

## Information Needs and School Library Media Centre Services Patronage among Federal Government College Students in South Western Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Information is a vehicle for development in all areas of human endeavour, particularly, in the area of education. The school library media centre is therefore considered to be a custodian of information for educational development of students, teachers and other stakeholders. It is in the light of this, that this research investigated information needs of secondary school students in the Federal Government Colleges in the South West of Nigeria. 1,662 questionnaires were distributed to the students out of which only 1,649 were returned and found useful. Descriptive research methods were employed to analyze the data collected. The result indicated that most of the information needed by the students was not available in the school library media centre and that their patronage of the school library media centre services was low. It was therefore recommended that the information needs of the students be considered in acquisition of information resources. However, it was concluded that meeting the information needs of FGC students will positively affect SLMC service patronage.*

### Introduction

Information is a very vital and essential ingredient for secondary school students as this will help their literacy development. Generally, information serves as a tool for communicating ideas, opinion beliefs, values, judgment, perception and knowledge to people in the society, which enables them to solve private and corporate problems. Also, information is a powerful tool that educates the mind and helps to develop the three domains of learning namely cognitive, affective and psychomotor spheres (Popoola, 2009; Folorunso and Familusi (2012). Alegebeleye (2008) affirmed that the library is the major source of information where not only the individual reader improves himself but a nation's literacy is enhanced. Udofia (2009) referred to information need as the extent to which information is required to solve problems as well as the degree of expressed satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the information acquired. For students to be well developed, they need necessary information to take rational decisions and reduce uncertainties. They need information to be up-to-date and well informed in every area of their academic pursuits. Information is also needed to solve day to day problems such as finding consumer goods, locating appropriate medical facilities for family health, investments, government policies, educational matter among others. For the School Library Media Centres (SLMCs) to meet the information needs of its students, they need to know the type of information that students patronize and value. However, it has been observed that the information needs of secondary school students have not been catered for in the sense that, the SLMC which is the custodian of

information has largely been neglected by government and school management. According to Alabi (2007), children are being neglected from generation to generation without taking into cognizance their information needs and exposure to SLMC patronage. Furthermore, he pointed out that some schools do not have libraries while some have rooms designated as libraries but which are not conducive for reading. Where information needs are not being met, there is every tendency for service patronage to be low, especially in this era of ICT which has made information accessibility very simple from other sources other than libraries. Therefore, it is expected that SLMC acquire and make available information materials such as textbooks, dictionaries, pictorial materials and internet facilities that will meet the information needs of students for examination purposes, doing class assignments and other learning activities.

### Literature Review

Despite the fact that information is very important in all human activities, it is a complex concept to define. Aina (2004) defined it as a group of processed data which when well patronized can help an individual deduce an inference and/or make value judgment in arriving at decisions. Popoola (2009), Okwilagwe (2009), Folorunso and Familusi (2012) portray information is a critical economic resource which is capable of improving the knowledge state of an individual to make rational choices. Adeniji (2004) cited by Adeniji (2007) stated that everybody needs information to reach his or her potential and that the more information is available to a

system about itself and about its environment, the more reliable it becomes. Also, availability of information enhances the survival rates of such a system. Therefore, information is a resource and service that must be acquired and used by the secondary school students for academic achievement. Crawford (2003), Thompson (2004) and Abdullahi and Haruna (2006) referred to need as a discoverable matter of facts. They went on to further explain that needs are objectives in the sense that they are what one must look for to support his/.her profession. Needs are a matter of priority. Therefore, exploring information needs and school library services patronage of Federal government Colleges is very important if the goals and objective of establishing the SLMC must be achieved. Otoide (2015) stated that the need for information among secondary school students is one of the cognitive needs of childhood which enables them to understand various things including the environment, the society the family, the schools and the future.

In the work of Seaman (2010), it was reported that the information needs of secondary school students encompass information about learning, academic growth, health, family, societal values, friendship and peer groups, religious groups, childhood and adulthood, career choice and culture and persona development. The study concluded that majority of secondary school students have similar information needs and that they select their information needs based upon values, interest and characteristics that they exhibit as youngsters. Thompson (2004) referred to information needs as what one must look for to support his or her profession. According to Wilson (2007), information need is an individual or group desire to locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious or unconscious need. Therefore needs and interest leads to information search. The objectives of studying information needs includes, the examination of wants, the explanation of observed phenomena of information use or expressed needs; the prediction of instance of information use, and the control and improvement of the utilization of information for solving problems and making decisions.

Information needs arise when an individual senses a problematic situation or information gap in which his or her internal knowledge, belief and mode of the environment fail to suggest a path towards the satisfaction of his or her goals. Such identified information needs which are deemed necessary for happiness, success or fulfillment may lead to information seeking and the formulation of requests for information. Information needs therefore require appropriate information resources and services in order to be satisfied. Information need has to be expressed in a particular form either orally or verbally by asking or requesting for it in writing and could be sourced from

variety of media which include textbooks, journals, microform, specimens, charts, maps, models, games and so on (Olaajo and Mbuka, 2006). Secondary school students need up to date information in the area of class assignments, health, examinations and for extracurricular activities such as debates, quiz competitions and recreation. These needs can only be met if they patronize the SLMC and make use of their resources and services.

No matter how important the availability of library materials and service in the achievement of the schools educational objectives are, there will be no achievement of such objectives if the library services are not patronized by the library users to meet their information needs. Popoola (2009) argued that information availability does not mean accessibility and patronage. He therefore suggested that school library media centres should, in addition, to the provision of information materials, organize and make accessible whatever information materials provided in a usable attractive form that young people will easily understand. Akinlade (2000), observed that libraries need to have information resources that can satisfy the needs of their users because the high expectations that people have when sourcing and retrieving information is commensurate to the frustration they feel when such expectations are not met.

Aina (2004) explained that through users' studies, libraries are well-placed to know those who use their services, what their information needs are, and what services will likely meet their information needs. Also, this type of study enables libraries to evaluate their services and know if they are useful. He went on further to point out that the user is very critical to a library, and must be constantly asked to assess the services and resources provided. This will help the library to improve upon its services and remain relevant to its users. This is most crucial as no matter how large the stock of a library is, if the services and resources provided are not patronized, the library will end up being a storehouse.

SLMC services, according to Babalola (2007), are all activities that are geared towards making learning seamless for all users. Therefore, library services can be referred to as all activities that are geared towards charming, stimulating and fascinating the interest and love of children in reading, making reading culture part and parcel of their lives and appreciating the world around them under the most conducive environment. Olajide (2007) Olajide and Ariwodola (2009) agreed that SLMC services are the activities or duties being carried out for the benefit of the library users so that the library resources can be adequately patronized. According to them, SLMC services include proper organization of materials, acquisition of materials, periodic evaluation, reservation and internet services. Nevertheless, these

services would only achieve the goals of setting up the SLMC when they are properly patronized.

According to Davies (2007), patronage is the support, encouragement privileges or financial aid that an organization or individual bestows to another. While Merriam Webster (2003) referred to patronage as the support that is given to an organization when buying its goods or using its services. Therefore, SLMC service patronage can be defined as the support given to the SLMC by clientele when utilizing its services and resources. Again, SLMC services patronage can be referred to as the practical and periodic use of SLMC services for the purpose of solving a problem. It is generally believed that availability and accessibility of library services would encourage patronage irrespective of the medium in which it is presented, therefore once library information and services are rich and materials therein satisfy the information needs of users, such services are bound to be patronized. Babalola (2007) opined that the environment where the library services would be provided for students is supposed to look attractive and inviting so that the students can be drawn to it thereby patronizing its services.

The patronage of any SLMC depends on the nature of the services being rendered and provision of recent and up-to-date information resources to meet the information needs of their users. Omekwu and Ugwuanyi (2010) submitted that a functional collection of information resources cannot be overlooked when one needs to provide effective services. According to Falade (2007), most SLMCs are not spacious while necessary facilities like conveniences and power generating sets are not available. Also, furniture items such as circulation desk and catalogue cabinet book trolley file cabinet are mostly not available. He therefore, concluded that government should adequately fund SLMC. Alabi (2007), also in his work on empowering literacy from childhood, discovered that what the schools have as libraries are not really that because they are being manned by non-professionals while the reading rooms are not conducive for reading. Simisaye (2003) declared that non-professional in SLMCs do not encourage full patronage of SLMC services by pupils and staff because they try to provide services they are not trained for. Thus, they find it difficult to acquire appropriate books for pupils and design information services specifically targeted at young people. Also, organizing these materials for optimal accessibility and patronage will be challenging to them considering the fact that they were not trained in information service delivery. He concluded that to encourage students to read in SLMCs, other stakeholders, including parents have roles to play.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The role of School Library Media Centre in Nigerian secondary Schools cannot be overlooked due to the services that they need to provide and their implications for reading culture development and overall academic achievement. However, it has been observed that majority of students do not patronise the SLMC. This could be due to inability of the SLMC to meet the information needs of students, inadequate funding and many SLMCs could possess obsolete educational media resources and services which are not readily accessible and lack of experts to guide users or impact on them the necessary user education. It is in the light of this that this research is investigating the relationship between information needs and SLMC service patronage in some selected Federal Government Colleges in South-Western, Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- i. find out the information needs of students in the SLMCs of the federal government colleges in South Western Nigeria;
- ii. find out the frequency of service patronage by students of the SLMC in the federal government colleges in South Western Nigeria;
- iii. find out the various challenges of SLMCs in the federal government colleges

### **Research Questions**

- i. What are the information needs of students in the SLMCs of the Federal government colleges?
- ii. How frequently do students patronize services in federal government colleges in the South Western Nigeria?
- iii. What are the types of SLMC services in the Federal Government Colleges in South Western Nigeria?
- iv. What are the challenges of SLMCs in the federal government colleges in the South Western Nigeria?

### **Methods**

The research design for this study was descriptive research design. The study population comprised 4,855 senior secondary school 2 students in all the 18 federal government colleges in 6 states in S/W Nigeria. Multi stage sampling technique was adopted and simple random technique was used to select one Federal government college in each State in S/W Nigeria. One instrument was used for this study named "Information Needs and SLMC Service Patronage Questionnaire" (INSPQ). The validity of the instrument was done by showing it to experts in the field of library and information studies at the university of Ibadan Nigeria.

Corrections and observations made by them were effected to enhance the validity of the instruments. The reliability of the instrument was done by administering questionnaire to 50 students of FGC which was not part of the sample. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as means, tables, percentages and standard deviation to provide answers to research questions

**Results**

Demographic information of respondents, is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents by Gender**

Gender	Student	
	Frequency	Percentage
Male	744	45.3
Female	899	54.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1643</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 2: Information Needs of Students in the SLMCs of the Federal Government Colleges in South-Western Nigeria**

sn	Items	Very needed (%)	Needed (%)	Occasionally needed (%)	Not needed %	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Assignment	1131 (68.8)	168 (10.2)	202 (12.3)	142 (8.6)	3.39	1.00
2	Examination	1039(63.2)	255 (15.5)	241 (14.7)	108 (6.6)	3.35	.96
3	Test	1032(62.8)	254 (15.5)	225 (13.7)	132(8.0)	3.33	.99
4	Career	1039(63.2)	216(13.1)	240 (14.6)	148 (9.0)	3.31	1.02
5	Internet facility	1044(63.5)	226 (13.8)	204(12.4)	169(10.3)	3.31	1.04
6	Personal development	967 (58.9)	287 (17.5)	242 (14.7)	147(8.9)	3.26	1.01
7	Religion	968 (58.9)	253 (15.4)	238 (14.5)	184(11.2)	3.22	1.06
8	Social activities	938 (57.1)	272 (16.6)	274(16.7)	159(9.7)	3.21	1.04
9	Recreation	937 (57.0)	276 (16.8)	260 (15.8)	170(10.3)	3.21	1.05
10	Sport	905 (55.1)	321 (19.5)	258 (15.7)	159 (9.7)	3.20	1.03
11	Competition	943 (57.4)	270 (16.4)	252 (15.3)	178 (10.8)	3.20	1.06
12	Debate	881 (53.6)	325 (19.8)	278 (16.9)	159(9.7)	3.17	1.03
13	Current affairs	934(56.8)	235 (14.3)	253 (15.4)	221 (13.5)	3.15	1.11
14	General	875 (53.3)	298 (18.1)	270 (16.4)	200(12.2)	3.12	1.08
15	knowledge Health	863 (52.5)	287 (17.5)	274(16.7)	219(13.3)	3.09	1.10
16	History	803 (48.9)	320(19.5)	318 (19.4)	202(12.3)	3.05	1.08
	Weighted Average				3.22		

Table 2 indicates that all the 18 items listed yielded high means score between 3.05 and 3.39. The weighted average of 3.22 showed that students were highly in need of information for various purposes which range from doing assignment to historical information. Thus they expect the SLMC to provide varied information materials to meet their diverse information needs for writing of assignment (x=3.39), preparation for examinations (x =3.35), tests (x=3.33), career choices and information (x=3.31), internet facilities (x =3.31) and personal development (x=3.26). Other high information needs are history (x=3.05), health (x=3.09), general knowledge

(x=3.12), current affairs (x=3.15), debates (x=3.17), competitions (x=3.20) and sports (x=3.20). All these and other indices indicated that students of FGC need a lot of information that should be provided by SLMCs.

**Table 3: Frequency of Service Patronage by Students in SLMC in Federal Government Colleges in South-Western Nigeria**

Services	Very Often %	Often %	Rarely %	Not at all %	Mean	Std. Dev
1. Study time services	353 (21.5)	382(23.3)	356(23.5)	522(31.8)	2.34	1.14
2. Leisure reading	293 (17.8)	384 (23.4)	461 (28.1)	505 (30.7)	2.18	1.08
3. Debate services	306 (18.6)	364 (22.1)	410 (25.0)	563 (34.3)	2.15	1.12
4. Reference services	322 (19.6)	301 (18.3)	437 (26.6)	583 (35.5)	2.22	1.13
5. Guidance services	267(16.3)	316(19.1)	451 (27.4)	609(37.1)	2.15	1.09
6. Drama	234 (14.2)	333(20.3)	525(32.0)	551 (33.5)	2.15	1.04
7. Loan Services	221 (13.5)	327(19.9)	533 (32.4)	562 (34.1)	2.13	1.03
8. Current awareness services	256 (15.6)	285(17.3)	500 (30.4)	602 (36.6)	2.12	1.07
9. Selective dissemination of information services	279 (17.0)	282(17.1)	439 (26.7)	643 (39.1)	2.12	1.11
10. Information dissemination services	276(16.8)	256(15.6)	412(25.1)	699(42.5)	2.07	1.12
11. Reading group services	255 (15.5)	254(15.5)	430 (26.1)	704(42.8)	2.04	1.10
12. Exhibition/display	228 (13.9)	274(16.7)	472 (28.7)	669 (40.7)	2.04	1.06
13. Teaching library skills	237 (14.4)	253(15.4)	441 (26.8)	712(43.3)	2.01	1.08
14. Playing game	226(13.8)	255(15.5)	389(23.7)	773(47.0)	1.96	1.08
15. Story time services	173 (10.5)	257(15.6)	462(28.1)	751 (45.7)	1.91	1.01
16. Recreational services	183 (9.5)	247(15.3)	460 (28.5)	753 (46.7)	1.88	.992
17. ICT services	206 (12.5)	206(12.5)	404 (24.6)	827 (50.3)	1.87	1.06
18. Doing assignment with SLMS	174 (10.6)	225(13.7)	416 (25.3)	828 (50.4)	1.84	1.02
19. Photocopy and binding services	188 (11.4)	177(10.8)	381 (23.1)	897(54.6)	1.79	1.03
20. Weighted Average	167(10.2)	200(12.1)	374(22.8)	902(54.9)	1.78	1.01

Table 3 reveals that out of 20 items listed, 13 items yielded moderate score between 2.04 and 2.34. Other 7 items yielded low mean score between 1.78 and 1.96. The weighted average of 2.05 attested to the fact that SLMC services patronage in the FGC was rarely regular as indicated by students. Findings indicated that services such as study time (mean 2.34), leisure reading (mean=2.28), debate (mean=2.25), reference (mean=2.22), guidance (mean=2.15) and drama (mean=2.15) were rated moderate while services such as authors' day (mean=1.78), photocopy and binding services (mean=1.79),doing assignment with SLMS (mean=1.84), ICT (mean=1.87), recreation (mean=1.88), and story time (mean=1.91) were rated very low. These and other indices rated the SLMC services as rarely patronised as indicated by students.

**Table 4: Problems and Challenges Facing SLMC in Federal Government Colleges in South-Western Nigeria**

Item	Challenges	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev	
1	There is no enough computers in my school library	476(29.0)	629(38.3)	310(18.9)	228 (13.9)	2.92	1.06	
2	No adequate and relevant material	297(18.1)	620(37.7)	531 (32.3)	195 (11.9)	2.91	.99	
3	In my school libraries, we don't have internet facilities and connectivity	336(20.5)	549(33.4)	563 (34.3)	195 (11.9)	2.90	1.01	
4	There is no time to make use of information resources needed	323 (19.7)	491 (29.9)	592 (36.0)	237(14.4)	2.88	1.06	
5	Nobody to guide me whenever I want to use the library	463 (28.2)	618(37.6)	308 (18.7)	254(15.5)	2.88	1.08	
6	No staff to provide information resources and services as at when needed	320(19.5)	463 (28.2)	599(36.5)	261 (15.9)	2.85	1.08	
7	Library materials are not well organized	381 (23.2)	582(35.4)	476(29.0)	204(12.4)	2.81	.99	
8	The materials in my school library cannot be borrowed	414(25.2)	519(31.6)	456(27.8)	254(15.5)	2.67	1.02	
9	The library is not conducive for reading	412(25.1)	497(30.2)	437 (26.6)	297(18.1)	2.62	1.05	
10	I don't have any knowledge about the library	375	(22.8)	447(27.2)	492 (29.9)	329(20.0)	2.53	1.05
	Weighted mean							

Table 4 indicates that all the 10 items yielded a high mean score between 2.53 and 2.92. The weighted average of 2.80 revealed that challenges facing SLMC as rated by student is high. Findings indicated that SLMC services patronage is facing a lot of challenges which negatively affects patronage by students. There are not enough computers in my school library was rated high with mean of 2.92, no adequate and relevant material (mean=2.91), lack of internet facilities and connectivity (mean=2.90), there is no time to make use of information resources needed (mean=2.88), nobody to guide me whenever I want to use the library (mean=2.88), and no staff to provide information resources and services as at when needed (mean=2.85). All these and other indices indicated that students had various challenges in patronizing SLMCs for the satisfaction of their information needs.

**Discussion**

The findings indicate that students need information mainly in the areas of education, health, current affairs, sports, general knowledge, religion, career choices and guidance, internet facilities, personal development, social activities, tests, assignments, examinations, competitions, debates, current affairs, history, recreation among others. These articulated information needs point to the facts that the students would want to boost their reading culture and find answers to questions about almost everything in life. Based on students' responses in this study, it is obvious that SLMC service patronage is low. The students rarely patronized the SLMC. This could be due to inadequacy of SLMC resources and services. Alabi (2007), Falade (2007) and Efosa (2014) confirmed this finding when

they reported that information resources in SLMCs were inadequate, deficient and substandard and this have negative impact on the services patronage because the students would not be able to get the information needed.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are being made:

- Students should be consulted in acquisition of books so that their information needs can always be met by SLMCs.
- Internet facilities should be acquired for the SLMCs to enable students access information.
- Opening hours should be extended to encourage students' patronage of SLMCs
- School management should employ professionals to man SLMCs

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the results show that students' information needs were not being met and service patronage in the Federal Government Colleges in South Western Nigeria is very low. This makes it difficult for students to get relevant information to their information needs. This could stunt their academic achievement potentials. For students to patronize SLMCs, their information needs ought to be identified and catered for.

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