

# Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour Among Undergraduate Students of Federal College of Education, Kano

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## Abstract

*The study aimed at revealing the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of Undergraduate Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) students in different schools of the Federal College of Education, Kano. The study strived to meet the following objectives: to determine the information needs of undergraduate bachelor of education students of the federal College of Kano, to establish approaches used by students of Federal College of Education in seeking information. Others objectives are to establish factors that affect information seeking efforts and suggest measures for improving information seeking and access by undergraduates of the Federal College of Education Kano. In so doing, the study used a descriptive research design. The questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. Students were randomly selected. Findings revealed that the majority of students use information resources for academic purpose, that is during examinations and when assignments are given. Most of the students browse the shelves in the library to access information, and they face problems while accessing information sources. Availability of materials, as well as their currency, has posed a problem to the user community. The study points to the importance of providing access to quality information resources and eliminates the bottlenecks that hamper easy access to quality information resources. This study helps design new methods and services for students so that their information needs can be fulfilled quickly. Further, findings suggest that library staff should assist students in meeting their information needs by conducting regular library orientation.*

**Keywords:** Information Seeking Behavior, Information Needs, Undergraduate Students

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## Introduction

Academic institutions are playing an imperative role in developing information literates and lifelong learners. Colleges and universities provide a basis for the intellectual and career development of students to make them informed citizens of the nation. The learning process is now increasingly based on the ability to discover and access knowledge and to apply it in problem-solving. Learning to learn, learning to convert into new knowledge and new knowledge into applications turn out to be more essential today than managing specific information.

The new paradigm gives priority to info literacy skill, that is, the ability to seek and find info, crystallise issues, formulate a testable hypothesis, evaluate evidence, and solve problems (Fourie, 2006). The information-seeking behaviour of students has been the subject of much debate in recent years as the mass availability of info on the web has led to widespread concerns about plagiarism in the over usage of web resources. Students, researchers and practitioners

wonder whether a fundamental shift in searching for and researching content has occurred among young people. This is a critical issue for higher education institution (Nicholas, 2009).

Information behaviour is a broad term covering all aspects of information seeking, including passive or undetermined information behaviour. Info- seeking behaviour is usually thought of as an active or conscious information behaviour info- searching behaviour describes the interactive element between a user and an info system (Fourie, 2007). Of the same view is Wilson (2000), who asserts that info-searching behaviour is as the active engagement in seeking information for purposes of answering a specific question. The seeker of information interacts with the system that helps in identifying and transferring that information. It is possible to compare the users' information need with learning, knowledge and research need where the purpose of info- seeking is to find relevant info about the fulfilment of a specific goal and info need.

Most times, students seek for info. As a result of the need to work assignments, prepare for class discussions, seminars or write their trial year research projects. In the course of this information- seeking and use students are faced with a series of influences ranging from personal to environmental. These issues are further compounded by the proliferation of information and communication technologies in higher education and the emergence of digital information resources.

Consequently, research in the area of info-seeking focuses on the factors which might influence the behaviour of students. These factors include information literacy, disciplinary area, the role of academics, and the impact of accessibility of various types of information resources (Al- Muomen, 2012).

## **Conceptual Definitions**

### **Information Need**

The concept of information-needs is the outcome of the combination of two terms," information and needs" in order to explore the individual need and seeking behaviour for academic activities; it is necessary to understand the concepts and significance of information needs" and " seeking behaviour". Information need is what an individual ought to have for his work, his research or for his recreation. Laloo and Buhril (2013) opined that information need is an impediment preventing an individual from moving forward in cognitive time and space. A person is often forced with a gap that must be bridged by asking questions, creating ideals and obtaining resources.

Miranda and Tarapanoff (2008) defined information needs as a state or process that begins when one perceives that there is a gap between the information and knowledge available to solve a problem and the real solution of the problem. Every individual has information needs, no matter how well versed the person is in his area of specialisation.

### **Information Seeking Behaviour**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century can be described as an era of the information revolution, as such information-seeking behaviour of individuals depend on what information they are looking for, the sources they consult, and also how they utilise the information they get. Wilson (2000) described information-seeking behaviour as the totality of human behaviour concerning sources

and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking and information use. He further described "Information seeking behaviour" as the more familiar field of investigation particularly concerned with the variety of methods people employ to discover information. It is also an aspect of scholarly work of most interest to academic libraries who strive to develop collections, services, and organisational structure that facilitate information seeking

### **Information**

The concept of "information" used in everyday English play a central role in contemporary society. According to Peter (2009), information is an assemblage of data that has been processed, has meaning, can be used to communicate. Information is usually recorded in a kind of media for purposes of dissemination; therefore, its need for every person must acquire information to make any substantial development in life. As such, people seek it in many different ways which characterise their attitude and behaviour towards information seeking. Information is a word that is used alongside beliefs, theories, interpretations, commands, opinions, questions, forecast, and the product of creative imagination (Hill, 2001).

Based on the above definitions, we deduce that information seeking is first subjected to a process and then transformed into something thing having a meaning and used for a particular purpose. Considering the nature and characteristics of the study group (students), the information in the context of this study will be conceived based on the definition provided by Eskola (1998) as something which students need during their studies when they construct meaning about the subjects in the process of learning.

### **Problem Statement**

Institutions of higher learning have always relied heavily on exploring information in order to toad new knowledge, answering questions and providing solutions to societal problems. The world has been experiencing information surge as there are different sources of information. Libraries are the principal resource centres in which students seek and access information having undergone the radical 21<sup>st</sup> information explosion with the student-oriented service taking over from library systems-based service. This study, therefore, sought to examine the information needs and information-seeking behaviour among undergraduate bachelor of Education students of the Federal College of Kano.

### **Objectives**

**The following objectives guided the study:**

1. To determine the information needs of bachelor of education students of the federal College of Kano
2. To establish approaches used by students Federal College of Education in seeking information
3. To establish factors that affect information seeking efforts and suggest measures for improving information seeking and access approaches by students of bachelor of education of the Federal College of Education Kano.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review for this study will be done under the following;

- Concepts and significance of Information needs and information-seeking behaviour.
- Information use by B.A.Ed (undergraduate) students.
- Types of Information resources provided to B.A Ed student.

### **Concepts and Significance of Needs and Seeking Behaviour**

Substantial literature about the study of information seeking behaviour is available. These studies help us to understand the diverse information requirements of users. Various information-seeking behavioural studies have been carried out based on students learning in higher education institutions. Research on information behaviour relates to the totality of human behaviour about sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking and information use.

Dervin (2005) asserts that information seeking is a constructing activity, with the protagonist involved in the "personal creation of sense. Besides, studying on information-seeking behaviour among college students, Callinan (2005) asserts that graduates need to develop information skills that will enable them to identify, evaluate, and use information effectively. According to the author, lack of awareness contributes to limited access and use of electronic library databases and consequently limited access to information. Callinan (2005) recommends that faculties should liaise with librarians in ensuring information collection development and literacy.

The recent higher education curriculum shifts towards a more learning-centred approach and an emphasis on independent learning mean that information skills are now far more fundamental to a students' survival and success (Varga-Atkins (2015). His work gives insight into this study as it helps to establish a comparative perspective of the learner-centred approach in as far as information-seeking behaviour is concerned.

According to Laloo (2002), it is envisaged that information need is a difficult concept to define. He further stressed that in order to understand the concept of information need, it is essential first to define the term "Need". According to him, a 'need' is what a person ought to have. It can also be defined as a circumstance under which something is lacking, therefore requiring some course of action; that which one cannot do without and that which is necessary for organisation's well-being.

Fiankor and Adam (2004) postulated that "information need arises whenever individuals find themselves in a situation requiring knowledge to deal with the situation as they see it. This means that the situation surrounding an individual in a way influences the type of information he needs and seeks.

Wilson (2000) described information-seeking behaviour as the totality of human behaviour with sources and channels of information. His description is used in the study to ascertain the involvement of undergraduate students of the Federal College of education in seeking information. The study examines how students are familiar with sources of information.

Kakai et al. (2004) defined information-seeking behaviour as an individual's way and manner of sourcing and gathering information for personal use, development or to improve knowledge.

The emphasis has shifted from user evaluation of library collections to studies of the information-seeking behaviour of individuals or groups that would lead to the design of appropriate information systems and services.

Zhang (2008) emphasised that a thorough understanding of the information-seeking behaviour of users is fundamental to the provision of relevant and adequate information services. Zhang informs this study in the sense that he recommends understanding of information-seeking behaviour of users. This study sought to examine information-seeking behaviour among undergraduate students of the Federal College of Education in an endeavour to establish their information needs.

### **Information use by Undergraduate Students of Federal College of Education, Kano**

Information use is one of the three core elements of information behaviour, along with information needs and information seeking (Wilson, 1999). His sentiments help in ascertaining how the undergraduate students of the Federal College of Education use their acquired information.

In the same vein, Choo (2002) views information to use as a dynamic, interactive social process of inquiry that may result in making meaning or decision making. Information use is exhibited in the way people make sense of things that matter. The need to acquire information implies there is the use of the same.

From this definition, therefore, information use is the factor that drives all other information behaviours since it represents the ultimate purpose for which information is needed and sought. Information is used for a different purpose by the Undergraduate students, which include the following:

**Research:** Research is finding what one does not know; Undergraduate students use the information to learn something or to gather evidence. They use research as organised learning, looking for specific things to add to their knowledge.

**Educational Needs:** Students use information for the educational purpose which prepares them for the future.

**Professional Needs:** Students use the information for personal or professional activities which helps them to be professionals in their fields, and to ensure competence. Undergraduate students, also use the information for personal purpose, which helps them to improve and develop themselves, build human capital and contribute to the realisation of their dreams and aspiration.

### **Information Resources Provided to the Undergraduate Students**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century can best be described as an era of information explosion due to the presence of information materials in different formats. Dempsey and Russell (1997) noted that the phrase "Information Resources" is often used to refer to books, images, bibliography records, Web pages, Journal articles or other types of resources that might be database, document supply centre, or libraries. Information resources have most times been classified under print and non-print resources according to their information-bearing formats.

**(A)Printed Resources:** These are resources with characters that are produced through mechanical and electronic means. They can further be sub-grouped into reference and non-reference resources:

**Reference Resources:** These are resources designed to be consulted for a specific piece of information examples dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, yearbooks, directories, atlases, and the like.

**Non-Reference Resources:** These are those detailed resources that are meant to be read. They include; textbooks, periodical, theses and the like.

**(B) Non-Printed Resources:** Information contained in these resources can only be accessed through the use of equipment. They include; audio resources, video resources, compact disks, electronic books, and Journals, and internet resources.

## **Methodology**

Descriptive survey method was adopted in the study. According to Nworgu (2006), a descriptive survey is aimed at collecting data on something and describing it systematically, the characteristic and facts about a given population. Random sampling technique was used in selecting participants. The technique was used in order to give the target population equal chances of being selected. The methods of collecting data for descriptive research can be employed singly or in various combinations depending on the research question at hand (Campbell, 1963). During this study, there was 2,405 Male, and 1,255 Female students pursuing Bachelor of Education Programme at Federal College of Education, Kano (Planning Unit of the College, 2019). The questionnaire was distributed personally among 500 students selected randomly from different departments, and its analysis revealed a response rate of 87.6%.

## **Data Analysis and Discussion**

The data collected were analysed statistically in order to have inferences. The analysis of the data provided the following results;

### **Gender**

The female respondents were more (55.5%) than the male respondents (44.5%) even though equal numbers of the questionnaire were distributed to them.

**Table 1: Information Needs of Undergraduate Students of FCE Kano**

<b>Information Needs</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Social Activities Need	385	77%
Health & Sanitation Need	129	26%
Recreation & Entertainment Needs	268	54%
Educational Information Need	425	85%
Political Information Need	118	24%
Economic Information Need	97	19%
Religious Information Need	188	38%



Table 1 above shows that 425 (85%) respondents needed information for education, while 385 (77%) respondents required information for their social activities. Additionally, 265 (54%) respondents needed information for their recreation and entertainment, 129 (26%) respondents needed information on health and sanitation. Also, 188 (38%) respondents need information on religious issues, 118 (24%) required politically-related information and 97 (19%) respondents needed information on the economy.

From the findings, education information need is the leading cause for students to search for information. A substantial number of students seek information related to social activities. This owes to the current digital world in which students use libraries resources to achieve social information through online platforms. Many of the students are less driven by their economic need to seek information concerning the same.

**Table 2: Purposes of Information Needs**

Purposes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Teaching	186	37%
Learning	320	64%
Assignments	290	58
Writing Project	229	46%
Preparing For Examination	450	90%
Practical's	97	19%
Seminar/Conferences	85	17%

From Table 2, 450 (90%) respondents agreed that they needed information in preparation for examinations. 320 (64%) respondents need information for learning purpose., 290 (58%) of the respondents indicated that they need the information to write assignments, while 229 (46%) of the respondents need information in writing their research projects. Additionally, 186 (37%) of the respondents need information in-class teaching, 97 (19%) needed it during practical's, and 85 (17%) of respondents needed information during seminars and conferences.

Findings imply that majority of students only searched for information during the exam period in preparation for it. The above establishments are in agreement with Fiankor and Adam (2004) who assert that an information seeker is driven by a pressing desire to find a solution to the prevailing problem.

**Table 3: Information Seeking Strategies by B.Ed. Students**

What are your primary sources of obtaining information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Online Public Access Catalogue	38	8%
Library Staff	229	49%
Friends/ Colleagues	186	37.2%
Multi-media	73	14%
Library Catalogue	97	19.4%
Search engines Google, ask, and the like.	86	17%
Group Discussions/Brainstorming	211	42.2%

Table 3, shows that 38 (7.6%) of the respondents indicated that the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) is the foremost tool they use in searching for information, (229) 49 % of the respondents searched for information with the aid of library staff. 73 (14%) of the respondents searched for information through multi-media. The library catalogue is used as a tool in searching for information by 97 respondents representing (19.4%), and 86 (17%) of the respondents searched for information through search engines. For example, 211 respondents representing (42.2%) obtained information through group discussions/ brainstorming sessions, while 320 (64%) of the respondents searched for information from the resource available in the library.

According to the findings, there are numerous strategies that students use to obtain information. However, online public access to information via catalogue proved to be the least preferred strategy as many pointed out to the difficulties they encounter while using the catalogue.

**Table 4: Information Resources Provided**

Information Resources provided	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Text Books	500	100%
Newspapers	431	86%
Encyclopedias	105	21%
Dictionaries	259	52%
Magazines	273	55%
E-Granary	75	15%
Academic Journals	123	25%
Online Databases	64	13%
Conference Reports	36	7.2%

Table 4 indicates that (500 (100%)) of the respondents certified that the College provides textbooks in the library for academic use. Four hundred thirty-one respondents representing 86% agreed that newspapers are supplied to the library daily. On the availability of Encyclopedia, 105 (21%) of the respondents agreed on its availability and currency. 259 (52%) of the respondents certified availability of dictionaries in the library, while 273 (55%) agreed on the provision of magazines in the library. Also, provision of E-granary recorded 75 (15%) of the respondents, and on the provision of adequate Journals, 123 (25%) agreed to that. 64 (13%) of the respondents certified on the provision of online databases, while 36 respondents representing (7.2%) attested to the availability of Conference proceedings.

The findings establish that libraries in the Federal College of Education have adequate resources that students tap information from.

**Table 5: Challenges Affecting Information Seeking Behavior of UG Students**

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Awareness of Information Resources	73	14%
The relevance of Information	58	12%
Contained		



Environmental Factors	86	17%
Ability to Access Information	320	64%
Social Factors	38	7.6%
Attitudes of Library Staff	211	42%

From Table 5, 320 (64%) of the respondents believed that their inability to use the information access tools (catalogue, classification marks) is what significantly affect their information-seeking behaviour. Finding also showed that the attitude of library staff towards library users constituted (42%) was 211 respondents indicated that library staff do not give them the required cooperation when seeking for information. 73 (14%) of the respondents indicated that they lack awareness of information resources available in the library, and this can be mainly due to the lack of regular and practical orientation to users. Environmental factors constituted (86) 17%, of the respondents who indicated that problems such as heat, irregular electricity supply, noise, and the like dramatically affects their information-seeking behaviour. In comparison, 58 (12%) of the respondents believed that resources available in the library are not so current in their respective course of study.

Based on the findings, majority of students are unable to access the information they need due to difficulties in using catalogues and classification marks. A substantial percentage revealed low services rendered by the librarians that discouraged them from accessing the library in search of the information they needed. Further, the findings indicate that the Federal colleges of Education in Kano libraries should be upgraded to provide a favourable environment to the users. The factors identify various factors affecting information-seeking behaviour of F.C.E., Kano; hence it met the third objectives of the study. In the same vein, it proposes several measures to be undertaken by the library staff to help reduce the challenges as mentioned earlier.

## Conclusion

Information use has gained importance in every sphere of human life, as such academicians, students, and researchers experience various information needs and consult different information sources based on availability and accessibility. The availability of sources in multiple formats is much affecting the information-seeking pattern and poses challenges to library administrators on their decision making, infrastructure, and information seeking. As revealed in the study, students were less satisfied with the library resources and services at Federal College of Education, Kano. Therefore there is a need for the library management to provide adequate and relevant resources and also improve on their service delivery in order to enhance the utilisation of their resources.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researcher recommended the following to the library management:

- Provision of library guide should be provided adequately on all shelves as this will go a long way to aid users on where a book can be found.
- Relevant and current materials should be provided and be made accessible to users.
- Digital library services should be provided with internet access and should be campus-wide.

- Orientation to users on how to make use of the library should be enhanced and should be at least every semester.
- Trained librarians should be placed at the Circulation, Reference, and Serials' Sections of the library, to provide users with adequate assistance.

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