

Perceived Impact of Library use on the Research Productivity of Postgraduate Students at Babcock University, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study investigated the impact of library use on research productivity. The study was carried out using the survey research method. The population was made up of 359 postgraduate students at Babcock University, Ogun state. Sampling was enumerative as all members of the population were used for the study. A self designed questionnaire was used for data collection. Results showed that library services are of utmost importance to the research productivity of postgraduate students as all the respondents who were able to have at least one publication within the last two years affirmed using the library. However, printed books were ranked as the most important library service for research. Although personal assistance of library staff was ranked very low in importance, suggestions made by the respondent for the training of library staff in order to improve staff-user relationship show that the respondents value the assistance of library staff but may not be happy with the way library staff relate to users presently.*

Keywords: *Research productivity; Postgraduate students; Library services; Library use; Babcock University.*

I. Introduction

The main essence of having libraries in universities is to provide effective information services that would enhance teaching, learning and research within the university community. Research is specifically important within the university environment because it constitutes a major determinant of the educational quality of an institution. Azad and Seyyed (2007) maintain that strong research profile adds to institutional reputation, visibility, and recognition.

Despite the emphasis on research, several researchers have drawn attention to the falling standard of education and low research output in Nigerian universities (Adeogun and Osifila 2010; Chiemeké, et al 2009). Several reasons were found accountable for this such as: obsolete research facilities where libraries are more or less archives of stale, archaic, and irrelevant materials; nonexistent research laboratories; low motivation for research and high student enrollment. In as much as the university library cannot be held solely responsible for the current status of education in Nigeria, it is worthwhile to access the role of the university library in aiding research especially at the postgraduate level. Indeed Poll (2001), affirms that the best testimony for an academic library's quality is the impact of the library's services on the educational process and the research results in the university.

Brief History of Babcock University Library

Babcock University has its roots in the Adventist College of West Africa (ACWA), established on September 17, 1959. The school adopted the name Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA) in 1975. It became known as Babcock University by virtue of Decree 9, of 1993 when the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1999 issued it the certificate of registration as a private university. Babcock University Library is also a continuation of the Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA) Library, which began at the inception of ACWA in 1959. The library is made up of five service points, known as the Main library (M.L.), Education and Humanities (E.A.H) library, Management and Social Sciences (M.S.S.) library, Science and Technology (S.A.T) library and Law and Security Studies (L.S.S) library.

II. Statement of the Problem

University libraries are created with the major objective of supporting the information needs of those within the university community. Literature however suggests that university libraries in Nigeria may not be carrying out this objective satisfactorily with increasing reports on low research productivity and declining quality of graduates which is often attributed to obsolete and irrelevant materials in libraries. It is on the basis of this, that the present study investigates postgraduate students' use of Babcock University library services with the view of finding out the degree of its support to their research activities.

III. Objectives of the study

This study aims to accomplish the following objectives:

- 1 determine the extent to which postgraduate students utilize Babcock university library;

- 2 find out the degree of importance that postgraduate students attach to specific library services;
- 3 ascertain the research productivity of postgraduate students at Babcock University;
- 4 establish the link between the use of library services and postgraduate students' research productivity.

IV. Review of Related Literature

Objectives of University Libraries

University libraries derive their mission from their parent organisations, thus the vision, mission and strategies which are selected by universities as a guide for meeting the core functions of teaching, learning and research form the foundation on which the university library is built. The objectives of university libraries can therefore be as diverse as the institutions themselves. The Kothari Commission of Education in India as cited by Rao (1993), while stipulating the functions of the university library, recommended that the library should: provide resources necessary for research in fields of special interest to the university; aid the university teacher in keeping abreast of developments in his field; provide library facilities and services necessary for the success of all formal programmes of instruction; open borders of one's own field of specialization; bring books and other information materials, students and scholars together under conditions which encourage reading for pleasure, self – discovery, personal growth and the sharpening of intellectual curiosity. Considering all these, Buckland (1989), maintains that the major role of library services is facilitating access to documents. Every other service rendered by the library is therefore considered as secondary. Obama (2005), however, summarizes the essence of libraries by stating that the library represents the window to a larger world.

Postgraduate Students Use of University Libraries

Library use are those activities which occur primarily within the library and which reflects rather traditional library functions such as circulating books and answering reference questions (Powell, 1988). A more embracing definition of library use was given by Reitz (2004) who described library use as the extent to which the facilities and resources of a library are actually used by its clientele. This definition seems more acceptable considering the fact that users now make use of library resources without stepping into the physical library space with the aid of technology.

Having obtained a first degree, it will not be out of place to assume that postgraduate students are not novices when it comes to using the library as many of them would have used the library at one time or the other in the course of obtaining a first degree. If this assumption is true, then postgraduate students are already exposed to different library environments and services. In the opinion of Luzius and Webb (2002) the physical library serves to provide access to technology, instruction to library use, a place to study among other things. These considerations are no doubt important to postgraduate students even though postgraduate students may not necessarily be frequent visitors to the physical library itself as indicated by a number of studies (Lawrence, Rudner, Miller-Whitehead and Gellmann 2002; King and Montgomery, 2002).

While all aspects of library service may seem important to librarians in their quest to support research, the case may not be the same with users, especially postgraduate students. In a study of user needs, satisfaction, and library performance at the University of Washington Libraries, Hiller (2001) found out that respondents placed increased importance on electronic resources. Anunobi, Nwakwuo and Ezejiolor (2010) also affirmed the importance of serials (print or non print) to postgraduate research as they maintain that serials form the bedrock of postgraduate research. In another study by Ikpaahindi (1985), findings revealed that majority of the respondents do not have their most important information need satisfied by the library as only 18.7 percent of the respondents in that study were nearly always successful in satisfying their most important information needs.

V. Library Use and Research Productivity

Although the research process may have many outcomes, the NBEET studies (1993, 1994) indicate that publications within education, journal articles, books, conference presentations and chapters of books are highly valued indicators of research performance.

Publications have been acknowledged to be the most valid, fair and direct measure of research performance amongst academics (Grigg and Sheehan 1989; Hattie et al. 1991; Hattie et al. 1994). Indeed Fox (1983) argues that research work only becomes 'a work' in the academic world when it takes on the conventional, physical form of a published paper or its equivalent. Where such is the case, postgraduate students' research outputs can be measured in tangible formats such as: paper presentations made at conferences, seminars or workshops, articles published in journals, or books published.

Few researchers have tried to look at the library's role in enhancing research productivity, majority however, concentrate on measuring library use and learning outcomes of which research productivity is a subset. In an early work carried out by Barkey (1965), the study found a direct correlation between books borrowed from the library by 'freshmen' and their grade point averages. Hiscock (1986) investigated influence of library use on academic performance, but was unable to establish a strong relationship between library usage and

academic performance. Qun and Onwuegbuzie (1997) in a study on reasons for university library usage, found out that academic achievement, semester course load, number of earned credit hours, etc. have no significant influence on how frequently students use the library. In a more recent study, Watson (2001) focused on how students' perceptions of the library could influence their educational outcomes, the study discovered among other things, that students feel strongly that the library is a place to use technology but do not correlate this function with their academic success or failure. Whitmire (2002), also examined the relationship between library resources and services and students' educational outcomes, the study revealed that library resources and services had almost no influence over undergraduates' use of library or their self-reported gains in critical thinking skills.

Among the few studies that looked directly at research productivity, Majid, Eisenschitz and Anwar (1999), studied library use pattern of Malaysian agricultural scientists, the result of the study revealed that majority of the respondents (88.4%) used the library extensively while writing research reports, 87.5% also admitted using the library extensively while writing research proposals. This can be inferred to mean that there is a relationship between library use and research outputs. Liu and Allmang (2008) assessed customer satisfaction at the National Institute of Standards and Technology Research Library (NIST), findings revealed that library services do have impact on research outputs as attested to by 71% of the respondents who affirmed that library services were valuable to their publishing in refereed journals. Another 69% affirmed that it assisted their presentations at a conference. Singh (2007) in another study of postgraduate students use of library resources for research found out that the respondents were generally satisfied with the resources (books, journals, databases, indexes, etc.) provided by the library and with the services (e.g. information skills classes, inter-library loans, etc.) In general, the students felt that the library had been useful to them in their research.

VI. Methodology

The descriptive research approach was used for the study. The study consists of 359 postgraduate students admitted as at May, 2010 (Babcock University, School of Postgraduate Studies, 2011). Enumerative sampling method was employed as all members of the population were given opportunity of participating in the study. A questionnaire titled "Library use and research productivity questionnaire (LURPQ)" was used for data collection. Out of 359 copies of the questionnaire sent out, 116 were filled and returned successfully.

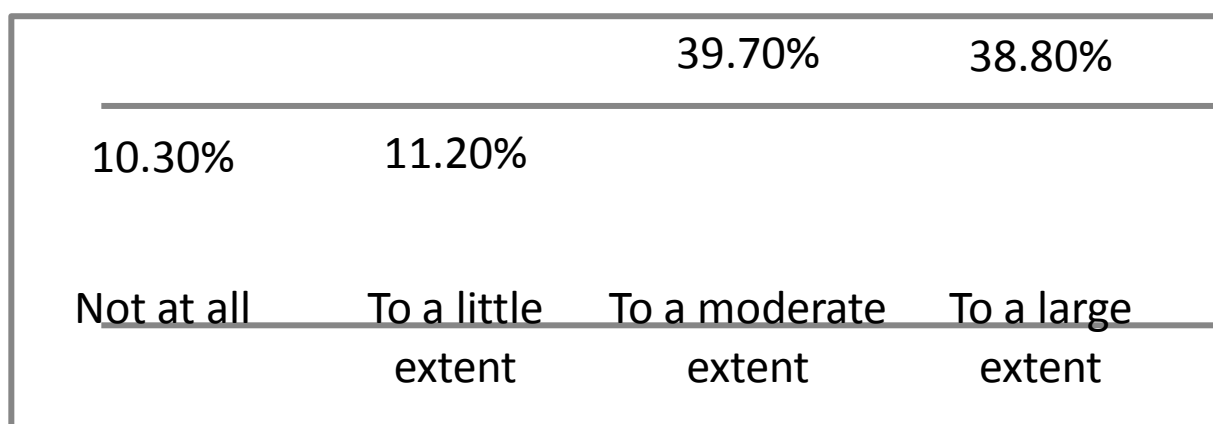
Presentation of findings

Majority of the respondents who filled the questionnaire were male 61(52.6%), while 55(47.4%) were female. Most of the respondents were also pursuing doctoral degrees 67 (57.8%), a few were enrolled for Mphil 6 (5.2%) while the remaining 43 (37.1%) were enrolled for Masters degree. This gave an indication that more doctoral students are enrolled in the postgraduate school.

Extent to which postgraduates students make use of the university library

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they utilize library services. The findings are presented in the Fig. 1.

Fig. 1. Use of library services



Findings from Fig. 1 indicates that most postgraduate students make use of library services as seen in the number of respondents who use library services to a large and moderate extent.

Importance of library services for research

Respondents were asked to rate the degree of importance attached to library services for the purpose of research. The result is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Importance of library services for research

Library services	Very important	Important	Moderately important	Unimportant	Rank
Books (print)	96(82.8%)	20(17.2%)			1 st
Internet provision	89(76.7%)	27(23.3%)			2 nd
Electronic journals	81(69.8%)	29(25%)	6(5.2%)		3 rd
Opening hours	77(66.4%)	21(18.1%)	12(10.3%)	6(5.2%)	4 th
Reading spaces	76(65.5%)	18(15.5%)	16(13.8%)	6(5.2%)	5 th
Current awareness	68(58.6%)	24(20.7%)	12(10.3%)	12(10.3%)	6 th
Print journals	66(56.9%)	38(32.8%)	12(10.3%)		7 th
Bibliographies	66(56.9%)	32(27.6%)	12(10.3%)	6(5.2%)	7 th
Online public access catalogue	64(55.2%)	27(23.3%)	19(16.4%)	6(5.2%)	8 th
Library website	62(53.4%)	48(41.4%)	6(5.2%)		9 th
User education/training in library use	61(52.6%)	42(36.2%)	6(5.2%)	7(6%)	10 th
Referral	61(52.5%)	23((19.8%)	26(22.4%)	6(5.2%)	10 th
CD-ROM search	54(46.6%)	34(29.3%)	22(19%)	6(5.2%)	11 th
Photocopying	45(38.8%)	43(37.1%)	28(24.1%)		12 th
Personal assistance of library staff	37(31.9%)	61(52.6%)	18(15.5%)		13 th
Inter library loan	32(27.6%)	38(32.8%)	33(28.4%)	13(11.2%)	14 th

Table 1 reveals a rank order of the degree of importance attached to library services. Books (print) is placed the most important followed closely by internet provision and electronic journals while personal assistance of library staff and inter library loan were ranked the least. The findings in this case indicate that printed books are still very essential to the university community even in the face of electronic resources. The findings agrees with that of Hiller (2001) whose study found out that respondents placed increased importance on electronic resources. It also affirms the study of Anunobi, Nwakwuo and Ezejiolor (2010) which affirmed the importance of serials (print or non print) to postgraduate research.

Research productivity of postgraduate students

Respondents were asked to state the number of publications they have had within the last two years in order to ascertain their productivity level. Publication for the purpose of this study includes paper presentations made at conferences, seminars or workshops, articles published in journals, or books published. The result is shown in table 2.

Table 2: Publications within the last two years

Number of publications	Frequency	Percentage
1-2	39	33.6
3-4	26	22.4
5 & above	0	00.0
NONE	51	44
Total	116	100.0

The results revealed that 39(33.6%) of the respondents had 1 or 2 publications within the last two years, 26(22.4%) had 3 to 4 publications, while 51(44%) were not able to come out with any publication. Considering the fact that more than half of the respondents have had at least one publication within the last two years, one can assume that the overall research productivity of postgraduate students at Babcock University is above average.

Extent to which the library facilitated research productivity

In order to establish the role of the university library in facilitating the publications of postgraduate students, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which materials cited in their publications were gotten from the university library. The result is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Extent to which materials cited in publications were gotten using the university library

Statement	Frequency	Percent
To a great extent	53	45.7
To some extent	63	54.3
Total	116	100.0

Table 3 shows that 53(45.7%) of the respondents found the materials cited in their publication, using the university library, to a great extent while 63(54.3%) found materials cited from the university library to some extent. Although “not at all” was also an option, none of the respondents indicated it which implies that all those who had at least one publication consulted the university library. As a means of ascertaining that the university library was actually useful to achieving the publications, respondents were also asked to indicate if they would have achieved a similar result without the use of library services. In response to this, 91 (78.4%) of the respondents affirmed that they would not have achieved a similar result without the use of library services, while 24 (21.6%) affirmed that they would have achieved similar result even without the use of the university library services.

The finding supports the work of Majid, Eisenschitz and Anwar (1999), whose study found out that majority of the respondents (88.4%) use the library extensively while writing research reports, 87.5% of the respondents also admitted to using the library extensively while writing research proposals. It is also in agreement with the work of Liu and Allmang (2008) whose findings revealed that library services do have impact on research outputs as attested to by 71% of the respondents.

Recommendations for improving library services

As a means of proffering solutions to better the services of the university library, respondents were asked to make suggestions to that effect. The result is shown in table 4.

Table 4: Suggestions for improving library services

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
Stable internet facility	33	28.4
Staff training to improve staff-user relationship	22	19.0
Provision of current materials	18	15.5
Increase in the number of computers	11	9.5
Provision of research consultancy	9	7.8
Not stated	20	17.2
Total	116	100.0

Table 4 shows that most of the respondents who made suggestions 33 (28.4%) want stable internet facility which is an indication that the internet facility on ground may not be working so well. Another 22 (19.0) want staff training for library staff to improve staff – user relationship. Considering the ranking of importance given to personal assistance of library staff, this suggestion does not come as a surprise. The least number of respondents 9 (7.8%) made recommendation for research consultancy, 20 (17.2%), however, choose not to make any suggestion.

VII. Conclusion and recommendations

This study has established that library services are of utmost importance to the research productivity of postgraduate students as all the respondents who were able to have at least one publication within the last two years affirmed using the library. The study also established that postgraduate students still cherish the provision of printed books in the library as they ranked it as the most important service for research productivity. Although personal assistance of library staff was ranked very low in importance, suggestions made for the training of library staff to improve staff-user relationship show that the respondents value the assistance of library staff but may not be happy with the way library staff relate to users presently.

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

- 1 Babcock University library should carry out staff training to enhance staff user – relationship. This is necessary for enhancing staff assistance to users while also improving user perception of library staff
- 2 Considering the fact that books (print) were ranked highest in respect to importance to research, the university library should not relent in providing current books.
- 3 The university library should also endeavour to provide stable internet facility to enhance research.

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