ACCESSIBILITY AND USE OF LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES OF THE MEDICAL LIBRARY, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA.

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the findings of a survey *study undertaken* to *ascertain access and use of library resources and services by customers of the Medical Library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaha. It reveals the type of information resources preferred by the customers, resources, age distribution, sources facilitating search, customers' perception of the different types of resources and the frequency to which the resources were put to use. Data gathered reveal that customers are highly satisfied with the services available because of accessibility, availability and relevance of the resources to the programmes offered by the faculty- However, customers solicit extension of working hours, expansion of the current sitting capacities in all branches of the Medical libraries to accommodate more customers and the completion of the library project at the clinical section of the medical school.*

INTRODUCTION

The utmost aim of any type of library is the provision of adequate information resources to support teaching, learning and research. The collection of a library at all times should be rich in quality and quantity. The medical profession is a field in which new discoveries are made continually, it is also influenced by changing technological advancement and development. *Popoola (2008) affirmed* that information resources and services available in institutional information systems must be capable and sufficient in supporting research activities by both the students and faculty members. Therefore, libraries responsible for serving this sector and professionals must be adequately equipped with the relevant technologies that can ensure availability and use of information resources to meet the needs of its patrons. To play this role effectively and efficiently, there must be adequate provision of fund for the acquisition of resources. The growth of innovation and research reporting in the medical profession is becoming more advanced with highly sophisticated technologies. The patrons of the library realize the great role the library can play in the provision of resources and services that can facilitate access and use of these *innovations and research findings to* enable them contribute to educational and research activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Accessibility and use of library resources is an important recurring theme in several literatures. According to Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), resources might be available in the library and identified to be very relevant to one's profession, but customers might not have access to

them. This implies that availability does not readily mean accessibility, because having direct access to the resource might be hindered by one reason or the other.

Olowu (2004) affirmed that lack of accessibility might be caused by natural or artificial barriers. Iyoro (2004) opined that serial publications play a significant role in the promotion of educational excellence and contribution to knowledge acquisition when available and accessible.

Due to the sensitivity of the medical profession, accreditation exercise is always conducted on a regular basis by different professional bodies that make up the medical profession. As a result of this, the library situated within it cannot be left to lag behind. The library requires current and up to date information resources in print and electronic formats. Ugah (2008) reporting on library usage and patronage revealed that users depend on capability to access and use resources.

Background of Medical Library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

The Medical Library (ABUTH) Zaria was established in 1967 to serve staff, faculty members, research staff and students. The library has three branches, with the main library situated at the old site of the teaching hospital at Tudun wada, the pre-clinical library on the main campus of the university and another branch at the permanent site of the teaching hospital at Shika. The pre-clinical branch is meant to serve users who are within the first three years of study at the medical college. The library has a total collection of 41,590 books and 3,275 journals titles.

Objectives of the study

1. To ascertain the accessibility and use of library resources by staff and students of the faculty.
2. To determine how the patrons perceive the library's resources.
3. To examine the satisfactory levels derive by patrons from the use of the library resources.
4. To identify the preferred sources of information by patrons of the numerous arms of the medical libraries.

METHODOLOGY

The population surveyed for the study comprise of staff and students of the Faculty of Medicine, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. Data on patronage were those of daily, weekly and monthly statistics documented by the library's customer service unit for a period of one year. A total of 11,740 clients use the library per annum, 33 persons visit the library per day, while on weekly basis, 226 use the library.

The instrument for additional data collection was a structured questionnaire divided into two parts; the first part dealt with the respondents' bio-data which included the following age, sex, level, rank and departments; while the second part of the questionnaire centred on library resources. Fifteen (15) item close ended questions were designed to be answered by respondents.

The sampling technique used for the study was the simple random sampling technique whereby every library patron had equal opportunity of being chosen as a population sample. A total of 800 respondents were chosen, 500 at the pre-clinical stage, and there are four departments at this stage namely: human anatomy, human physiology, community medicine and nursing services. 300 respondents were chosen at the clinical level of the medical school of which 200 were students while 100 respondents were lecturers. This represents the minimum users who visit the library on monthly basis. Caution was maintained to ensure that a reader was not given the questionnaire twice to avoid duplication.

Data were collected through random distribution of questionnaire to patrons at both the pre-clinical and clinical stages of the medical school. Out of the 800 questionnaire given out, a total of 669 were returned of which 583 were properly filled. Upon analysis using percentage, the response rate was 72.8%.

Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data using the statistical package for social sciences. The analysis included the use of frequencies, tables, bar charts and percentages.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic information on the respondents revealed that 408 (69.9%) were males while 175 (30%) respondents were females. The age distribution is as follows: 18 – 25 years (68.9%); 26 – 33 years (17.3%) and 34 – 41 years (13.7%). The respondents were asked of their familiarity with the use of computer. 500 (85.7%) of the respondents expressed their familiarity while the remaining 83 (14.2%) did not respond on the state of their knowledge on the use of computer

Table Ia – Age distribution

Age	Frequency	Percentage %
18 – 25	402	69
26 – 33	101	17.32
34 – 41	80	14

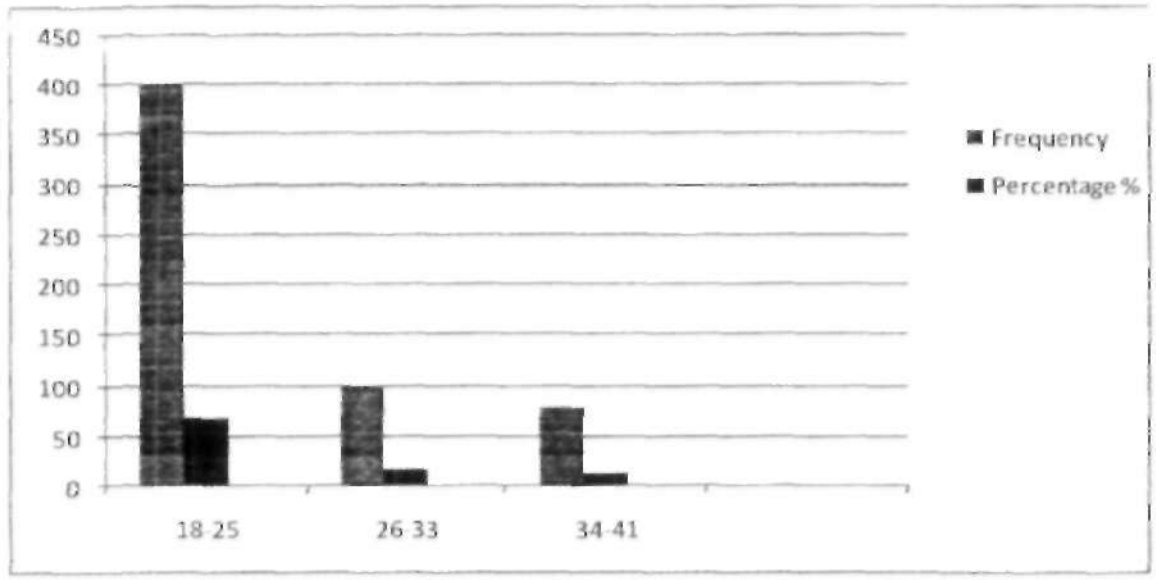


Fig. 1a – Age distribution

Table 1b – Gender distribution

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	408	70
Female	175	30

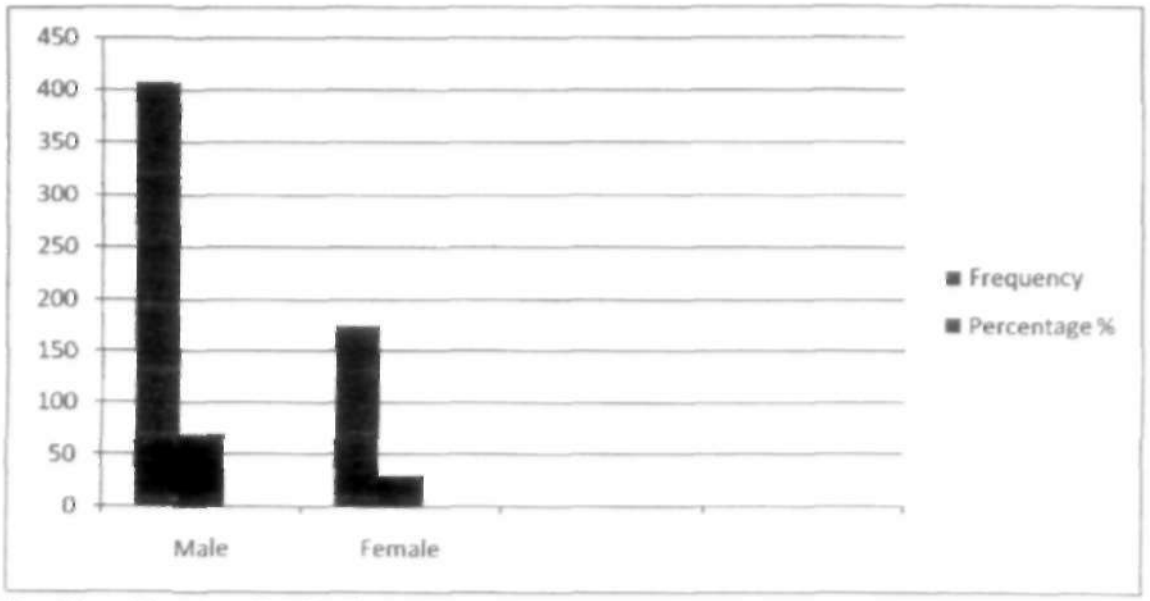


Fig. 1b – Gender distribution

Use of library resources

Respondents were required to indicate their reasons for utilizing the library. As shown in table 2, 408 representing 70% of the total population sampled indicated they utilize the library for academic purposes, 58 (10%) use the library for research purposes while 70 (12%) registered with the library to enable them have the opportunity of borrowing resource materials from the library. 40 respondents (8%) of the entire population indicated that they utilize the library whenever they want to relax, this response is evident at the clinical stage of the medical school. The schedule of work at this stage is very cumbersome and any opportunity opened to them to have some rest is quickly grabbed. Varied reasons were shown by the patrons as their justification for using the library. Tsafe (2004) conducted a study on students' use of Usman Danfodiyo University Library and it is evident from the study that the justification for the use of the library is multivarious. Weber and Flatley (2008) clearly indicated that students visualize the library as an important place for studying, meeting and group projects and for other reasons. It shows that a minimum of 11,740 use the library per annum (i.e. 33 per day), 226 per week and 978 per month.

Table 2: Use of library resources
N 800 (583)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Academic purposes	408	70
Research work	58	10
Borrowing Resource materials	70	12
Others	40	8

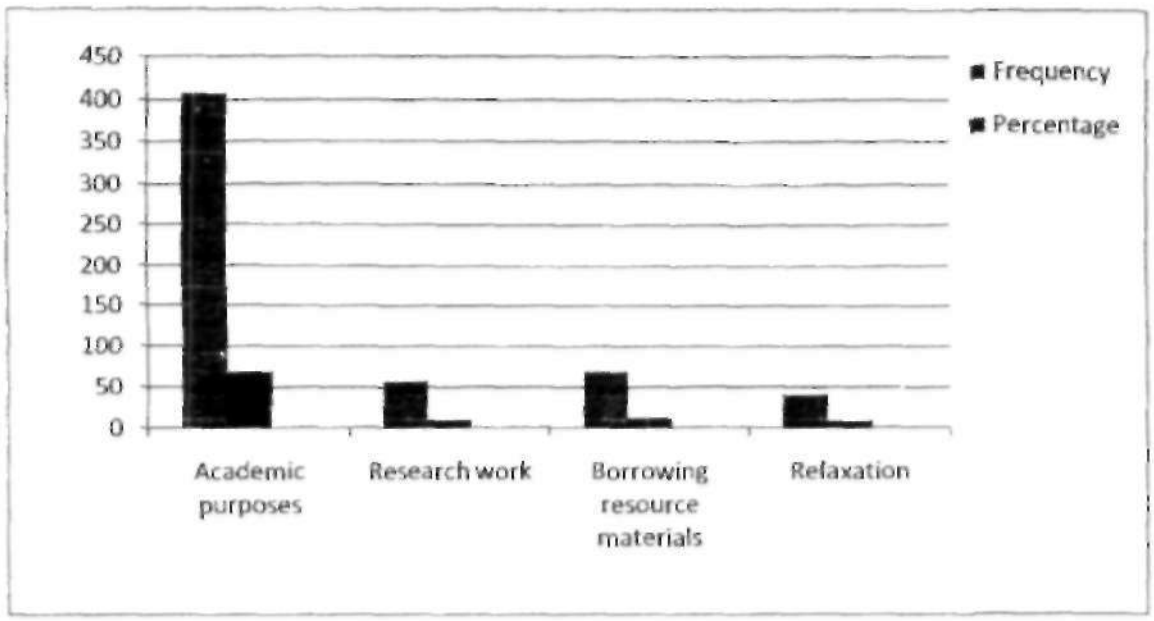


Fig. 2 – Usage of resources.

The study revealed that those who responded found the library resources very vital for their academic pursuit. It is also revealed from the study that patrons have access to the library's resources, it was only at the clinical stage that displeasure was shown due to the fact that the sitting capacity in the library is very inadequate vis-a-vis the population of the patron community. This is due to the fact that there is no befitting library structure at the permanent site of the Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, Shika, Zaria. In the absence of this, the study agrees with the work of Ajayi and Adetayo (2005) who reported that the library is seat for revolution within the city because that is where ideas are generated and analyzed especially when they are fundamental. This is due to the fact that there is freedom to challenge ideas and opinions which give the society the ability to adapt them on the long run.

Search for information

The respondents were required to indicate how they get to know about library resources. Their responses are shown in Table III. The result indicated that 263 (45%) got required information through personal search; 99 (17%) were informed of library resources through reference services provided in the library; 87 (15%) through lecturers while 76 (13%) indicated that library instruction really assisted them in their searches for resources and finally 58 respondents (10%) of the population sample said assistance from friends and course mates was of immense help in their search for information. This contradicts the findings of the studies conducted by OCLC (2005) in Australia, Canada, India and United States of America whereby 61% of the respondents identified friends as their main choice in identifying electronic/ information sources while less than 15% of respondents indicated that they discovered information sources from librarians or lecturers.

Table 3 – Information search
N 800(583)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Personal search	263	45
Reference services	99	17
Lecturers	87	15
Library Instruction	76	13
Friends	58	10

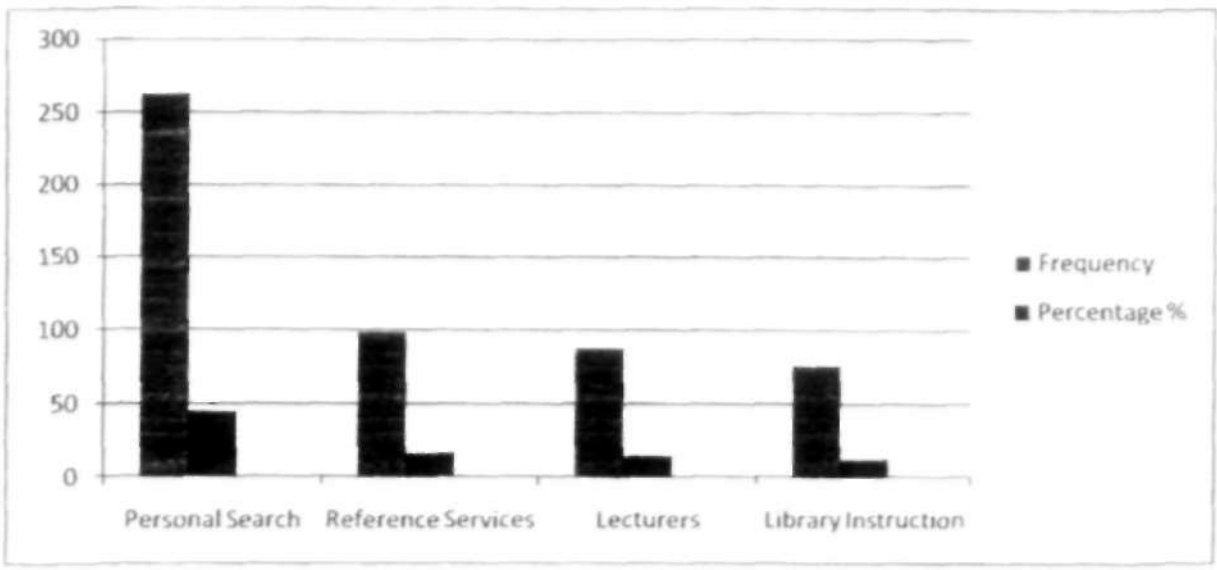


Fig. 3 – Information search

Sources of information

The source of information utilized by the patrons of the library reflects that 466 (80%) of the patron community rely heavily on books and journals for their information quest while 58 (10%) searched for information through the internet. It was also reflected that 58 (10%) respondents consulted electronic databases such as HINARI and other medical related databases. The result implied that both books and journals were the most consulted sources of information. There is a lot to be done at the clinical stage of the medical school when the construction of the permanent library building is completed. Provision of library services at this stage is that of going "beyond the borders", that is going beyond the norms to make services available to the patron community such as running 24 hours services.

Table 4 – Sources of information
N 800(583)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Books/Journals	466	80
Internet	58	10
Electronic	58	10

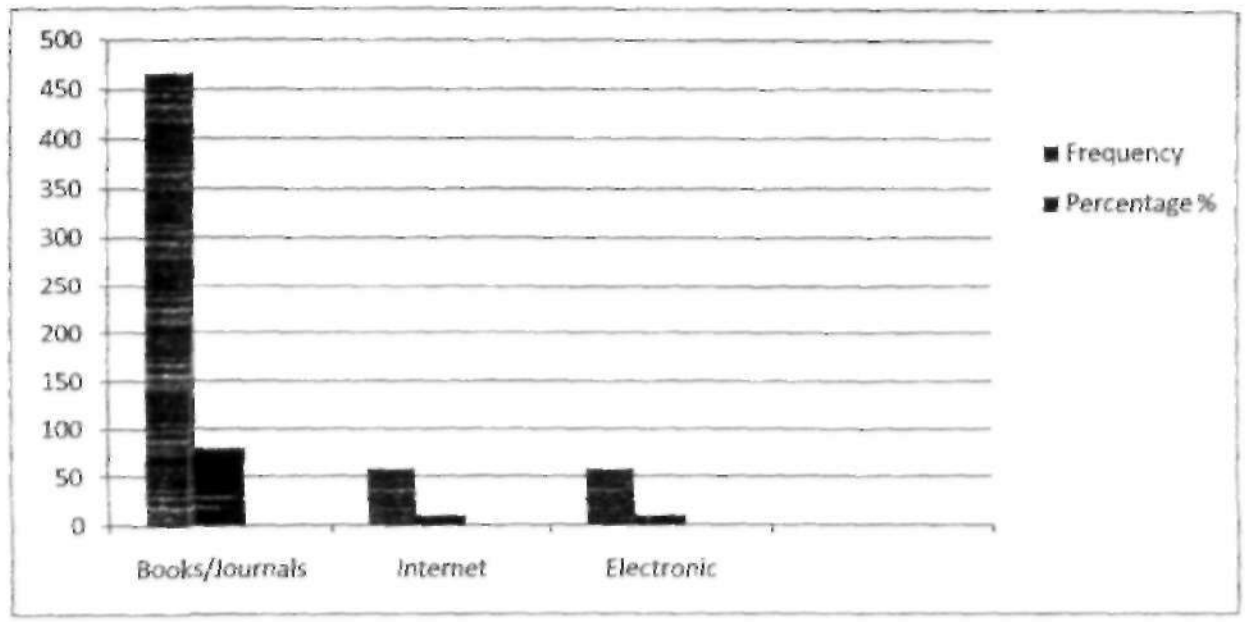


Fig. 4 – Information sources

Perception of internet and library resources

The perception of the users of the medical library of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria was assessed using a five point Likert scale questionnaire which was utilized to elicit information from respondents (Table V). This was classified as strongly Agreed (SA); Agreed (A); Undecided (U); Disagreed (D). This was ranked using scale 1 – 5 with 1 representing disagree down to 5 which represents strongly agreed. The result of the study is evident that 366 (70%) indicated that the library really assisted in enhancing their studies. 209 (40%) of the respondents revealed that the resources available in the library helped in their research needs. Furthermore 403 (77%) of the patron community who constituted the population sample signified that they found the resources very important for their academic work while 313 (60%) of the respondents indicated their patronage of the library was due to the availability of useful resources. Judging from the analysis of the respondents, library resources are well appreciated by the users.

Table 5a – Perception of library resources.

N = 800 (523)

Variables	SA	A	UD	D
a. Library role has enhanced my studies	366	141	-	16
b. Library satisfies research needs	209	298	16	-
c. Find library resources important for my work	403	110	10	-
d. Visit the library due to availability of resources	313	194	16	-

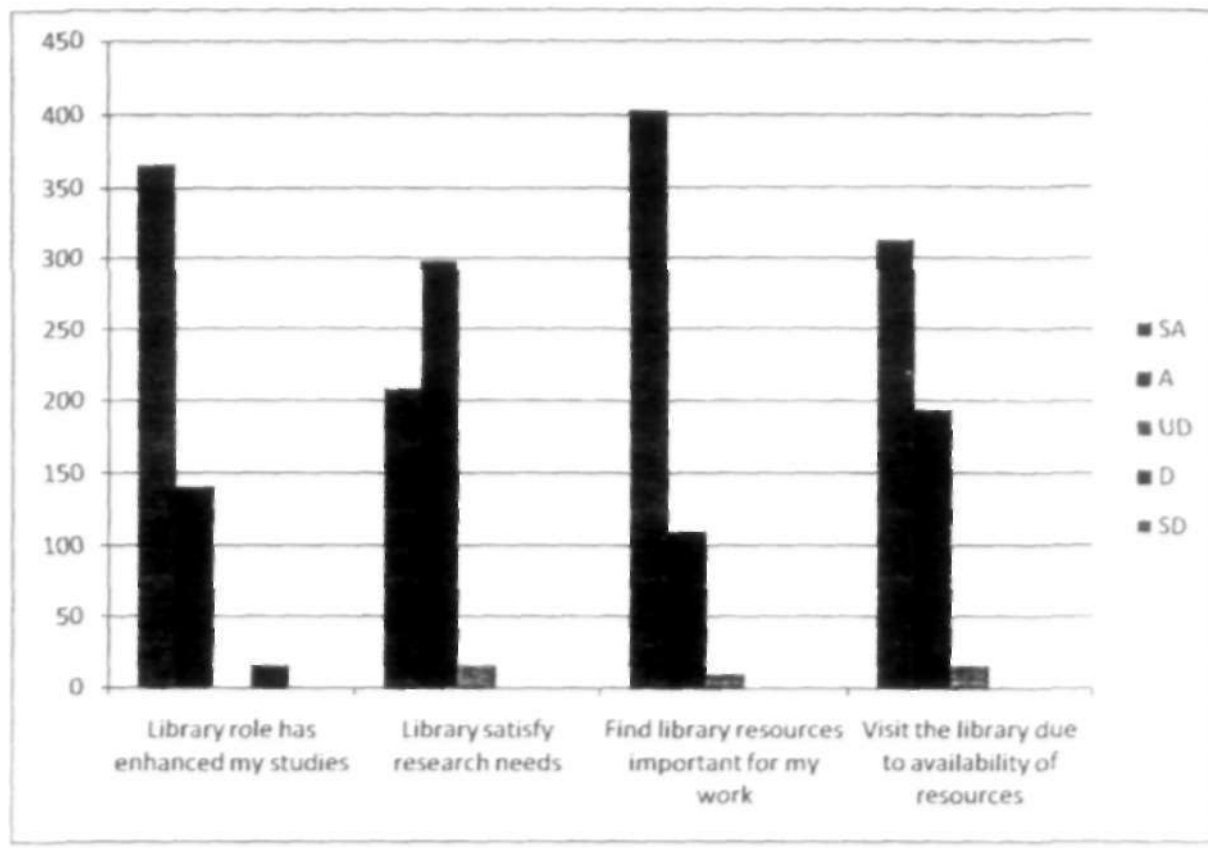


Fig. 5a - Perception of library resources

The study also examined the frequency of internet usage. At the pre-clinical library, 260 (65%) indicated that they used the internet on monthly basis while 92 (23%) indicated using the internet twice in a month while the remaining 6 (12%) used the internet daily. At the clinical stage, 137 (75%) of the respondents indicated they used the internet on daily basis but these services are not provided to them in the library but they use individual modem.

The absence of a bigger library such as the one now under construction limits the service provision to the patron community at the clinical stage. 156 (85%) of the respondents indicated that they visit the library on daily basis. The findings of this study contradicts that of OCLC (2005) which revealed that 65% of college students used their library at least once a month with 14% using it on a daily basis.

Table 5b – Frequency of use of library/internet

N500 (400)

Variables	Internet usage		Library usage	
a. Monthly	260	65%	-	-
b. Twice monthly	92	23%	-	-
c. Weekly	24	6%	40	10%
d. Daily	24	6%	360	90%

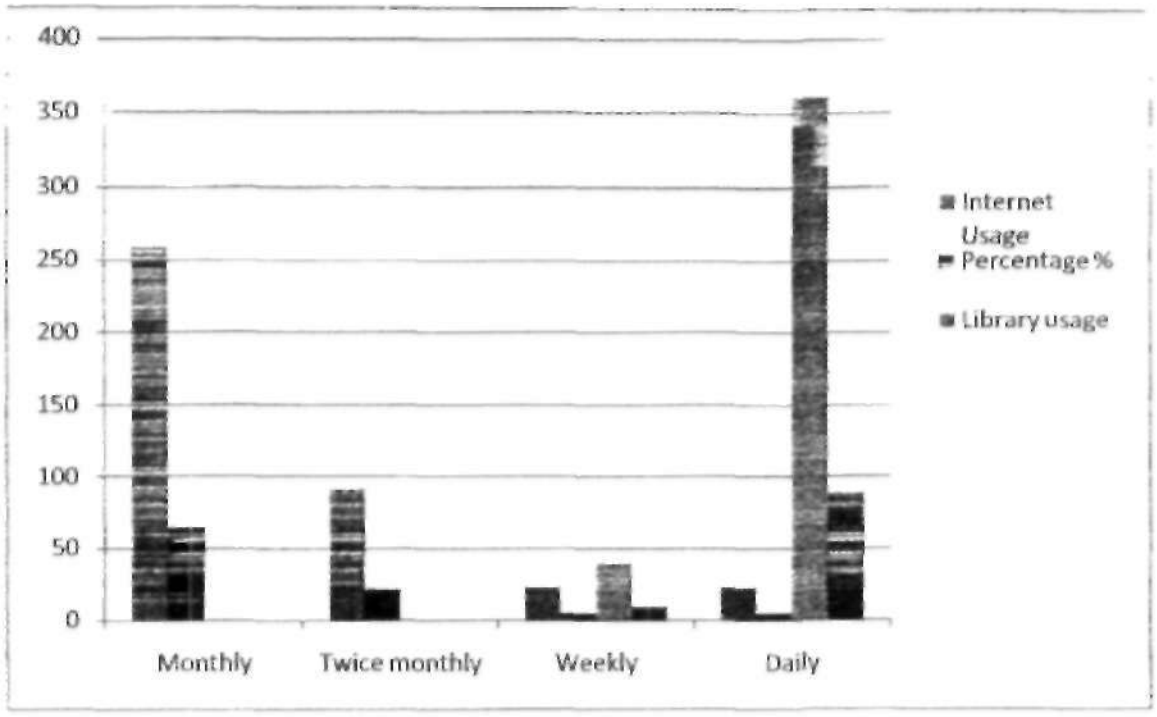


Fig. 5b – Frequency of use of library/internet

Table 5c – Frequency of use of library and internet (clinical)
N = 300 (183)

Variables	Internet usage		Library use	
a. Monthly		5%		
b. Twice monthly		10%		
c. Weekly		10%	27	15%
d. Daily		75%	156	85%

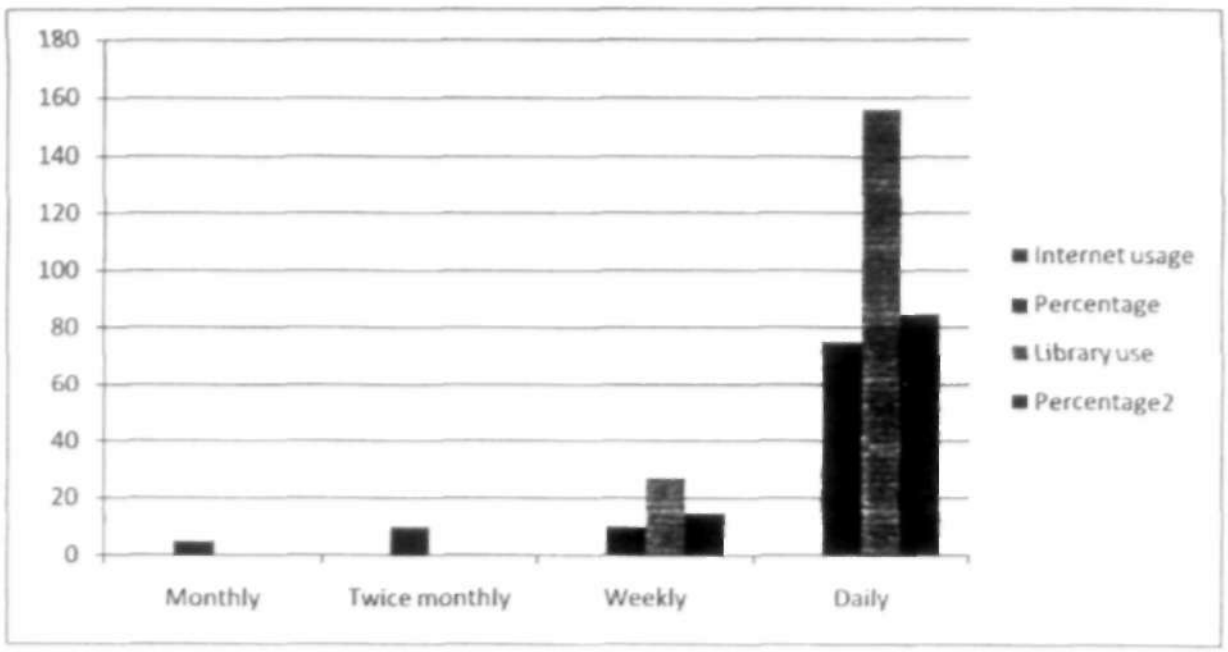


Fig. 5c – Frequency of use of library and internet (clinical)

Those who partook in the study were requested to indicate if there were differences between the availability of information found through the internet and resources available in the library 525 (90%) indicated that more information was available on the internet while 58 (10%) disagreed. This study corroborates the findings of Weber and Flatley (2008) who indicated that students go to the internet whenever a research or assignment is being carried out.

Accessibility of library resources.

Respondents were asked to indicate their perception on accessibility of information required for their academic and research works. 548 (93%) indicated that they found library resources very accessible for their academic pursuit while 35 (6%) indicated that they found it difficult accessing library resources. Reasons given for the inability to access required information resources was that their schedule of work is too tight which does not give them room to utilize the library during the operating hours of the library.

The accessibility of library resources at the pre-clinical medical school at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria is highly adequate because the library is within reach. The students have other avenues whereby information could be sought since they are located within the main campus of the university.

At the clinical stage, having access to the library resources is not as easy compared to what obtains at the pre-clinical, due to the non-availability of a befitting library structure at that stage. The clinical campus is located far from the main university's campus, thereby the patrons at this stage have to cover some distance before they can access library resources. The current building and structure utilized as a library for students at the clinical stage is small compared with population of students and staff the library is expected to serve. As such, there is a limited number of patrons that can utilize the library at a given period of time. Provision of library services to users at this stage of the medical school is that of "stepping beyond the borders". This implies that staff has to go extra miles to

make services available to the patrons; for instance the charging and discharging of borrowed materials. A library staff takes up the responsibility of collecting titles of resources to be borrowed (with borrowing cards), which are taken to the main library for necessary documentation before they returned back to the patron. This is a very tasking exercise to carry out.

CONCLUSION

The medical profession is a field with new innovations and there are developments from time to time. As such the library has to be well informed of resources that will satisfy the information quest of the patron community who constitute the library users.

From this empirical study the following conclusions are drawn. It is evident that the patrons of the library are satisfied with the quality of services provided in the library. Perception of the library from the patron's point of view is very encouraging. This is evident from the tables provided in the body of the work. The library is viewed as an mystery to the realization of their academic goals through the availability of varied resources

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study carried out, the following recommendations are made:

1. It is agreed that medical profession is a very sensitive field. Efforts should be geared toward the provision of up to date and relevant information at all times to all and sundry in the profession that visits the medical library.
2. The library operating hours be adjusted to avail the patrons ample time to use library resources.
3. Sitting capacity in the libraries should be increased in order to accommodate more customers at a time.
4. Authorities involved in decision making should ensure that results of research based on use and accessibility of library resources and services are utilized to improve on provision of library services to customers.
5. Construction work on the library project at the clinical wing is very slow, it should be completed quickly to improve service delivery.

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