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AVAILABILITY AND EXTENT OF USE OF INFORMATION BY LEGAL PRACTITIONERS IN ANAMBRA STATE JUDICIARY LIBRARY

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ABSTACT

This research examined the availability and the extent of use of information by legal practitioners in Anambra state Judiciary library. Four research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study comprised of 121 legal practitioners in Anambra state judiciary library. No sampling technique was used. The main instruments for data collection were a checklist and questionnaire. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean scores. The study found that the availability of information resources by legal practitioners in Anambra state judiciary library was high such as Computer, CD ROMS, TV, Slides, Microfiche reader and many others. The extent of information use by legal practitioners in Anambra state judiciary Awka was high. The problems that affect legal practitioners in information availability and use in Anambra state judiciary are inadequate fund. The solution to the problems that affect legal practitioners in information availability and use in Anambra state judiciary were adequate funding to the libraries. The study concludes that the judiciary library is supposed to provide adequate legal information resources readily available to the legal practitioners for their use. The study

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recommended that adequate funds should be made available for the acquisition of information resource for legal practitioners in the judiciary library.

Keywords: Availability of Information, Extent of Use of information, Legal Practitioners, Judiciary Library

Introduction

Legal practitioners are engaged in legal practice which is the pivot on which they are recognize as solicitors and advocates of the Supreme Courts of Nigeria. A legal practitioner is a person learned in the law as an attorney, counsel or solicitor, a person licensed to practice law. Working as a lawyer represents the practical application of legal theory and knowledge to solve real problems or to advance the interests of those who retain. Lawyers for legal services. The role of a lawyer varies significantly across legal jurisdictions and therefore can be treated here in only the most general terms (Blacks Law Dictionary, 2014). Generally, as noted by Fowler (2017), legal practitioners work primarily in the legal culture, with its extensive rules and procedures requiring the right kind of legal information. Legal practitioners operate in information intensive environment in everything they do, whether providing legal advice, representing a client in court, or drafting a legal document requires information (Otike & Mathews, 2020).

In the library and information science resources "availability" means that an information resource is physically present and ready for a user to access and use. It is a key component of information service distinct from accessible which refers to weather a user can identify and use the resources. Availability of information resources is able to be obtain and used. These information resources could be in form of books, periodicals, abstracts. Indexes, reference materials, audio-visuals information technologies and database. Uhegbu (2013) affirmed that without available of information, accessibility will be difficult and it utilization impaired. Availability of relevant legal information resources affects how frequency legal practitioners use them. Harana and Mabawonku (2013) affirmed that legal practitioners depend very much on relevant information for success in their profession.

Use is the process of how people find, access, evaluate and utilize information to meet their needs.s To use is to apply or implement a tool, resources or material. To use is to adopt a process, a thing or an object towards getting benefit from it. In the library perspective relating to information, according to Adebanwo (2014) information use is defined as the practical and maximum use of information resources and services identified to be suitable for the purpose of reading, education or occupational. Information use can be achieved if there is adequate access to information resources. Chidaka, (2017)

observed that information use leads to liberation from ignorance. Hence, legal practitioner's ignorance from utilization can make them become unaware of the resources in the judiciary library system. In this view, the judiciary libraries are expected to ensure that the legal practitioners have good access and make good use of the legal information sources and services available in the judiciary library that will solve and promote their quest and information needs. The judiciary library staff is supposed to be skilled in providing this access and usage to the legal information by the legal practitioners in the judiciary library.

The judiciary library system housed the human recorded knowledge in the form of law sources in its diverse forms (print and electronic). The judiciary library, as explained by Deakin University Australia (2014), provides quality legal information sources through relevant law books, journals and periodicals for legal practitioners, scholars, researchers, law teachers and law students. The library provides the operational services, promote information services and implement libraries' mission. Judiciary libraries provide access to materials on legal subjects and other law related courses in both print and electronic formats, and draw users' attention to the law information sources available around the globe through library awareness. In recent past, judiciary libraries were seen as rooms where traditional law sources, (print law texts, journals, and newspapers) were housed, and the staff that manually provide working spaces for users who consult the law librarians, and manually locate law texts on shelves with card catalogue and subject index notifies (Windsor & Friedman, 2020). At present in the Anambra State Judiciary Library, it is unclear if these legal practitioner's information needs are provided to them through equitable access to the information. There is also uncertainty if these legal practitioners use this information in their services to the state and their functions. It is in this view that this research is carried out.

Statement of the Problem

Conventionally, judiciary libraries are expected to play a two-dimensional role of supporting legal information retrieval and research. As part of their mandate, they are to improve on their function so as to enable the legal practitioner to be effective in their service delivery using various technologies and social media tools to promote resource utilization. However, most of these judiciary libraries may not have sufficient information resources in the library. The effective use of these resource by the legal practitioners depends on the extent of the availability in the law library.

If judiciary library does not implement new means in their provision of library service to these legal practitioners, it could affect the legal practitioners' functions and they might be handicapped and might not see the need to visit the library. Based on these problems, this study is set to investigate the availability and the extent use of information by legal

practitioners in Anambra state judiciary library.

Research Questions

1 What are the legal information resources available to legal practitioners in Anambra state judiciary library?

2. What are the extent of information use by legal practitioners in Anambra State Judiciary Library?

3. What are the problems that affect the legal practitioner's availability of legal information resources and use in Anambra state judiciary library?

4. What are the solutions to the problems encountered by legal practitioners in the availability of legal information resources and use of information in Anambra state judiciary library?

Methods

A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The reason for choosing descriptive survey research design is because it is used to study very large population and involves collecting data on a representative population on which generalization is made, with the intent of gathering data about a target population from a sample and generalizing the findings obtained from the sample population. Nworgu (2015) asserts that descriptive survey research design is simple in its way of gathering information and seeking opinion of individuals.

The area of the study is Anambra state judiciary library. It is a special library that is domiciled by management structure in Anambra state judiciary arm of government. The population of the study comprised the legal practitioners in Anambra State Judiciary Library. The population of the legal practitioners from the records of the Anambra state judiciary library is 121 (Anambra State Judiciary Library Records, 2023. The population of 121 is sizeable and manageable. In this regard, the researcher used the entire population as its sample. Therefore, the need to sample was necessary.

The main instrument used for collecting data for this study is questionnaire and observational checklist. The instrument is titled "AEUILPA" and it is designed to elicit information on the research questions. The observation checklist was used to collect data on the availability of legal information resources. while the questionnaire was designed using four-point rating scale of Availably and Non availably for research question 1. Very High Extent, High Extent, Very Low Extent and Low Extent for research question 2 and SA- Strongly Agree, A- Agree, D- Disagree, SD- Strongly Disagree for research questions 3 and 4.

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PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Research Question 1: Observational checklist on legal information resources available to legal practitioners in Anambra State Judiciary library?

Table 1: Observational checklist on legal information resources available to legal practitioners in Anambra state judiciary
(Available, Not Available)

S/NO	**legal information resources available to legal practitioners**	Available	Not Availabl
1	Computer		X
2	CD ROMS		x
3	TV		x
4	Radio		X
5	Microfiche reader		X
6	Slides	Available	x
7	Law firms		X
8	Law encyclopedias	Available	
9	Legal picture books	Available	
10	Law books	Available	
11	Law library catalogs	Available	
12	Legal newspaper	Available	
13	Law databases	Available	
14	Law journals	Available	
	Law manuscripts	Available	
	Legal maps	Available	
	Law newspaper	Available	
	Law magazines	Available	
	Electronic reference titles in law	Available	
	Law e-books	Available	

The table 1 above, the legal information resources available were slides, law encyclopedias, legal picture books, law books, law library catalogs, legal newspapers, law databases, law journals, law manuscripts, law news magazines, electronic reference titles in law and law e-books. However, Legal information resources such as computers, CD-ROMS, TV, Radio, Microfiche reader, law firms and legal maps were not available in Anambra state judiciary library, Awka. Therefore, it implies that majority of the legal information resources were available in Anambra state judiciary library, Awka.

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Research Question 2: What is the extent of information use by legal practitioners Anambra sate Judiciary library?

Table 2: Mean response of the extent of information use by legal practitioners in Anambra state judiciary library**.**

(High extent HE, Very high extent VHE, Low extent HE, Very low extent VLE)

S/NO	**Extent of information use by legal practitioners**	Mean	Decision
1	International legal information (involves relations among nations with the legal framework as provided by United Nations)	2.60	High extent
2	Criminal and constitutional legal information	3.12	High extent
3	Private legal information (pertains to relationships between citizen)	2.94	High extent
4	Decrees	3.21	High extent
5	Legal matters concerning rights of citizens	2.89	High extent
6	Inheritance legal information	2.61	High extent
7	Family legal information	2.81	High extent
8	Business legal information	2.92	High extent
9	Tort legal information	2.84	High extent
10	Crime and safety	2.90	High extent
11	Policies and government	2.56	High extent
12	Statues	2.82	High extent
	Cluster mean	2.84	**High extent**

The table 2 above shows that the respondents agreed with a mean score above 2.50. that extent of information use by legal practitioners in Anambra state judiciary library was high on international legal information, criminal and constitutional legal information, private legal information, decrees, legal matters concerning rights of citizens, inheritance legal information, family legal information business legal information, tort legal information, crime and safety, policies and government and statues.

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Research Question 3: What are the problems that affect the legal practitioner's availability of information resources and use in Anambra State Judiciary library?
Keys: Agree, Disagree, Strongly agree, Strongly Disagree
Table 3: Mean responses on problems that affect the legal practitioners' availability of information resources and use in Anambra State judiciary library.

S/N	Problems that affect the legal practitioners availability of information resources and use	Mean	Decision
1	Inadequate fund to the Judiciary library	2.96	Agreed
2	Insufficiency of online skills of legal practitioners	3.12	Agreed
3	Poor librarians' attitude in providing access to information needs of legal practitioners	2.84	Agreed
4	Erratic power supply to access information needs online	3.01	Agreed
5	None availability of data for legal practitioners to access information	2.91	Agreed
6	Low information literacy skills of legal practitioners	3.21	Agreed
7	Lack of technical support to manage the information needs of legal practitioners	2.96	Agreed
8	Poor service network for legal practitioners to access information	3.12	Agreed
9	Apathy of legal practitioners on use of ICT to seek information	2.84	Agreed
10	Poor ICT policy in Judiciary library	3.01	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	2.92	**Agreed**

Table 3 above shows that the problems that affect legal practitioners in information availability and utilization in Anambra State Judiciary as the respondents agreed on all the items on the tables with mean score above 2.50 was inadequate fund to the judiciary library, insufficiency of online skills of legal practitioners, poor librarians attitude in providing access to information needs of legal practitioners , erratic power supply to access information needs online, none availability of data for legal practitioners to access information, low information literacy skills of legal practitioners and many others.

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Research Question 4: What are the solutions to the problems encountered by legal practitioners in their availability of information resources and use in Anambra state Judiciary library?

Keys: Agree, Disagree, Strongly agree, Strongly Disagree

Table 4: Mean responses on the solution to the problem that affect the legal practitioners in availability information resources and use in Anambra state judiciary library.

S/N	Solution to the problem that affect the legal practitioners in their availability and use	Mean	Decision
1	Adequate funding in libraries	3.16	Agreed
2	Sufficiency of online skills of legal practitioners	3.02	Agreed
3	Positive attitude in providing access to information needs of legal practitioners	2.94	Agreed
4	Stable power supply to access information needs online	3.11	Agreed
5	Availability of data for legal practitioners to access information	2.98	Agreed
6	High information literacy skills of legal practitioners	3.14	Agreed
7	Provision of technical support to manage the information needs of legal practitioners	2.96	Agreed
8	An improved service network for legal practitioners to access information	3.12	Agreed
9	High interest of legal practitioners on use of ICT to seek information	3.14	Agreed
10	Improved ICT policy in Judiciary library	3.08	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	3.09	Agreed

The table 4 above shows that the solution to the problems that affect legal practitioners in information availability and utilization in Anambra state judiciary is adequate funding to the libraries, sufficiency of online skills of legal practitioners, positive librarians attitude in providing available to information needs of legal practitioners, improving power supply to access information needs online ,availability of data for legal practitioners to access information, improved service network for legal practitioners and many others.

Discussion of findings

From the result of the findings, the legal information resources available to legal practitioners in Anambra state judiciary is available on all the items on the table such as international legal information and many others. The data showed that the extent of information use by legal practitioners in Anambra State Judiciary Library was high. This result was in line with the study of Tuhumwire and Okello-Obura (2020) who stated that legal practitioner in judiciary library uses more of international legal information and criminal and constitutional legal information as these are some of the major cases that they

present in court and as such will need to make use of adequate information. In support of the result, Okello-Obura (2018) the legal practitioner also makes use of inheritance legal information, family legal information and business legal information as these are regular cases that always come up in courts and the legal practitioner will need to make adequate use of the information from these sources. The show that the problems that affect legal practitioners in their information availability and utilization in Anambra State Judiciary were inadequate fund to the judiciary library. This result was in line with the study of Windsor and Friedmann (2020) who stated that legal practitioner in judiciary library have a number of issues that affects their availability and use of legal information resources which is majorly centered on poor funding and lack of adequate legal information resources in the library. The data show that the solution to the problems that affect legal practitioners in their information availability and utilization in Anambra state judiciary is adequate funding to the libraries. This result was in line with the study of Bharat Makri (2018) who stated that legal practitioner in judiciary library will have easy access to legal information resources when there is sufficient data and good network in the judiciary library. This will encourage them to use the library to seek their information needs.

Conclusion

In line with the summary of major findings of this research study, is that Judiciary library are supposed to provide adequate legal information resources, readily available to the legal practitioner for their use. the issues with poor available and use of legal information resources by the legal practitioner is due to the poor state of the library and low funding that have affected their provision of legal information resources for the legal practitioner.

Recommendations

i. Information and communication infrastructure should be given urgent attention as appropriate to ensure that legal practitioners are provided with information at the right time and are able to fully utilize the information resource online.

ii. Well-meaning legal gurus and personalities and non-government legal agencies should also participate in equipping the judiciary library with current and adequate legal information materials.

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