

Evaluation of the Use of Law Libraries Among Legal Practitioners in Kwara State

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Abstract

The study evaluates the use of the library by legal practitioners in Kwara State. A descriptive survey is adopted and questionnaire is used to serve as the instrument for data collection. A sample size of 257 participants was selected from the study population of 772 and only 252 copies of the questionnaire are returned and found useful, constituting a 98% returned rate. The study found that law reports, law textbooks, reference materials, index and abstracts, legal periodicals, legislation and statutes, and digests are the library resources available to legal practitioners. Moreso, majority of the respondents use legal periodicals, law reports, law textbooks, indexes and abstracts, legislation and statutes, and digest daily while the majority of them use reference materials only once in a month. The majority of the respondents purposely use library resources to broaden their horizon on legal issues; for work in progress; to keep informed of the development in the legal profession; to defend their client in the court of law, and for case preparation. The test hypothesis indicates that there is gender difference in male and female legal practitioners' use of library resources in Kwara State. The reason for this is that the t-value is 84.961, and the associated p-value which is 0.000 less than the level of significance 0.05. Upon examining and considering the use of law libraries by legal practitioners in Kwara State, the researchers are stocked by the verdict that the law library remains essential for legal scholarship. The study, therefore, recommends that adequate provision should be made for current legal information resources in the library.

Keywords: Use of Library, Law Library, Legal Practitioner, Legal Information, Kwara State, Nigeria

Introduction

Law libraries are essentially designated to provide library and information services to law students, legal educators/lectures, attorneys, judges, law clerks, and all other legal practitioners. Law libraries serve as appendages to law faculties, law firms, ministries of justice, and law schools. Their collections are attributed to the special needs of the institution or organization they are affiliated with. The special nature of law library collections are tailored to the special needs of their special users accounted for why law libraries are regarded as special kind of libraries. Modern law libraries like every other kind of library house their collections both in print and digital format and these collections come in form of law textbooks, law reports, law dictionaries, law encyclopedias, law treaties and status, legal acts, legal history, legal journals and so on. Law libraries are used mostly by legal practitioners and others that are interested in law-related issues and research. Legal practitioners require legal information and it is rightly deposited in the law library. Meanwhile, availability and accessibility to this legal information constitute an essential ingredient for an effective judicial system and administration of justice.

Legal information to the legal profession is invaluable so much that one may argue that lawyers cannot practice effectively without having access to accurate, reliable and up-to-date information. This is because information, as it is has become the most important element for progress in any society. Therefore, to thrive in this modern era one needs a variety of information, no matter how well-versed one is in his/her profession (Okonoko, Emeka-Ukwu & Ayomanor, 2015). In light of this, Tuhumwire and Okello-Obura (2010) postulate that information is very important, if effective justice is to be served in our society. To this end, for legal practitioners to thrive in their profession, timely information is needed. In another perspective, legal practitioners need accurate information if a miscarriage of justice is to be avoided, otherwise, innocent people would suffer as a result of improper decisions resulting from the absence of accurate information to serve as precedence. Based on this, law libraries have the potentials of providing a wide-ranging of current and timely law resources to legal practitioners.

It is in light of this that this study is designed to examine the extent of law library utilization among the legal practitioners in Kwara State. It seeks to provide insight into the application and relevance of the law library in the legal realm and it is sincerely hoped that it would stimulate what is urgently needed to develop adequate law library services. It is also anticipated that the findings of the study would be of the utmost benefit to the policymakers of the law library and all

stakeholders in the legal profession. It is expected that the study would serve as a reference source that has contributed to the body of existing knowledge.

Research Questions

The study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the legal information resources that are available in the law library for legal practitioners in Kwara State?
2. To what extent do legal practitioners in Kwara State use library resources?
3. What are the purposes legal practitioners in Kwara State uses the library?
4. What are the challenges legal practitioners in Kwara State encounter while using the library?

Hypothesis

The study would test the following null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significant

H₀₁ There is no significant difference in the use of library resources between male and female legal practitioners in Kwara State.

Review of Relevant Literature

Legal information sources can be categorized into formal sources, historical sources, literary or material sources and other law sources. formal sources are the ultimate origin of the whole body of a legal system which in the abstract sense is the source from which a political, social, or economic authority derives their power from, while historical sources of law consist of chains of circumstances and events that brought about or lead to the evolution of legal rules over a specific time. Law library that tends to justify its continuous relevant must ensure that its collections are relevant, accurate, timely and adequate (Olorunfemi, 2014). Legal information sources range from print to electronic, and the usage of these information resources varies among legal practitioners depending on their areas of specialization.

Studies carried out by the previous researchers have shown that legal practitioners encounter different challenges while using library resources. This is shown in a study carried out by Onuoha and Awoniyi (2011) that report that the major problem noted by the respondents in using library and the ICT resources is that needed materials are not available. The respondents also note that obsolete material is another major problem. Other problems include; library staff not willing/friendly, incomplete information materials, information sources far located, lack of time, do not know how to use the library catalogue, information scattered in too many sources. Other challenges include information sources that are located far away, latest information explosion or too much information, lack of time for searching, non-availability of electronic resources (journal and databases), too many

classes or administrative work, lack of training in electronic resources/products, library staff is incompetent or not well trained, lack of computer hardware or software, lack of technical support, lack of information about available sources, lack of support from library staff, lack of knowledge in using the library, and language barrier (most of the material is in foreign languages).

Olorunfemi (2014) has investigated the law information sources used in legal research among undergraduate law students in Nigeria universities. It has been found that the print law sources are mostly available in the law libraries, which the law students frequently use in legal research to access law-related information. The respondents indicate that they do legal research to further their knowledge of legal issues. The study has identified some challenges experienced in legal research while sourcing information in the law libraries. The challenges are as follows: lack of adequate law library materials; information materials are not in the right places or not well arranged; erratic power supply; no current law texts, many are old books; no accessible electronic library among others. Similarly, Uluocha and Mabawonku (2014) has examined the availability and utilization of the legal information resources as determinants of law lecturer's research productivity in Nigerian universities. The result shows that law books, legal periodicals, reference materials, law reports, reference materials, legislation and statutes, newspapers, loose-leaf, indexes and abstracts, and digests are readily available to Law lecturers. The study found that legal information resources such as law reports, legal periodicals, legislation and statutes, indexes and abstracts, law book, non- legal materials, reference materials, digests and e-resources are used by lecturers in Nigerian universities.

Furthermore, Onwudinjo, Ogbonna and Onwumbiko (2015) investigate the law library collections and their utilization by the undergraduate students of Faculty of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, the study shows that a greater number of law students use the law library at least twice a week for preparing for examinations. In the light of this, the study recommends that the law library should be adequately stocked with current and relevant law resources, as well as improving the reading environment to make it more conducive for learning and research.

Methodology

The design adopted for this study is a descriptive survey and the population of the study consists of all the 772 registered legal practitioners. The sampling technique adopted for this study is a simple random sampling technique. According to the Raosoft sample size calculator, the sample of 772 is equal to 257. The instrument for this study is a questionnaire and to ensure that the questionnaire used is valid, it was given to three research experts in the Department of Library and

Information Science, University of Ilorin, Ilorin for face and content validation. On reliability testing of the instrument, thirty copies of the validated questionnaire were administered to thirty legal practitioners in Oyo State. Thereafter, data collected is subjected to Cronbach alpha correlation co-efficient which involves associating each measurement item with other measurement items and obtaining the average inter-correlation for all the paired associations. The total co-efficient value is 0.771. Researchers administered copies of the questionnaire to the respondents during the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) monthly general meeting in the Ilorin and Offa branch respectively with the help of three trained research assistants. The collected data was analyzed through percentage and central tendencies, using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (IBM-SPSS) version 22.0 and the T-test was used to test the hypothesis.

Data Presentation and Interpretation of results

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents (n=252)

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	170	67.5
Female	82	32.5
Total	252	100.0
Age		
21-30	67	26.6
31-40	136	54.0
41-50	49	19.4
Total	252	100.0
Qualification		
Bachelor Degree	129	51.2
Master/M.Phil	117	46.4
PhD	6	2.4
Total	252	100
Specialization		
Practicing	243	96.4
Lecturing/Practicing	9	3.6
Total	252	100
Year of Experience		
1-5	100	39.7
6-10	106	42.1
11-15	16	6.3
16-20	30	11.9
Total	252	100.0

(Source: Field Survey, 2020)

The result in Table 1 shows the demographic information of the respondents. The table shows that out of 252 respondents, 170 (67.5%) are male while 82 (32.5%) are female. This shows that majority of the respondents are male. Furthermore, the result reveals that 67 (26.6%) falls between the ages of 21-30 while 136 (54.0%) falls between the ages of 31-40 and 49 (19.4%) falls between the ages of 41-50. This shows that the majority of the respondents fall between the ages of 31-40. In the same vein, the result reveals that 129 (51.2%) have a Bachelor's Degree while 117 (46.4%) have Master/M. Phil Degree and 6 (2.4%) have a Ph.D. This means that the majority of the respondents have Master/M.Phil. Furthermore, the result shows that 243 (96.4%) are practicing lawyers while 9 (3.6%) have combined both lecturing and practicing together. Based on the year of experience of the respondents, the results confirmed that 100 (39.7%) have 1-5 year experience while 106 (42.1%) have 6-10 year experience. On the other hand, 16 (6.3%) have 11-15 years of experience while 30 (11.9%) have 16-20 years of experience. In summary, it can be deduced that the majority of the respondents have 6-10 years of experience.

Table 2 Library Resources available to Legal Practitioners (n=252)

S/N	Items	Available	Not Available
Library resources			
1	Law Reports	251 (99.6%)	1 (0.4%)
2	Legal periodicals	233 (92.5%)	19 (7.5%)
3	Legislation and Statutes	182 (72.2%)	70 (27.8%)
4	Indexes and Abstracts	245 (97.2%)	7 (2.8%)
5	Law textbooks	247 (98.0%)	5 (2.0%)
6	Non-legal materials	117 (46.4%)	135 (53.6%)
7	Reference materials	246 (97.6%)	6 (2.4%)
8	Digests	127 (50.4%)	125 (49.6%)

Source: (Field Survey, 2020)

The result in Table 2 reveals the library resources available to legal practitioners. Therefore, based on the library resources that are available to the legal practitioner, the result shows that out of 252 respondents, 251 (99.6%) have claimed that law reports are available to them while 1 (0.4%) are against this. Furthermore, the result reveals that 233 (92.5%) states that legal periodicals are 19 (7.5%) which is against this. In the same vein, the result shows that 182 (72.2%) affirm that legislation and statutes are available to them while 70 (27.8%) have declined this. Also, the result shows that 245 (97.2%) have agreed that indexes and abstracts are available to them while 7 (2.8%) are against this. Also, the result reveals that 247 (98.0%) states that law textbooks are available to them while 5 (2.0%) are against this statement.

Similarly, the result reveals that 117 (46.4%) have confirmed that non-legal materials are available to them while 135 (53.6%) are against this. Furthermore, the result shows that 246 (97.6%) states that reference materials are available to them while 6 (2.4%) are against this. Finally, the result reveals that 127 (50.4%) have agreed that digests are available to them, while 125 (49.6%) disagree with this. In summary, it can be deduced that law reports, law textbooks, reference materials, index and abstracts, legal periodicals, legislation and statutes, and digests are the library resources available to legal practitioners.

Table 3: Extent to which Legal Practitioners Use Information Resources in the Law Library(n=252)

S/N	Library Resources	Daily	Twice a week	Once a month	Yearly
1	Law Reports	138 (54.8%)	46 (18.3%)	66 (26.2%)	2 (0.8%)
2	Legal periodicals	152 (60.3%)	58 (23.0%)	28 (11.1%)	14 (5.6%)
3	Legislation and Statutes	102 (40.5%)	30 (11.9%)	84 (33.3%)	36 (14.3%)
4	Indexes and Abstracts	118 (46.8%)	45 (17.9%)	71 (28.2%)	18 (7.1%)
5	Law textbooks	119 (47.2%)	112 (44.4%)	19 (7.5%)	2 (0.8%)
6	Non-legal materials	87 (34.5%)	60 (23.8%)	75 (29.8%)	30 (11.9%)
7	Reference materials	75 (29.8%)	61 (24.2%)	98 (38.9%)	18 (7.1%)
8	Digests	91 (36.1%)	48 (19.0%)	49 (19.4%)	64 (25.4%)

(Source: Field Survey, 2020)

The results in Table 3 show the extent to which legal practitioners use the library resources. The result shows that out of 252 respondents, 140 (55.5%) use law reports daily while 46 (18.3%) use it twice a week. On the other hand, 66 (26.2%) use it once a month. Furthermore, the results reveal that 152 (60.3%) use legal periodicals daily while 58 (23.0%) claim that they use it twice a week. Conversely, 28 (11.1%) use it once a month and 14 (5.6%) use it yearly. In the same vein, the result shows that 102 (40.5%) use legislation and statutes daily while 30 (11.9%). In contrast, 84 (33.3%) have claimed that they use it once a month while 36 (14.3%) use it yearly. Also, 118 (46.8%) state that they use indexes and abstracts daily, while 45 (17.9%) state that they use it twice a week. On the contrary, 71 (28.2%) claim that they use it once a month while 18 (7.1%) use it yearly.

Similarly, the study shows that 119 (47.2%) use law textbooks daily, while 112 (44.4%) uses it twice a week. Conversely, 19 (7.5%) use it once a month while 2 (0.8%) use it yearly. The result reveals that 87 (34.5%) use non-legal materials daily while 60 (23.8%) use it twice a week. Also, 75 (29.8%) use it once a month and 30 (11.9%) use it yearly. Besides, the results shows that 75 (29.8%) use reference materials daily while 61 (24.2%) use it twice a week. On the other hand, 98 (38.9%) use it once a month while 18 (7.1%) use it yearly. Furthermore, the result of the table shows that 91 (36.1%) use digests daily while 48 (19.0%) use it twice a week. Contrary to this, 49 (19.4%) use it once a month while 64 (25.4%) use it yearly. In summary, it can be noted that the majority of the respondents use legal periodicals, law reports, law textbooks, indexes and abstracts, legislation and statutes, and digest daily while the majority of them use reference materials once a month.

Table 4: Purpose of Using Library Resources by Legal Practitioners in Kwara State(n=252)

S/N	I used library resources:	SA	A	D	SD
1	To further knowledge on legal issues	152 (60.3%)	85 (33.7%)	15 (6.0%)	-
2	For case preparation	117 (46.4%)	80 (31.7%)	50 (19.8%)	5 (2.0%)
3	To defend a client in the court of law	132 (52.4%)	80 (31.7%)	25 (9.9%)	15 (6.0%)
4	For work in progress	142 (56.3%)	85 (33.7%)	20 (7.9%)	5 (2.0%)
5	To keep informed of the development in the legal profession	147 (58.3%)	80 (31.7%)	15 (6.0%)	10 (4.0%)

(Source: Field Survey, 2020)

Results in Table 4 reveal the purpose of using library resources by legal practitioners in Kwara State. The results show that out of 152 respondents, 237 (94.0%) have agreed that the purpose of using library resources is to broaden their knowledge on legal issue while 15 (6.0%) are against this statement. Similarly, the result confirms that 197 (77.1%) have agreed that they use library resources for case preparation while 55 (21.8%) have disagreed with this statement.

Also, the result reveals that 212 (84.1%) have agreed that they use library resources to defend their client in the court of law while 40 (15.9%) have disagreed with this statement. Furthermore, the result shows that 227 (90.0%) have agreed that they use the library resources for work in progress while 21 (9.9%) have disagreed with the statement.

Lastly, the result confirms that 227 (90.0%) have agreed that they use library resources to keep informed of the development in the legal profession while 21 (9.9%) have disagreed with this statement. In summary, the majority of the respondents use library resources to further knowledge on legal issues; for work in progress; to keep informed of the development in the legal profession; to defend their client in the court of law, and for case preparation.

Table 5: Challenges that Legal Practitioners Encountered while using the Law Library(n=252)

S/N	Items	Yes	No
1	Lack of adequate library resources	182 (72.2%)	70 (27.8%)
2	Information resources are not well arranged	147 (58.3%)	105 (41.7%)
3	Electronic information resources are not easily accessible	15 (6.0%)	237 (94.0%)
4	No current law textbooks and other information materials	240 (95.2%)	12 (4.8%)
5	Poor internet facility	219 (86.9%)	33 (13.1%)
6	Epileptic power supply	203 (80.6%)	49 (19.4%)

(Source: Field Survey, 2020)

The result in Table 5 shows the challenges that legal practitioners encounter while using library resources. From the table, the result reveals that out of 152 respondents, 182 (72.2%) claim that lack of adequate library resources is one of the major challenges they encounter while 70 (27.8%) are against this statement. Furthermore, the result reveals that 147 (58.3%) states that information resources in the library are not well arranged while 105 (41.7%) have disagreed with this. In the same vein, the result confirms that 240 (95.2%) affirms that no current library textbooks and information material are related to the legal profession available in the library while 12 (4.8 %) have declined this. Also, the result shows that 219 (86.9%) have agreed that poor internet facility is another challenge they encounter while using library resources and the remaining 33 (13.1%) are against this statement. Lastly, the result shows that 203 (80.6%) claims that epileptic power supply is another challenge they encounter when using the library resources while 49 (19.4%) are against this statement. In summary, it can be deduced that no current law textbooks and other information materials; poor internet facility; epileptic power supply; and lack of adequate library resources are some of the challenges that legal practitioners encounter while using library resources.

Testing of Hypotheses

H_{01} There is no significant difference in the use of library resources between male and female legal practitioners in Kwara State.

Table 6: Difference in the Use of Library Resources between Male and Female Legal Practitioners in Kwara

Variable	N	M	SD	T-cal	Df	P
Male	170	37.190	3.92	84.961	250	.000**
Female	82	28.832	2.03			

(Source: Field Survey, 2020)

Table 6 shows the results that there is a significant difference in the use of library resources between male and female legal practitioners. This is because the result reveals that the t-value is 84.961, and the associated p-value which is 0.000 less than the level of significant 0.05. Furthermore, the mean score of male legal practitioners is significantly higher than the mean score of female legal practitioners,

that is, the mean score of male legal practitioners is 37.190 compared to the mean score of female legal practitioners which is 28.832. This means that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the use of library resources between male and female legal practitioners in Kwara State is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Most importantly, legal practitioners need accurate information if a miscarriage of justice is to be avoided in any society; otherwise, innocent people will suffer as a result of improper decisions resulting from a lawyer's incompetency or lack of accurate information. Therefore, for legal practitioners to get accurate and current information, the library has taken a central position by making information available to them.

The study has found that law reports, law textbooks, reference materials, index and abstracts, legal periodicals, legislation and statutes, and digests are the library resources available to legal practitioners. This finding corroborates with Olorunfemi (2014) study that law report, legal and non-legal textbooks, reference materials, abstracts, electronic court records, among others are the library resources available to the law library.

Furthermore, the study has examined the extent to which legal practitioners use library resources. It has found that the majority of the respondents use legal periodicals, law reports, law textbooks, indexes and abstracts, legislation and statutes, and digest daily while the majority of them use reference materials once a month. This finding contradicts the work of Olorunfemi (2014) who found that law students frequently use both the library and the ICT resources for their research and learning activities. The study is also inconsequent to the finding of Onwudinjo, Ogbonna and Onwumbiko (2015) who has found that law students use library and the ICT resources twice a week. The reason for this may be subjected to the fact that Olorunfemis' study was carried out among the law student while this present study is carried out among the legal practitioners.

Similarly, the study investigates the purpose of using library resources by legal practitioners. It has found that the majority of the respondents purposely use library resources to further their knowledge on legal issues; for work in progress; to keep informed of the development in the legal profession; to defend their client in the court of law, and for case preparation.

It is reported that lack of adequate law library materials; information materials are not in the right places or not well arranged; erratic power supply; no current law texts, many are old books; no accessible electronic library among others are the challenges that legal practitioners encounter while using library resources.

The study has established the fact that there is a significant difference in the use of library resources between male and female legal practitioners. This means that legal male practitioners use library resources compare to female legal practitioners. The finding supports the work of Oyesiku and Oduwole (2004) who reports that male students in Olabisi Onabanjo University use the library much more than their female counterparts.

Conclusion

Upon consideration of the use of law libraries by legal practitioners in Kwara State, the researchers are stocked by the verdict that the law libraries as it may, remain essential for legal scholarship. Moreso, the potentiality in the much greater use of the law library stood as an effective, and, in fact, an indispensable educational instrument for legal practitioners. Based on the findings of the study, there is no doubt whatsoever, that intelligently utilized library services by legal practitioners will contribute something of value in preparation for the effective conduct of litigation. Be that as it may, ineffectiveness of the legal practitioners in the use of the law libraries, no shortcoming appears more conspicuously and unmistakably other than that of dearth on legal information resources and deficiencies in the services provision in law libraries.

Recommendations

Based on the result of findings, the study presents the following recommendations:

- i. Peculiarly, there is a dearth of law digest and non-legal information materials in law libraries in Kwara State; hence law libraries should ensure their availability in terms of adequacy.
- ii. Library management should acquire current law textbooks into the library which will motivate legal practitioners to continue using the library;
- iii. Legal practitioners in Kwara State seem not to be having issues with electronic information resources, therefore, library management should provide good internet facility in the law libraries;
- iv. Law libraries across the state should make public awareness of their information resources and services through publicity and library display of new arrivals.
- v. There should be a standby generator that will curb the issue of power failure; and
- vi. There should be adequate provision of library resources in the library for consultation by legal practitioners.

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