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Mitigating Research Challenges among Post Graduate Students through Effective Library Service Delivery

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Abstract: Postgraduate students across Nigerian universities face various challenges in their quest for higher degrees. The study adopted a survey method to examine the research challenges faced by postgraduate students in three selected universities in Osun State and the role that university libraries play in mitigating them. The selected universities are Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Osun State University, Oshogbo and Redeemers University Ede. Structured and validated questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. 370 copies of the questionnaire were distributed while 300 representing 81% were retrieved and found valid for analysis. The data generated for the study were analyzed using Mean and Standard deviation. Findings of the study showed that the postgraduate students are confronted with several challenges in their research activities. It equally revealed that, the libraries are not lacking in their role of offering necessary facilities/services to aid research by postgraduate students as the students showed appreciable level of satisfaction with the services being

provided by their university libraries. However, inadequate electronic resources, erratic power supply, insufficient ICT facilities as well as insufficient awareness were identified as the greatest challenges hindering effective use of library services by the postgraduate students. Consequently, it was recommended that adequate funding should be provided by the parent institutions for the procurement of electronic resources, ICT facilities and functional alternative power supply. Also, user education programmes should be improved upon and extended with the postgraduate students in mind.

Keywords: *Research Challenges, Post Graduate Students, Library Service Delivery, Osun State*

Introduction

Postgraduate education in Nigeria is the higher level of education which is provided after bachelor's degree or Higher National Diploma (HND). It is formal and comprised of structured programmes that combine both course work and research projects. In the past, postgraduate education was seen to be the exclusive reserve of intellectually brilliant people who desire to pursue careers in the academics and other highly specialized sectors. However, as institutions of higher learning continue to proliferate with attendant mass production of first degree holders, the quest for post graduate degree has been heightened with increase students' enrolment. Ekpoh (2016) attributes this development to lack of employment, desire for personal fulfilment, pursuit of knowledge, prospect for better employment and desire to upgrade qualification.

Post graduate study is a goal-oriented venture and not an all-comers affair. The students are regarded as "mature students" because they have passed through the undergraduate stage and are now facing a higher level of academic studies which connotes higher responsibilities and challenges that require students to be interested in their

area of study and full of enthusiasm that should not wane as the study advances and as the challenges are confronted (Igun, 2010; Onifade, Ogbuiyi & Omeluzor (2013).

Several challenges have been identified to be affecting postgraduate students in their quest for higher degrees. In Nigeria, Ekpoh (2016) grouped them into supervisor-related, student-related and institution related challenges. Duze (2010) identifies problems related to university administration, accommodation problem, family background, problem of external examiner and personal problem. Although great efforts have been made to understand the magnitude of these challenges, it is obvious that the greatest area of challenge for most postgraduate students is research (Hotman & Berg, 2000; Golde & Dore, 2001; Achimuju, Oluwagbemi & Oluwarati, 2010, Igun, 2010, Duze, 2010, Idiegbeyan-Ose, Nkiko & Ifeakachuku, 2016). University libraries are research laboratories whose roles foster research activities. It is therefore safe to assume that through various library services, the research challenges of postgraduate students could be mitigated.

Statement of Problem

Year in year out, too many students have continued to enroll for postgraduate programmes in Nigerian universities. Despite the escalating rate of enrolment, graduate turn out has continued to dwindle (Ekpoh, 2016). Part of the serious challenges encountered by students in their quest for postgraduate degrees is in the area of research which is one of the prerequisite conditions for conferment of postgraduate degrees. It is rather worrisome that students spend much more number of years in programmes that should ordinarily take two or four years as the case may be. Apart from the conventional issues of incessant industrial actions by staff unions, infrastructural deficit, inadequate staff strength among others, facing university education in Nigeria, there are other peculiar factors that impede timely and effective conduct of academic research by postgraduate students. Such factors include; poor library services, lack of access to research materials, lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) knowledge on research methods, challenges of research topics, research funding, lack of research equipment, etc. To overcome some of these challenges, it would require active involvement of the university library given its prominent place as the centre for research. Review of literature shows that, significant number of studies have been carried out to understand the general challenges facing postgraduate students in Nigeria. However, there is a paucity of empirical studies that address the roles that university libraries play in mitigating

the research challenges of postgraduate students in Nigerian universities. This study was therefore undertaken to fill this identified gap with the view to bringing to the limelight what university libraries could do to facilitate the research activities of postgraduate students in universities in Osun State.

Objectives of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to examine the role of university libraries in mitigating the research challenges of postgraduate students in universities in Osun State. The specific objectives were as follows;

1. To determine the research-related challenges facing postgraduate students in universities in Osun State.
2. To identify the roles of university libraries in facilitating research among postgraduate students in universities in Osun State.
3. To ascertain the students' level of satisfaction with the quality of library services been rendered by their universities' libraries.
4. To determine the challenges facing postgraduate students in in universities in Osun State in using the library

Review of Literature

It is a fact that is supported by numerous empirical evidences that postgraduate education in Nigeria is bedeviled with a lot of challenges. A study by Ekpoh (2016) indicates that 92% of the postgraduate students in University of Calabar encounter various forms of challenges in their studies. The summary of his finding revealed that, these challenges could be grouped into three – supervisor-related, student-

related and institution-related challenges. Also, Duze (2010) analyzed the problems encountered by postgraduate students in Nigerian universities by sampling a total of 1,752 postgraduate students across Nigerian universities, and found that the most highly rated problem areas for postgraduate students in Nigerian universities were problems related to lack of equipment, academic problems, financial problems, problem of data collection, supervisor problems, problems related to university administration, accommodation problem, family background problem, external examiner problem and personality problem.

It is disquieting to observe that in Nigerian higher institutions, there still remain an acute shortage of teaching staff. Postgraduate students intake in Nigerian universities are not commensurate with the number of lecturers employed, thus further compounding the problem. The unprecedented increase in postgraduate enrolment has further reduced the already inadequate resources available for postgraduate studies in Nigerian universities. The consequence is that the available human and material resources have become increasingly insufficient to meet the educational needs of the students (Ojaide, 2005; Duze, 2006; Duze, 2010) Similarly, Achimuju, et al (2010) report that, tertiary institutions in Nigeria lacked adequate ICT infrastructure, noting that the basic software for research were not available and where they available, they were not accessible.

Igun (2010) in a study on difficulties experienced by postgraduate students in some Nigerian universities found that, majority of them experienced challenges such as strike action; lack of research materials, and challenges of research topics. Specifically, the author reports that, 35% of the respondents had problems in selecting good research topics, while 70% had difficulty in research interaction.

University libraries as centres for research are instrumental in alleviating the research related challenges confronting postgraduate students. Rasul and Singh (2010) examine the postgraduate students' views on the role of university library services in facilitating research with their resources in four Malaysian public universities and found that 90% of the respondents acknowledged the role of university libraries in facilitating research. According to Adeyim and Oluwabiya (2013), university libraries have the task of providing effective library services that could assist the research activities of the postgraduate students.

Campbell (2006) observes that, the roles of university libraries should not be limited to providing books and space for students to study, but also provide services for facilitating research activities. Thus, the library must strive to articulate, package and extend multifaceted services that will accommodate the multifarious research engagements of postgraduate students. More importantly is the need to create adequate awareness on the available information services and products that could be beneficial to postgraduate students because most times, they do not

even know what to expect from the library.

The study by Onifade, Ogbuiyi and Omeluzor (2013), revealed several reasons why postgraduate students visit university libraries to include consultation of materials for research; to prepare seminar papers; borrow books; study for examinations; consult librarians for guidance on literature search; for lecture follow up; and to read newspapers/magazines. Indeed, the services rendered by university libraries that could benefit post graduate students are not limited to the authors' list above. It was further suggested that university libraries should also provide current awareness services (CAS), electronic/ICT facilities, selective dissemination of information (SDI), referral services, mobile information services, provision of abstracts and bibliographies, reference services, software training etc. In view of all these, user education becomes imperative because as noted by Ekpoh (2016), the success of university libraries is measured not by provision of resources and services, but by the use and value placed on them by researchers.

At this juncture, it is imperative to say that, university libraries have to maintain their position as key partners in research by anticipating, understanding and acknowledging the challenges in research activities. The strategies for achieving this would require the re-examination of their role in facilitating research. The new order demands that librarians package targeted services that must be rendered in the most efficient and effective manner possible if they

hope to mitigate the research challenges of postgraduate students.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study consisted the postgraduate students admitted between 2014/2015 to 2017/2018 academic sessions in three selected universities in Osun State. They are; Obafemi Awolowo University, (OAU) Ile-Ife; Osun State University (UNIOSUN), Osogbo and Redeemer's University, Ede. The institutions were purposively selected to reflect the three categories of university ownership in Nigeria i.e Federal, State and Private respectively. The total number of the study population is 3658 consisting of 3571 students at various levels of postgraduate programmes and 87 academic librarians. Simple random sampling technique was employed to accommodate a wide range of students from different faculties/colleges and departments. Structured and validated questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was carefully developed using four-point rating scale responses, after an elaborate review of literature. The questionnaire was made up of two sections. Section A contained the demographic data of the respondents such as name of institution, postgraduate programme, year of admission, expected year of graduation and stage of programme. Section B contained 70 question items generated in line with the research objectives. Two set of questionnaire were developed - one for the postgraduate students and the other for the librarians in the selected universities. 370 copies of the questionnaire were distributed while 300

(81%) were retrieved and found valid for analysis. 140 (46.67%) from OAU, 100 (33.33%) from UNIOSUN and 60 (20%) from Redeemer’s University, Ede. All Data generated for the study were analyzed using Mean and standard deviation.

Decision rule: the instrument is a four point rating scale with a response set given as Strongly Agree – 3.5. – 4.0; Agree – 2.50 – 3.49; Disagree – 2.0 – 2.49; and Strongly Disagree -1.0 – 1.99,

as well as Very Satisfied – 3.5. – 4.0; Satisfied – 2.50 – 3.49; Fairly Satisfied – 2.0 – 2.49; and Unsatisfied - 1.0 – 1.99. On this scale, the average Mean cut off Mean is 2.50, hence, Mean response below 2.50 was deemed unacceptable while Mean responses of 2.50 and above were taken as agreed and as such accepted.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data generated for the study are analyzed and presented here

Table 1. Demographic Information of respondents

Institution of respondents	OAU 140 (46.67%)	UNIOSUN 100 (33.33%)	RUN 60 (20%)	-	Total 100
Gender	Male 159 (53 %)	Female 141 (47 %)	-	-	100
Programme	PGD 56 (18.67%)	Master 131 (43.67%)	Mphil 24 (8%)	PhD 89 (29.66%)	100
Year of Admission	2014/2015 47 (15.67 %)	2015/2016 81 (27 %)	2016/2017 82 (27.33 %)	2017/2018 90 (30 %)	100

Table 1 shows the demographic information of the respondents. It reveals that, 140 (46.67 %) are from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; 100 (33.33 %) from Osun State University (UNIOSUN), and 60 (20 %) from Redeemers’ University, Ede. 159 (53%) of them are male while 141 (47%) are female. The table further reveals that greater percentage of the

students (131-43.67%) are master students; 89 (29.66%) are PhD students, followed by 56 (18.67%) who are PGD students. 24 (8%) are Mphil students. 47 (15.67%) of the respondents were admitted in 2014/2015 academic session; 81 (27%) in 2015/2016 session; 82 (27.33%) in 2016/2017 session; while 90 (30%) were admitted in 2020/2021 academic

Table 2: Summary of Respondents’ Mean Score on the Research-Related Challenges Encountered by Postgraduate Students.

S/N	Research related challenges of PG	Students X	Std. dev.	Remarks
1.	Lack of research funding	3.13	0.87	A
2.	High cost of obtaining research materials.	2.95	0.8	A
3.	Problem of data collection	2.83	0.69	A
4.	Challenges of research topics	2.80	0.81	A
5.	Lack of access to research materials	2.74	0.74	A
6.	Insufficient time for research	2.66	0.84	A
7.	Insufficient knowledge of research methods	2.64	0.79	A
8.	Lack of ICT knowledge of research methods	2.62	0.77	A
9.	Poor library facilities and services	2.60	0.82	A
10.	Inefficient library services	2.58	0.81	A
11.	Lack of commitment to research	2.54	0.91	A
12.	Supervisor related problems	2.53	0.93	A
13.	Insufficient knowledge of plagiarism offences	2.52	0.83	A
14.	Scarcity of literature on your chosen topic	2.51	0.81	A
15.	Unfavourable institutional policies	2.40	0.73	D
Grand Mean		2.67	0.81	

* A – Agree; D - Disagree N = 300

Table 2 presents the research-related challenges faced by postgraduate students in universities in Osun State. It shows that apart from unfavourable institutional policies, which has a mean score of 2.40, all other items in the table constitute a challenge been encountered by the respondents. Analysis of data

reveals that, lack of research funding (3.13); high cost of obtaining research materials (2.95); problem of data collection (2.83), problem of research topics (2.80), and lack of access to research materials (2.74) top the list of challenges being faced by the postgraduate students under study

Table 3: Summary of Respondents’ Mean Score on the available and accessible Library Services for Postgraduate students.

S/N.	Available & Accessible Services for PG Students	X	Std. Dev.	Rks
1.	ICT facilities	3.10	0.76	A
2.	Electronic resources	3.06	0.82	A
3.	Current Awareness Services (CAS)	3.00	0.83	A
4.	User education programmes	3.00	0.76	A
5.	Selective dissemination of information	2.95	0.88	A

URL: <http://journals.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/index.php/cjlis/>

6. Provision of abstracts and bibliographies	2.93	0.80	A
7. Referral services	2.92	0.70	A
8. Reference services	2.88	0.71	A
9. Database of research topics/ project	2.85	0.89	A
10. Separate section for postgraduate students	2.81	1.15	A
11. Literature search	2.77	0.81	A
12. Mobile information services	2.60	0.79	A
13. Software training	2.43	0.81	D
14. Document delivery	2.42	0.79	D
15. Provision of information on research grants and scholarships	2.41	0.77	
Grand Mean		2.81	0.81

* A – Agree; D - Disagree

N = 300

Table 3 presents the library services available and accessible to the postgraduate students in universities in Osun State. Analysis of data indicates that ICT facilities (3.10); electronic resources (3.06); CAS (3.00); user education programmes (3.00); SDI (2.95) top the list of available and accessible library services to the students. With a grand mean score of

2.81, the result shows that the libraries have quite a significant number of services for the postgraduate students. However, the result equally reveals that, services such as software training (2.43); document delivery (2.42); and provision of information on research grants and scholarships (2.41) are not popular in the university libraries used for the study.

Table 4: Summary of Respondents' (Librarians) Mean Score on the Available Library Services for Postgraduate students.

S/N. Available Services for Postgraduate Students	X	Std. Dev.	Rks
1. Provision ICT facilities	3.54	0.52	SA
2. Provision of Electronic resources	3.54	0.52	SA
3. Separate section for postgraduate students	3.45	0.68	A
4. User education programmes	3.27	0.46	A
5. Provision of abstracts and bibliographies	3.10	0.70	A
6. Current Awareness Services (CAS)	3.10	0.53	A
7. Mobile information services	3.00	0.89	A
8. Reference services	3.00	0.63	A
9. Literature search	2.90	0.83	A

10. Information literacy	2.90	0.83	A
11. Provision of information on research grants and scholarships	2.81	0.98	A
12. Referral services	2.81	0.60	A
13. Selective dissemination of information	2.72	0.90	A
14. Document delivery	2.72	0.78	A
15. Database of research topics/ project	2.63	0.92	A
16. Equipment borrowing	2.63	0.80	A
17. Software training	2.54	0.93	A
18. Interlibrary loan	2.54	0.68	A
19. Reprographic services	2.36	1.02	D
Grand Mean	2.92	0.74	

*SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; D - Disagree

N = 11

Table 4 presents the librarians’ account of the available services for postgraduate students in their universities. The result indicates that almost all the services listed in the table are offered by the libraries with a grand mean of 2.92, except reprographic services which obtained 2.36 – less than the 2.50 cut off. Analysis of data equally reveals that, there are certain services offered by the libraries that the postgraduate

students are not even aware of. The students’ responses on the available and accessible facilities/services for them in table 3 reveal that, services such as software training; document delivery; and provision of information on research grants and scholarships are not popular in the university libraries used for the study. This is a direct contrast of what table 4 unveils.

Table 5: Summary of Respondents’ Mean Score on Postgraduate Students’ Satisfaction with Library Services in their Institutions

S/N	Students’ Satisfaction with Library Services in their Institutions		
	X	Std. Dev.	Remark
1. Adequacy of information resources	3.06	0.75	S
2. Adequacy of staff	3.04	0.84	S
3. Ease of access to information resources	3.02	0.84	S
4. Quality of services provided	3.02	0.64	S
5. Professionalism in discharge of duties	3.00	0.69	S
6. Level of interaction with users	2.98	0.71	S
7. Speed of response to users’ demands	2.97	0.71	S

8. Currency of information resources	2.86	0.75	S
Grand Mean	3.00	0.74	

*S-Satisfied

*N = 300

Table 5 presents the respondents' satisfaction with library services in their institutions. The table reveals that the postgraduate students in universities in Osun State are quite satisfied with the

level of services offered by their university libraries. Analysis of data shows a grand mean of 3.00 which shows an appreciable level of satisfaction with available services.

Table 6: Summary of Respondents' Mean Score on the Challenges Faced by Postgraduate Students in using the library services.

S/N	Challenges Faced in Using Library Services	X	Std. Dev.	Remarks
1.	Inadequate electronic resources	2.62	1.07	A
2.	Erratic power supply	2.60	0.98	A
3.	Inadequate ICT facilities	2.57	1.01	A
4.	Unconducive study environment	2.47	1.03	D
5.	Inadequate physical facilities	2.45	0.91	D
6.	Poor quality of services	2.44	0.88	D
7.	Difficulty in accessing materials	2.43	0.97	D
8.	Poor attitude of staff	2.43	1.00	D
9.	Stringent rules and regulations	2.41	0.90	D
10.	Inadequate collection of information resources	2.40	0.97	D
11.	Insufficient access point	2.37	0.95	D
12.	Library timing	2.36	0.94	D
13.	Inappropriate location of library building	2.13	1.01	D
Grand Mean		2.43	0.98	

*A – Agree, D- Disagree

N = 300

Table 6 presents the challenges facing the postgraduate students in their use of library services. Analysis of data shows that the challenges facing the students in their use of library services are relatively small with a grand mean of 2.43. Out of the 13 items contained in the table, only three have a mean score above 2.50, and therefore considered to

be the major problems been encountered by the postgraduate students in their use of library services. They include inadequate electronic resources (2.65); erratic power supply (2.60); and inadequate ICT facilities (2.57).

Discussion of Findings

This study was carried out to examine the research challenges of postgraduate

students in universities in Osun State and how the university libraries through effective service delivery could contribute towards mitigating the challenges. Findings of the study reveals that, the postgraduate students under study are confronted with multifarious challenges such as lack of research funding; high cost of obtaining research materials; problem of data collection; problem of research topics; lack of access to research materials; lack of ICT knowledge of research methods; supervisor related problems among others. These challenges have continued to affect the quality of the students' research outputs and delay their timely graduation. For instance, when asked to state the expected year of their graduation in the distributed questionnaire, one of the respondents hilariously wrote 'only God knows when'. Even the National Universities Commission (NUC) has acknowledged this misnomer and is currently considering pegging a given calendar for PhD programmes to forestall the situation where students spend up to 10 to 15 years before obtaining doctoral degrees (Erunke, 2018). The finding of this study correlates with Duze (2010) and Ekpoh (2016) whose studies submit that, postgraduate students in Nigerian universities face too many challenges including lack of research equipment, financial problems, problem of data collection, supervisor problems, among others.

It is one thing for services and facilities to be available and another thing for them to be accessible, and yet another thing for them to be adequate. On the library services available and accessible

to the postgraduate students, the result shows that the libraries have quite a significant number of services for the postgraduate students. Conversely, the respondents reported that, services such as software training, document delivery, and provision of information on research grants and scholarships are not popular in their university libraries. This finding supports Campbell (2006) who opines that, the roles of university libraries should not be limited to providing books and space for students to study, but also provide services for facilitating research activities.

The researchers anticipated that, certain services could be available in the universities libraries without the knowledge of the postgraduate students. They therefore sought the librarians' opinions on the available facilities and services for the postgraduate students in their universities. Analysis of data reveals that, there are certain services offered by the libraries that the postgraduate students were not aware of. The students' responses on the available and accessible facilities/services for them in table 3 reveal that, services such as software training; document delivery; and provision of information on research grants and scholarships are not available in their libraries. This is a direct contrast of what table 4 unveils as the librarians responded that those services, including equipment borrowing and interlibrary loan were available in their libraries. This finding is in line with the call from Campbell (2006) to create adequate awareness on the available information services and products that could be beneficial to postgraduate students because most

times, they do not even know what to expect from the library.

On postgraduate students' satisfaction with library services in their institutions, the result reveals that the respondents were quite satisfied with the level of services offered by their university libraries. This finding is in line with Rasul and Singh (2010) whose study found that, postgraduate students in four Malaysian public universities acknowledged the role of university libraries in facilitating research and were satisfied with the services of their university libraries.

On the challenges facing the postgraduate students in their use of library services, analysis of data shows that the challenges are relatively small. The respondents identified three major challenges which are inadequate electronic resources, erratic power supply, and inadequate ICT facilities. One obvious thing is that, the university libraries of the 21st century are technology driven, hence, the inadequacy of ICT facilities, electronic resources and power supply is antagonistic to quality service delivery of modern university libraries. This finding is supported by Achimuju et al (2010) who reported that, tertiary institutions in Nigeria lacked ICT infrastructure, noting that the basic software for research were not available.

Conclusion

The general purpose of this study was to examine the role of university libraries in mitigating the research challenges of

postgraduate students in universities in Osun State. It is evident that, several challenges are confronting postgraduate students in their research activities. Interestingly, the universities' libraries are not lacking in their role of offering necessary facilities/services to aid research by postgraduate students, hence maintaining their place of pride as the corner stone of research within institutions of higher learning.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Research grants and scholarship should be made available for postgraduate students by governments, relevant agencies, philanthropists and other stakeholders.
2. Core research areas should be taught in departmental seminars/workshops to bridge the research knowledge gap of most postgraduate students.
3. Adequate funding should be provided for library facilities and operations. When sufficient fund is made available, electronic resources, ICT facilities and functional alternative power supply would be procured.
4. User education programmes should be improved upon and extended with the postgraduate students in mind. This will enhance their level of awareness of the library facilities and services that could aid their research activities.

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