

ENHANCING LIBRARY USER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Introduction

Optimal use of library and information resources is the most important aspect of undergraduate students' academic performance. Undergraduates ought to know how to effectively use library material so that they can thrive in their academic work (Olajide and Adio, 2017). In some universities, particularly in developing nations such as Cross River State, Nigeria, students are typically confronted with huge hurdles in accessing, as well as, utilizing such resources. User education programs as pointed out by Okediji et al (2023), seek to bridge this gap by equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage library systems. User education programs, as defined by Stopar and Bartol (2019), offer crucial skills, such as searching for books, using online databases, and conducting research.

While indispensable, such programs are bedeviled by problems of unawareness, lack of resources, and poor implementation. This study investigates the challenges against the performance of user education programs and proposes implementable recommendations for better delivery. Through these issues, the study aims to advance students' ability to make maximum use of the library resources, thereby contributing to enhanced academic performance.

Objective of the study

Generally, the objective of the study is to investigate the influence of user education programmes on the use of library and information resources by undergraduate students of universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, this study sought to;

1. identify the challenges of impacting user education programme on undergraduate students for effective use of library and information resources in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria
2. Suggest strategies for enhancing library user education for the use of university library and information resources by undergraduate students of universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

1. What are the challenges of user education programme affecting undergraduate students' effective use of library and information resources in Cross River State, Nigeria?

2. What are the strategies for enhancing library user education for the use of library and information resources by undergraduate students of universities in Cross River State, Nigeria?

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design, which allowed the collection of quantitative data from a representative sample of the population using questionnaires. This design was chosen because it facilitated statistical analysis of trends in responses regarding the enhancing library user education: challenges and strategies for undergraduate students in Cross River State, Nigeria. The area of the study comprised two universities in Cross River State, University of Calabar (UNICAL) and University of Cross River State (UNICROSS), selected due to their functional libraries and ongoing user education programmes. The population consisted of 987 third-year undergraduate students registered with the libraries (563 from UNICAL and 424 from UNICROSS), chosen for their familiarity with library operations. A sample size of 285 students was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, with proportionate stratified random sampling applied to ensure representation from both universities, followed by simple random sampling for participant selection. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Data was collected through personal administration with the aid of research assistants, ensuring a high response rate. Analysis involved descriptive statistics (frequency counts, mean, and standard deviation) to address research questions. This systematic approach ensured robust data collection and analysis for reliable findings.

Research Question 1:

What are the challenges of user education programme affecting undergraduate students' effective use of library and information resources in Cross River State, Nigeria?

To answer this research question, data on the challenges of impacting user education programme on university undergraduate students for effective use of library and information resources in Cross River State were collected and analyzed as presented on Table 1

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Percentage Analysis on the challenges of impacting user education programme on university undergraduate students for effective use of library and information resources in Cross River State, Nigeria

S/No	Items	N	Mean	SD	Percentage score (%)	Decision
1	Lack of awareness about user education programme	285	2.78	0.95	59.33	Agree
2	Lack of interest in the programme by undergraduate students	285	2.87	0.99	62.33	Agree
3	Anxiety of asking for assistance from the library staff	285	2.88	1.02	62.67	Agree
4	Poor attitude of library staff towards the undergraduate students	285	2.76	0.93	58.67	Agree
5	Inadequate professional staff to assist the undergraduate students	285	2.68	0.90	56.00	Agree
6	Inappropriate provision of library user education course	285	2.98	1.08	66.00	Agree
7	Time allocated for user education is too short	285	2.84	0.97	61.33	Agree
8	Lack of good foundational base and knowledge of library and information	285	2.88	1.02	62.67	Agree

	resources						
9	Crowded and largeness of user education classes	285	2.68	0.93	56.00	Agree	
10	Epileptic power supply to power available electrical equipment like fans and air conditioners.	285	2.65	0.84	55.00	Agree	
11	Lack of modern technologies in delivering user education e.g. Public address system and projectors.	285	2.67	0.88	55.67	Agree	

Table 1 showed the challenges of user education programme affecting undergraduate students' effective use of library and information resources in Cross River State, Nigeria. As revealed on Table 1, the respondents agreed to all the 11 items (items 1- 11) with Mean values ranging from 2.65 – 2.98 which are above the benchmark of 2.50. This implied that all the items are considered the challenges of user education programme affecting undergraduate students' effective use of library and information resources in Cross River State, Nigeria

Research Question 2

What are the strategies for enhancing library user education for library use and information resources by undergraduate students of universities in Cross River State, Nigeria?

To answer this research question, data on the strategies for enhancing library user education for the use of library and information resources by undergraduate students of universities in Cross River State, Nigeria were collected and analyzed as presented on Table 2

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Percentage Analysis on the strategies for enhancing library user education for the use of library and information resources by undergraduate students of universities in Cross River State, Nigeria

S/No	Items	N	Mean	SD	Percentage Score (%)	Decision
12	Creation of awareness about the importance of the programme	285	2.78	0.96	59.33	Agree
13	User education should be made a compulsory course	285	2.82	0.98	60.67	Agree
14	Installation of workstations for CD-ROM searches in the library for Librarians to assist undergraduate students who fear to ask for help	285	2.86	1.00	62.00	Agree
15	Librarians should possess a great deal of public relations skills	285	2.76	0.94	58.67	Agree
16	More skilled and competent Librarians should be employed and provided with on the job training	285	2.75	0.90	58.33	Agree
17	Provision and availability of a well-planned manual or handbook on library user education and the library.	285	2.89	1.05	63.00	Agree
18	Time for library instruction should be extended in the school time table	285	2.78	0.96	59.33	Agree

19	Undergraduate students should be trained and educated on how to use the library and the relationship of the library to their studies	285	2.66	0.87	55.33	Agree
20	Construction and furnishing of lecture theatres with fans and air conditioners to ensure ventilation	285	2.59	0.83	53.00	Agree
21	Provision of an alternative source of power supply	285	2.88	1.03	62.67	Agree
22	Provision and use of ICTs in the delivery of user education	285	2.93	1.10	64.33	Agree

Table 2 showed the strategies for enhancing library user education for the use of library and information resources by undergraduate students of universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. As revealed on table 2, the respondents agreed to all the items (items 12 -22) with Mean values above 2.50. This implied that all the items are considered the strategies for enhancing library user education for the use of library and information resources by undergraduate students of universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Distribution of Respondents

S/No	Institution	Population
1.	University of Calabar	563
2.	University of Cross River State	424
	TOTAL	987

The total number of respondents for this study was 987 three hundred level (300level) undergraduate students who were registered with the libraries at University of Calabar and University of Cross River State. According to the distribution, 563 students were from University of Calabar and 424 were from University of Cross River State.

Results and Discussion

The first finding of the study revealed the challenges of user education programme affecting undergraduate students' effective use of library and information resources in Cross River State, Nigeria to include: lack of awareness about user education programme (59.33%) lack of interest in the programme by undergraduate students (62.33%); anxiety of asking for assistance from the library staff (62.67%); poor attitude of library staff towards the undergraduate students (58.67%); inadequate professional staff to assist the undergraduate students (56.00%) and inappropriate provision of library user education course (66.00%). Other are: the time allocated for user education is too short (61.33%); lack of a good foundational base and knowledge of library resources and information services (62.67%); crowded and largeness of user education classes (56.00%); epileptic power supply to power available electrical equipment like fans and air conditioners (55.00%) and lack of modern technologies in delivering user education e.g. Public address system and projectors (55.67%). This finding corroborate with that of Gbuushi and Ubwa (2018) who reported that, over population, lack of instructional materials, poor monitoring of staff; inadequate qualified staff, limited time allocation, inadequate accommodation and space are the problems that bedevilled the effectiveness of user education programme. The finding also corroborate with that of Njoku (2016) who reported poor network/internet connectivity to access electronic databases, and mostly outdated and non-current library collections as some of the major

challenges of using the university library by the students. Also in corroboration with this finding is that of Abah, Chorun and Mbatsoron (2016) who reported inadequate funds to finance the programme, shortage of library materials, lack of professionals to handle the programme, lack of follow up instructions, inadequate ICT facilities for the programme as the identified as challenges of user education. Similarly, Uwakwe, Oyeneke and Njoku (2016) reported that over population, lack of infrastructure, inadequate and unqualified staff, lack of instructional materials, limited time allocated to the programme, un-conducive environment and inadequate space are the problems that militate against effective user education. This finding as observed implied that there are a plethora of challenges that affect user education programmes and subsequently, students' use of information resources in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Lastly, the findings of the study revealed the strategies for enhancing library user education for the use of library and information resources by undergraduate students of universities in Cross River State, Nigeria to include: creation of awareness about the importance of the programme (59.33%); user education should be made a compulsory course (60.67%); installation of workstations for CD-ROM searches in the library for Librarians to assist undergraduate students who fear (anxiety) to ask for help (62.00%); librarians should possess a great deal of public relations skills (58.67%); more skilled and competent Librarians should be employed and provided with on the job training (58.33%); provision and availability of a well-planned manual or handbook on library user education and the library (63.00%); time for library instruction should be extended in the school time table (59.33%); undergraduate students should be trained and educated on how to use the library and the relationship of the library to their studies (55.33%); construction and furnishing of lectures theatres with fans and air conditioners to ensure ventilation (53.00%); provision of an alternative source of power supply (62.67%); and provision and use of ICTs in the delivery of user education (64.33%).

This finding is in tandem with that of Njoku (2016) who investigated the influence of library environment and user education on undergraduates' use of the University central library at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and recommended that, user education should be given more priority in the university library in order to sensitise more students and also, draw their attention to the available resources and services that can be of immense benefit to them in the course of their studies. Also in corroboration with this finding is that of Uwakwe, Oyeneke and Njoku (2016) and Bem-Bura (2015) who recommended employment of adequate and qualified Librarians to teach user education programme and also that more time should be allocated to the teaching of library user education. Similarly, Sharma (2019), recommended that library should increase the number of employees' expert and skilful Librarians who can provide user education programmes and also, make user education training compulsory for all faculties

Conclusion

This study examined the challenges and strategies for enhancing library user education programs among undergraduate students in Cross River State, Nigeria. The findings revealed significant barriers, including lack of awareness, inadequate staffing, poor infrastructure, and insufficient integration of modern technologies, which collectively hinder students' effective use of library resources. These challenges align with broader issues identified in similar developing contexts, underscoring the urgent need for systemic improvements. The study also highlighted actionable strategies, such as making user education compulsory, extending instructional time, improving staff training, and leveraging ICT tools, which received strong consensus from respondents. By addressing these gaps, universities can significantly enhance

students' information literacy and academic performance, ensuring that library resources are utilized to their full potential.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Make user education a mandatory course for all undergraduate students to ensure universal participation and awareness.
2. Allocate more time in the academic timetable for library orientation and hands-on training sessions.
3. Provide regular professional development programs for librarians to improve their public relations and instructional skills.
4. Recruit additional qualified staff and offer incentives to retain skilled personnel.
5. Invest in modern ICT tools (e.g., projectors, e-learning platforms) to enhance the delivery of user education.
6. Ensure reliable power supply through alternative energy sources (e.g., solar panels, generators) to mitigate disruptions.
7. Develop interactive, student-friendly manuals or handbooks to guide library use independently.
8. Collaborate with faculty to integrate library resource utilization into coursework and research projects.

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