# Information Needs and Use of Library Resources by Special Needs Students in Selected Government Schools in Kaduna State and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria

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*ABSTRACT: This study is on the information needs and use of library resources by special needs students in selected government schools in Kaduna State and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The survey technique was employed in the study. Five schools (i.e., Kaduna State Special Education School; Government Technical College, Malali, Kaduna; Alhudahuda College Zaria; Government Secondary School, Kwali and Government Secondary School, Kuje) were purposefully selected out of a total of seven. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire for two respondent groups (i.e., special needs students and teachers/librarians). A total of 5 teachers/librarians and 345 special needs students were selected for the study. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings of the study show that the special needs students have high needs for information on education, employment opportunities, health matter, and human rights. The major information resources in the libraries are books, magazines, newspapers, and few Braille materials. In general, special needs students have a moderate level of satisfaction with the resources in the libraries. The major issue identified by special needs students is insufficient information resources, especially in Braille. On the part of the teachers/librarians, inadequate funds for the acquisition of information resources and the employment of qualified librarians/teachers are found to be the major challenges faced by the libraries.*

## I. Introduction

Professional educators tend to classify people with special needs by the degree of their disability. The magnitude of disability differs from one group to another, ranging from blindness, deafness, crippled persons, and the mentally retarded, etc. Often, the terms of impairment, physically challenged, handicapped, disabled, and special needs persons are used interchangeably. Everyone is expected to conform to certain physical standard. Special needs students are either placed in special schools or classes or totally excluded from any educational opportunity on the ground that they are disabled. Nevertheless, everyone has certain abilities that can, with appropriate education and training, be developed to their maximum capability. No matter what the state of an individual's disability is, it is necessary to provide information services to such a person. The rights of the special needs people and the obligation the society has for them are the starting point of a study on their needs for information services. New development, ranging from research in innovative area such as

rehabilitation to changing attitudes in many general service fields, have combined to effect significant improvements in the lives of the special needs students.

The library in any establishment is a repository of information sources. Major functions of a library include the collection, organization, storage, and dissemination of information. A library is a resource center for students, teachers, researchers, and others. The involvement of libraries in provision of information services to individuals with special needs will afford them the opportunity of wider exposure. They will be able to learn more about themselves as well as other people.

## II. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To determine the information needs of the special needs students in the schools under study.
2. To identify the types of information resources available to the special needs students.
3. To ascertain the extent of usage of library materials by the special needs students.
4. To determine the level of satisfaction derived from the use of library resources.
5. To identify the issues that militate against the availability and accessibility to the information resources needed by the special needs students.
6. To ascertain how the identified issues could be resolved or minimized.

## III. Literature Review

Information has long been recognized as important resources for national development. Access, or lack of it, to information could have a significant effect on the success or failure of individuals in solving problems or enhancing their life opportunities. Information is an important resource for development and should be considered as a prerequisite for sound decision in all areas of activities, research and development, academic, planning, industrial development, and investment. The most critical commodity influencing changes in the urban situation is information. In the view of Ajibero (2000), "information value is frequently expressed as a derivation from communication utility" (p. 3).

Abdulahi (2000) observed that companies that are committed to customers are interested in what customers think and feel, and therefore, make conscious efforts to track down information about customers' needs, aspirations, behaviors, and preferences. He further stressed that marketing personnel relies more on data and information to get a better understanding of the marketing issues before deciding on a course of action.

Information is needed at every level of business activities. It is required for policy formulation, planning and implementation of policy objective. The increased and increasing importance of information in that was stressed by Bell (1976), "A post-industrial society is basically an information society. Exchange of information in terms of various kinds of data processing, record keeping, market research and so forth is the foundation of most economic changes" (p. 46).

Information is a vital resource for everyone. The library must find and select the most profitably useful information for its clients. Mbeki (1997) stressed that "The concept of a caring society is strengthened and deepened when we recognise that disabled people enjoy

the same rights as we do and that we have a responsibility towards the promotion of their quality of life".

In Nigeria, although there is constitutional provision for the education of the special needs persons, it is philanthropic organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private and missionary schools, rather than the National Library of Nigeria, that have faced the challenges of providing reading materials to the special needs persons.

Aina (2004) opined that

> Many studies in Africa have revealed that these groups of users are not catered for by almost all types of libraries. Only in those libraries that are specifically devoted to this group of users will one find most of the equipment and materials, like Braille, that the users require. (p. 6)

**IV. Research Methodology**

The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The population was made up of seven selected government schools in Kaduna State and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. Five schools (i.e., Kaduna State Special Education School, Technical College Malali Kaduna, Alhudahuda College Zaria, Government Secondary School Kwali and Government Secondary School Kuje) were purposefully selected out of a total of seven. The data were collected using a structured questionnaire from two respondent groups (i.e., users and teachers/librarians). A total of 5 teachers/librarians and 345 users were selected for the study. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

**V. Findings and Discussion**

The population of the study comprised of 7 government schools located at Kaduna State and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

| Name of School | Location | Years of Establishment | Category of Students | | Total Population | No. of Teacher/ Librarians |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **Deaf** | **Blind** | | |
| Kaduna state special education school | Kaduna | 1979 | 165 | | 165 | 1 |
| Technical college Malali-Kaduna | Kaduna | 1998 | 55 | | 55 | 1 |
| Alhudahuda College Zaria | Kaduna | 1998 | | 24 | 24 | 1 |
| G.G College Zonkwa | Kaduna | 1998 | | 15 | 15 | 1 |
| G.S.S Kwali | FCT Abuja | 1991 | | 16 | 16 | 1 |
| G.S.S Fadan Kaje | Kaduna | 1997 | | 20 | 20 | 1 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| G.S.S Kuje | FCT Abuja | 1991 | 85 | | 85 | 1 |
| **Total** | | | **305** | **85** | **380** | **7** |

*Table 1.* Government Schools in Kaduna State and FCT, Abuja

| Name of School | Location | Years of Establishment | Category of Students | | Total Population | No. of Teacher/ Librarians |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **Deaf** | **Blind** | | |
| Kaduna State Special Education School | Kaduna | 1979 | 165 | | 165 | 1 |
| Technical College Malali-Kaduna | Kaduna | 1998 | 55 | | 55 | 1 |
| Alhudahuda College Zaria | Kaduna | 1998 | | 24 | 24 | 1 |
| G.G College Kwali | FCT Abuja | 1991 | | 16 | 16 | 1 |
| G.S.S Kuje | FCT Abuja | 1991 | 85 | | 85 | 1 |
| **Total** | | | **305** | **40** | **380** | **5** |

*Table 2.* Sample Size of the Schools under Study

A total of five schools were selected to serve as the sample for the study. Three of the schools were drawn from Kaduna state while the remaining two were from FCT, Abuja, Nigeria.

| | Special Needs Students | | | Teachers/Librarians | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **School** | **No. of copies of questionnaire administered** | **No. retrieved** | **Percent (%)** | **No. of copies of questionnaire administered** | **Usable return** | **%** |
| Kaduna state special education, Kaduna | 165 | 152 | 48 | 1 | 1 | 100 |
| Technical College, Malali, Kaduna | 55 | 54 | 17 | 1 | 1 | 100 |
| Alhudahuda College, Zaria | 24 | 17 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 100 |
| GSS, Kwali | 16 | 11 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 100 |
| G.S.S Kuje | 85 | 83 | 26 | 1 | 1 | 100 |
| **Total** | **345** | **317** | **99** | **5** | **5** | **100** |

*Table 3.* User and Teacher/Librarian Response Rate

The total number of copies of the questionnaire administered was 350. Three hundred and forty five (345) copies were administered to the special needs students while five (5) copies were administered to teachers/librarians. Three hundred and seventeen (317) were collected

and found usable from the respondents. The five teachers/librarians all retuned their copies. Table 3 shows the response rate according to the schools. The high rate of response was recorded because the researcher personally visited the schools and administered the questionnaire.

| Class Level | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| JSS 1 | 46 | 14.5 |
| JSS 2 | 52 | 16.4 |
| JSS 3 | 67 | 21.1 |
| SS 1 | 49 | 15.4 |
| SS 2 | 49 | 15.4 |
| SS 3 | 59 | 17.0 |
| **Total** | **317** | **100** |

*Table 4.* Users' Class Level Distribution

Table 4 shows that 46 (14.5%) respondents were in JSS1, 52 (16.4%) in JSS2, 67 (21.1%) in JSS3, 49 (15.4%) in SS1 and SS2 respectively, and 59 (17.0%) in SS3.

| Type | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Blind | 30 | 9.50 |
| Deaf | 287 | 90.5 |
| **Total** | **317** | **100** |

*Table 5.* Type of Special Needs Students

Table 5 shows that the majority of the respondents were deaf students (287, 90.5%) while the remaining 30 (9.5%) were blind. This indicates that there were more deaf students than the blind that have responded to the questionnaire.

| Information Needs | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Educational Information Needs | 317 | 100 |
| Recreational Information Needs | 317 | 100 |
| Medical/Health Information Needs | 103 | 32.49 |
| Religion Information Needs | 18 | 5.68 |
| Need for Employment Information | 317 | 100 |
| Civil Information Needs | 317 | 100 |
| Socio-Cultural Information Needs | 18 | 5.68 |

*Table 6.* Information Needs of the Respondents

**Educational Information Needs:** Under this variable, other sub-variables were considered. They included scholarship opportunities, information about subjects taught in the schools, and career guidance. Table 6 shows that all the respondents (i.e., 317, 100%) indicated that they needed information about education. The same is true about scholarship opportunities. This probably could be attributed to the fact that as disabled students, information about educational assistance is regarded as very important. This finding could probably be corroborated with the observation of Haruna (1996), who maintained that educational programs have not been properly extended to the disabled citizens.

**Recreational Information Needs:** Under this variable, games and clubs were considered. Data collected indicated that many of the respondents 244 (76.97%) indicated that they

needed information about games while 73 (23.03%) indicated that they needed information about clubs. This could be attributed to the fact that most of the respondents were deaf, who can actively participate in most of the games in the schools.

**Medical/Health Information Needs:** Under this variable, 103 (32.49%) respondents indicated that they need information about general health matters. This indicates that less than a third of the respondents sought information on health matters. It could be that the school administration has not made the special needs students aware that they can acquire information about their health.

**Religions Information Needs:** Under this variable, only 18 (5.68%) respondents indicated that they need information about religious matters. It seems that the majority either already have religious information or do not need religious information.

**Need for Employment Information:** Under this variable, all the 317 (100%) respondents indicated that they need information about employment opportunities. Everyone needs to work and earn a living. The special needs students need information about job opportunities so that they could seek for employment after graduation.

**Civic Information Needs:** Under this variable, civic information and information about human rights were considered. 304 (95.89%) respondents need information about human rights whereas 13 (4.10%) indicated that they needed only civil information. This could be that the special needs students need information on human rights more than the civic information. Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998) stated in Section 8, Subsection 84 of the National Policy on Education that "all necessary facilities that would ensure easy access to education shall be provided for the special needs students".

**Socio-Cultural Information Needs:** Under this variable, only 18 respondents (5.7%) indicated that they need information about their culture.

| Available Information Resources | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Books | 258 | 81 |
| Journals | 15 | 5 |
| Magazines/Newspapers | 34 | 11 |
| Braille Materials/Machines | 10 | 3 |
| **Total** | **317** | **100** |

*Table 7*. Information Resources Available

Table 7 shows that 258 (81%) respondents indicated that books were available in their libraries. This high number could be attributed to the fact that books are the most common sources of information in the libraries and that most respondents were deaf, not blind.

Magazine/Newspapers attracted 34 (11%) responses while Braille materials/machines attracted the least number of responses 10 (3.1%). It may not be seen as a surprise because only two out of the five sampled schools have blind students with a total population of thirty (30).

From the perspective of teachers/librarians, those from the blind schools indicated that there were only a few Braille books and machines in their libraries. On the other hand, those from

the deaf schools indicated that their libraries possessed all the information resources listed except the Braille materials/machines, which they do not need since they have no blind students in their schools.

| Usage | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Everyday | 140 | 44.2 |
| Three times a week | 87 | 27.4 |
| Once a week | 25 | 7.9 |
| Others | 13 | 4.1 |
| Undecided | 52 | 16.4 |
| **Total** | **317** | **100** |

*Table 8.* Extent of Library Resources Usage

Table 8 shows that 140 (44.2%) respondents used their libraries everyday. This indicates that most of the respondents were fully aware of the importance of the libraries in helping them to pursue their academic activities. Those who used the library three times a week were 87 (27.4%) while 25 (7.9%) used the libraries once a week.

| Level of Satisfaction | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| High | 34 | 10.7 |
| Moderate | 177 | 55.8 |
| Low | 30 | 9.5 |
| Undecided | 76 | 24 |
| **Total** | **317** | **100** |

*Table 9.* Levels of Satisfaction Derived

Table 9 shows that 34 (10.7%) respondents indicated a high level of satisfaction. This could be as a result of availability of resources relevant to their requirements. On the other hand, 30 (9.5%) respondents indicated a low level of satisfaction. This figure corresponds with the total number of blind students who could not possibly use the conventional libraries. The majority (177, 55.8%) of the respondents indicated that they derived moderate level of satisfaction from the use of the library resources.

| Resources Accessibility | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| The materials are not openly accessible. | 188 | 59.3 |
| The attitude of the librarians is not encouraging. | 2 | 0.6 |
| No proper accommodation of using audio-visuals. | 85 | 26.8 |
| The library does not have proper sign posts. | 27 | 8.5 |
| Undecided. | 15 | 4.7 |
| **Total** | **317** | **100** |

*Table 10.* Resources Accessibility

Table 10 shows issues for the respondents to access library materials. Most prominently, 188 (59.3%) of the respondents indicated that library materials were not openly accessible. This collaborates the views of Dada (2003) that "it is however unfortunate that information and library facilities are not available and when available are not accessible to the children with special needs".

Another major issue was indicated by 85 (26.8%) respondents, that is, the libraries lacked a proper accommodation for using audio-visual materials.

The absence of proper sign posts, though relevant, was not considered as an important problem since only 27 (8.5%) respondents considered this as an issue.

## VI. Conclusion

The fundamental problem for the special needs students is the difficulty of obtaining the necessary information. In addition to educational information needs, they also have needs for recreation, medical/health, employment, and human rights.

The use of the resources by the special needs students, as the findings of the study show, was minimal and the level of satisfaction derived from using library materials was moderate.

The major issue identified by special needs students is insufficient information resources, especially in Braille. On the part of the teachers/librarians, inadequate funds for the acquisition of information resources and the employment of qualified librarians/teachers are found to be the major challenges faced by the libraries.

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