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Information Needs and Resources Utilization by Inmates in Medium Security Prison, Makurdi, Benue State

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This study investigated information needs and resource utilization by inmates in medium security prison Makurdi Benue State. Information needs is an important concept that can affect every individuals life. The area of study was the prison located in Makurdi the Benue state capital. The study covered both the inmates in male and female wings of the prison. The population of the study constitutes four hundred and seventy five (475) inmates. Using the simple random sampling techniques, a sample of 50 inmates and 10 from the prison officials was decided. The questionnaire was the major tool of data collection. The descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage and mean) was used to summarise the data collected with the view to gaining better understanding of the data set. The options of the respondents were scored based on their responses using the 4-point Likert type rating scale. A cut-off mean or decision point of 2.50 and above was regarded as a favourable decision and decision point below 2.50 as unfavourable. From the result of the data analysis, the following findings as regard the subject was deduced; the research shows that the prison inmates get their information needs from the legal services, educational and recreation sources. The study revealed that the information services provided and used on a daily basis to prison inmates includes information literacy services, referral services, literature services and reference services. The study revealed that the level of satisfaction derived from the utilization of library books, workshop/seminars and literacy class's resources and services were satisfied. The study revealed that prison inmates' purpose for using information resources includes educational purpose, recreational purpose and to be aware of current issues. The study also revealed that the level of satisfaction derived from library books, workshop/seminars and literacy classes 'utilization of resources and services was satisfied. The study revealed that problems encountered in the provision of services to prison inmates in Makurdi Medium Security Prison includes lack of infrastructures, lack of modern information technology, lack of funds, inadequate qualified staff and inadequate library books. The most worrisome problem identified was the issue of funding; this has posed a great challenge to the prison authorities. This is because, the resources and services which could have been provided was not possible as funds were grossly inadequate. The study further revealed that the strategies to overcome the problems in the provision of services to prison inmates includes; provision of separate library building, recruitment of qualified library staff, funds should be made available, prison libraries should diverse other ways of building their collection and modern information technology should be installed (satellite and internet).

Key words: Information needs, Resources, Utilization and Prison

INTRODUCTION

Government owes it as a duty to its citizens the need to protect and respect their rights. No society therefore, irrespective of its material position or level of its socio-economic advancement is completely free from one form of crime or the other nefarious activities haunt every society. Chiemezie, (2005) assert that most inmates found in Nigeria's prisons are not only youths of great strength but of unique intelligence. He stated that prison inmates are not empty headed, neither are they a lazy lot as most people perceive them to be. Unfortunately, these are in the model age bracket of 18 – 45 years which ought to raise serious concerted actions by government and the public to address the problems prison inmates face in Nigerian prisons.

Prisons are therefore, established confinement for the safe keeping of those legally interned or awaiting trails. Which is the case, except for those who are to be executed upon the death penalty on them, prisons are expected to transform and reform the interned towards the re-integration of the affected individuals into the larger society on completion of their terms. For prisons to achieve the objectives of reformation and rehabilitation there is the need for training and re-training of inmates. This requires exposing them to adequate and timely information.

Information is generally considered important for the survival of convicted persons during incarceration. However, investigation indicates that prison inmates' information needs particularly those found in Nigeria have been grossly undermine and not adequately catered for. Information is a major resource in human development as access to it could improve their knowledge. Omagbemi and Odunewu (2005) assert that information is the heart of the world's development. They further explain that increased access to timely, accurate, relevant, reliable and current information remains a significant precursor to technological innovations.

Information has severally been described and documented among different professional disciplines as power, and wealth as an important factor of production (Saunders, 1998; Ajayi, 2002) as cited in (Emeaselu, 2010). On the other hand, information needs has been referred to as a desirous (want) situation that requires solution (Emeaselu, 2010). This means that information is an important resource to the individual, groups; government, businesses and institution alive in the empowerment of man in abide to attain the goals for developmental activities. Every individual therefore, requires one form of information or the other in order to satisfy their information needs.

Resource utilization is the practical and maximum use of library information materials identified and acquired by a user for the purpose of solving a problem. Utilization varies among individuals, social groups, institutions, government agencies, organisations and establishments. Emeaselu, (2010) opines that usability of any information type by a clientele is determined by the type of job and duties performed; the type of profession a user belongs and the kinds of functions executed at any particular point in time. Ughegbu, (2002) further asserts that user understanding in terms of their age, gender and educational background form the main principle of utilization.

Consequently, prison inmates require library information resources both in print and non-print format in order to keep abreast of current happenings, events and developments while in incarceration. Library information resources have been defined as those information carrying materials that may include textbooks, journals, indexes, abstracts, newspapers and magazines, internet/e-mails, video tapes/cassettes, diskettes, magnetic disk, computers among others. These constitute the raw materials that most libraries acquire, catalogue, stock and make available to their clientele for utilization (Popoola, 2009). This study therefore, is a probe into availability of otherwise of information services to prison inmates in Nigeria, using the Makurdi prison in Benue State as a case study.

Preliminary studies show that Nigerian prisons have inadequate facilities to provide adequate general welfare needs of inmates, access to current information and library information services and resource materials. Prison libraries (where they exist) have inadequate infrastructure and equipment to effectively and efficiently play its supportive role to prison rehabilitation, reformation, education and skill acquisitions. The remote effects of overcrowding, congestion, in human condition of Nigerian prison environment are idleness, laziness, emotional and personality disturbances which also leads to anxiety and depression. Consequently, the provision of legal and reference services, recreational and instruction services among other treatment programmes designed to aid prison reforms and re-integrate inmates into the society are yet to reflect the set objectives of prisons.

Previous studies have looked into information needs and utilization and challenges encountered by prison inmates during reformation and reintegration process. However, none of the literature perused indicate any study in Nigeria on the information needs and resource utilization by Makurdi prison inmates. It is against this background, that this study seeks to investigate the information needs and utilization of library resources of prison inmates in Makurdi prison so as to fill the missing gaps in literature.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the information needs and the utilization of its resources. The specific objectives includes

i.   To determine the information needs of prison inmates in Makurdi prison
ii.   To determine the extent of provision of information resources and services to them.
iii.   To determine the extent of usage and purpose of usage of the resources and services.
iv.   To determine the level of satisfaction derived from the usage of the resources.
v.   To identify the problems militating against the provision and utilization of services.
vi.   To adopt strategies to overcome such problems.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

i.   How and where do the prison inmates in Makurdi go to get satisfaction for their information needs?
ii.   What is the extent of the provision of information resources and services to the inmates?
iii.   What is the extent of their usage and what is the purpose of usage of the resources and services?
iv.   Are they satisfied with the usage of the resources?
v.   What problems are encountered in the provision and utilization of services by the inmates?
vi.   What strategies can be adopted to overcome these problems?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The term 'information' lends itself to various definitions. This is possible because the definition of the concept may well depend on the particular context of purpose for which it is identified and used. According to Platek (1998), incarcerated criminals are still members of the society and as a consequence, there is the need to continuously make provisions and cater for their information needs. As he put it 'prisoners should be allowed to keep most of the rights enjoyed by free citizens and granting them rights specific to their incarceration status are expressions of basic tenets of humanitarianism and social solidarity'. Platek's argument is simply that despite their incarceration status, prison inmates still possess their fundamental human rights to information. This is further guaranteed through the provision of library information materials that should cater for the specific information needs of inmates.

In a parallel vein, Campbell (2005), described inmates and people in a situation that is environmentally unusual,

enclosed in stress and low in opportunities for decision making. He adds that inmates need information in order to stabilize this initial speculation and fear. Information utilization referred to the practical and adequate use of resources and materials of information identified and acquired by the user for the purpose of solving a problem. Utilization of information varied among individuals, social groups, institutions, government agencies, organization and establishments. This is also dependent on the varied information needs of the particular information sources and resources.

In the traditional library setting, information is passed to its users through oral and written media. The oral medium include seminars, workshops, meetings, verbal discussion and conferences, while written medium includes newspaper, magazines, books, newsletters, journals among others. They play a significant role in the process of effective utilization of information (Ughegbu, 2002). This assertion lends the fact that the prison library is the place where the inmates go to get the satisfaction for information needs.

In his opinion, Daramola (2004) expresses the fact that prisons were established to exploit diverse programmes such as adult and remedial education for inmates, skills and vocational training, religious institution, recreation and attitude change towards the achievement of the information and rehabilitation of inmates, so as to facilitate their social integration into the society after their prison terms. This, he concluded that one should assert that these goals needs adequate provision and utilization of information. The library, if well developed, will provide the information support needed for achievement of the prison tasks. The use of books and other print and non-print materials, particularly the television sets, for convicted inmates have been found to satisfy some of the needs of the prison inmates (Rubin 1978).

In order to ensure proper and effective provision of library services for the provision of information, Kantuoya (1992) informs that, the information must not just be made available in the right quantity and at the right time, but also must be accurate and it sources should be credible, reliable and received within the closest proximity to the user. Essentially, it must be accessible and without any socio-economic and environmental barriers

Writing on the adequacy of library facilities in Nigerian prisons, Dike as cited in Emeaselu (2010), opines that prisoners like other persons need library services to exercise their fundamental human rights to information. She adds that libraries can play an even greater role in the lives of prisoners, due to their disadvantaged status. She further asserts that library services are essential to modern correctional objectives of reformation and rehabilitation. She however, observes that prison libraries are yet to be developed fully in many parts of the world especially in Nigeria.

Omagbemi and Odunewu (2008), opined that most of

the prison inmates desired information on the current events in the society (news and current affairs) on the outside, while others wanted educational information, they however observed that, these could hardly be met by the prison library, as most of the materials could not meet these needs.

Dike as cited in Emeaselu (2010) opines that the current state of prisons in Nigeria which are poorly equipped with materials, personnel etc., hamper the provision of adequate information services to the inmates, noting further that this leads to dissatisfaction of usage by the inmates due largely to the quality of materials in stock. This is a regrettable fact as inmates like other persons need library services for the modern day objectives which are correctional, recreational, and rehabilitation in nature.

The problems militating against the provision of services and utilization includes absence of infrastructural facilities and equipments cost of acquisition (Omagbemi, 2008), inadequate qualified staff of professionals in the prison services to man the few libraries (Odunewu, 2008), and inadequate funding (Rao and Devi, 1989).

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study is survey design. The area of study was the prison located in Makurdi the Benue state capital. The study covered both the inmates in male and female wings of the prison. The population of the study constitutes four hundred and seventy five (475) inmates. Using the simple random sampling techniques, a sample of 50 inmates and 10 from the prison officials was decided. The questionnaire was the major tool of data collection. The descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage and mean) was used to summarise the data collected with the view to gaining better understanding of the data set. The options of the respondents were scored based on their responses using the 4-point Likert type rating scale. A cut-off mean or decision point of 2.50 and above was regarded as a favourable decision and decision point below 2.50 as unfavourable.

FINDINGS

It is worth knowing that all the 60 copies of questionnaires distributed to the respondents representing 100% of the total number of the questionnaires were successfully filled and returned. The high rate of 100% of the returns was because of personal involvement of the researcher in the entire process. The analysis was based on 60 questionnaires completed and returned

Table 1 answers research question one. From the table

1 it is clear that the information needs provided for the prison inmates is mainly legal services 37(61.7%). Other needs includes educational 16(26.7%) and recreational 7(11.7%).

Table 2 provides answers to the other side of research question one. It shows that the prison inmates get their information needs mainly from library books 26 (43.3%), watching television 23(38.3%), magazines 5(8.3%), radio 3(5.0%), the internet 2(3.3%) and newspapers 1(1.7%) respectively.

Table 3 reveals that all information services are provided except exhibition and display services and computer services.

Table 4 reveals that, inmates use the resources on a daily basis 43(72%), weekly basis 11(18%), monthly 3(5%) and 3(30%) of the inmates do not use the resources at all.

Table 5 provide answers to the other side of research question three. It reveals that the main purpose of usage was for current issues 29(58%), followed by educational purpose 12(24%), then recreational purpose 9(18%).

Table 6 is a representation of the level of satisfaction derived from utilization of resources and services. This is to say that 12 respondents were HS with the radio and television services, 10 were MS with the item, 8 FS, 20NS, the mean score was 2.3. On library books 18 were HS, 12MS, 18 FS and only 2 were not satisfied, the mean score was 2.9. A total of 32 respondents were HS with the workshop/seminars, 4 MS, 9 FS and 5 NS, the mean score was 3.3. Another resource was newspaper/magazine which 3 were HS, 17 MS, 8 FS and 22 were NS, the mean score was 2.0. The last resource was literacy classes where 23 were HS, 15 MS, and 12 were fairly satisfied, the mean score was 3.2.

On the average, the respondents agreed that the level of satisfaction derived from utilization of library books, workshop/seminars and literacy classesresources and services were satisfied. Hence, the overall mean (2.7) is ≥ 2.5.

Table 7 is a representation of responses on the problems encountered in the provision of services to prison inmates, in which 27 respondents strongly agreed that lack of infrastructure was one of the problems, 14 agreed with the item, 4 and 15 disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that lack of infrastructure was one of the problems. The associated mean is 2.9, hence the respondents agreed that lack of infrastructure was one of the problems in the provision of services to prison inmates of Makurdi Medium Security Prison.

For the question on whether lack of modern information technology was a problem, 39 strongly agreed, 10 agreed, 3 disagreed and 8 strongly disagreed. The associated mean is 3.3, hence the respondents agreed that lack of modern information technology was a problem in the provision of services to prison inmates of Makurdi Medium Security Prison.

Table 1: How do the prison inmates in Makurdi Medium Security Prison get satisfaction for their information needs?

Information needs	Frequency (F)	Percentages %
Educational	16	26.7
Recreational	7	11.7
Legal services	37	61.7
Current issues	0	0.0
Reading skills	0	0.0
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 2: where do prison inmates get satisfaction for their information needs?

Sources of information	Frequency (F)	Percentage %
Television	23	38.3
Radio	3	5.0
Library books	26	43.3
Newspapers	1	1.7
Magazines	5	8.3
Internet	2	3.3
Total	60	100

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 3: Information services provided to prison inmates

Information services	Frequency (F)	Percentage %
Information literacy services	22	44.0
Referral services	2	4.0
Exhibition and display services	0	0.0
Literature services	8	16.0
Computer services	0	0.0
Reference services	18	36.0
Total	50	100

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 4: The frequency of usage of resources by prison inmates (for prison officials)

Frequency of usage	Frequency (F)	Percentage %
Daily	43	72
Weekly	11	18
Monthly	3	5
Do not use at all	3	5
Total	60	100

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 5: The purpose for using information resources

Purpose of usage	Frequency (F)	Percentage %
Educational	12	24.0
Recreational	9	18.0
To improve reading skills	0	0.0
To aware of current issues	29	58.0
Total	50	100

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 6: Level of satisfaction derived from utilization of resources and services

Resources	HS	MS	FS	NS	Mean	Decision
Radio and TV	12	10	8	20	2.3	Not satisfied
Library books	18	12	18	2	2.9	Satisfied
Workshop/seminars	32	4	9	5	3.3	Satisfied
Newspapers/magazines	3	17	8	22	2.0	Not satisfied
Literacy classes	23	15	12	0	3.2	Satisfied
Overall Mean					**2.74**	**Satisfied**

Source: Field Survey, 2016
Decision Rule:
If 2.0≤ overall mean<2.5 the respondents are Not Satisfied
If overall mean ≥2.5 the respondents are Satisfied

Table 7: Problems encountered in the provision of services to prison inmates of Makurdi Medium Security Prison

Problems	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Lack of infrastructure	27	14	4	15	2.9	Agree
Lack of modern information technology	39	10	3	8	3.3	Agree
Lack of funds	37	2	11	10	3.1	Agree
Inadequate qualified staff	10	1	25	24	2.0	Disagree
Inadequate library books	19	27	5	9	2.9	Agree
Overall Mean					**2.84**	**Agree**

Source: Field Survey, 2016
Decision Rule:
If 2.0≤ overall mean<2.5 the respondents are Disagree
If overall mean ≥2.5 the respondents Agree

For the question on whether lack of funds is a problem in the provision of services to prison inmates of Makurdi Medium Security Prison, which 37 strongly agreed, 2 agreed and 11 and 10agreed and strongly disagreed respectively that lack of funds is a problem in the provision of services to prison inmates of Makurdi Medium Security Prison.The associated mean score is 3.1, hence the respondents agreed that lack of funds is a problem in the provision of services to prison inmates of Makurdi Medium Security Prison.

For the question on whether inadequate qualified library staff was another problem in the provision of services to prison inmates of Makurdi Medium Security Prison, 10 strongly agreed, 1 agreed,25 disagreed, 24 strongly disagreed. The associated mean score is2.0. Hence, the respondents disagreed that inadequate qualified library staff was another problem in the provision of services to prison inmates of Makurdi Medium Security Prison.

Furthermore, for the question on whether inadequate library books is a problem in the provision of services to prison inmates of Makurdi Medium Security Prison, 19 respondents strongly agreed, 27 agreed, while 5 and 9 disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that inadequate library books is a problem in the provision of services to prison inmates of Makurdi Medium Security Prison. Since the associated mean is 2.9 the respondents agreed that inadequate library books is a problem in the provision of services to prison inmates of Makurdi Medium Security Prison.

On the average, the respondents agreed that the problems encountered in the provision of services to prison inmates of Makurdi Medium Security Prison includes; lack of infrastructure, lack of modern information technology, inadequate funds and library books. Hence, the overall mean (3.1) is ≥ 2.5.

Table 8 presents the responses on strategies to overcome the problems in the provision of services to prison inmates in Makurdi Medium Security Prison. shows the result of strategies that could be adopted to

Table 8: Strategies to overcome the problems in the provision of services to prison inmates in Makurdi Medium Security Prison.

Strategies	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Provision of separate library building	40	18	2	0	3.6	Agree
Recruitment of qualified library staff	38	18	3	1	3.6	Agree
Funds should be made available	43	16	1	0	3.7	Agree
Prison libraries should diverse other ways of building their collection	30	28	2	0	3.5	Agree
Modern information technology should be installed (satellite and internet)	30	16	13	1	3.3	Agree
Overall Mean					3.5	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2016
Decision Rule:
If 2.0≤ overall mean<2.5 the respondents are Disagree
If overall mean ≥2.5 the respondents Agree

overcome the problems encountered. 40 strongly agreed with the provision of separate library building, 18 agreed with the item, 2 disagreed. The mean score was 3.6. 38 respondents strongly agreed with recruitment of qualified library staff, 18 agreed and only 3 respondents disagreed with the item, the mean score was 3.6. For funds to be made available, 43 respondents strongly agreed, 16 agreed and 1 respondent disagreed, with a mean score of 3.7. On the need for prison libraries to diverse other ways of building their collections, 30 strongly agreed, 28 agreed with the item and only 2 respondent disagreed with the item, the mean score was 3.5. 30 respondents strongly agreed that modern information technology should be installed i.e. satellite and internet, 16 agreed with the item and 13 disagreed with the item, the mean score was 3.3.

On the average, the respondents agreed that the strategies to overcome the problems in the provision of services to prison inmates in Makurdi Medium Security Prison includes; provision of separate library building, recruitment of qualified library staff, funds should be made available, prison libraries should diverse other ways of building their collection and modern information technology should be installed (satellite and internet). Hence, the overall mean (3.5) is ≥ 2.5.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the result of the data analysis, the following findings as regard the subjectwas deduced;

The research shows that the prison inmates get their information needs from the legal services, educational and recreation sources.

The study revealed that the information services provided and used on a daily basis to prison inmates includes information literacy services, referral services, literature services and reference services.

The study revealed that the level of satisfaction derived from the utilization of library books, workshop/seminars and literacy classesresources and services were satisfied

The study revealed that prison inmates' purpose for using information resources includes educational purpose, recreational purpose and to be aware of current issues.

The study also revealed that the level of satisfaction derived from library books, workshop/seminars and literacy classes'utilization of resources and services was satisfied.

The study revealed that problems encountered in the provision of services to prison inmates in Makurdi Medium Security Prison includes lack of infrastructures, lack of modern information technology, lack of funds, inadequate qualified staff and inadequate library books. The most worrisome problem identified was the issue of funding; this has posed a great challenge to the prison authorities. This is because, the resources and services which could have been provided was not possible as funds were grossly inadequate.

The study further revealed that the strategies to overcome the problems in the provision of services to prison inmates includes; provision of separate library building, recruitment of qualified library staff, funds should be made available, prison libraries should diverse other ways of building their collection and modern information technology should be installed (satellite and internet).

CONCLUSION

The research also shows that the inmates used the resources on a daily basis to be abreast with current issues. The inmates were not satisfied with the current issues but seek more of workshops/seminars, literacy classes and library books. There were problems which where encountered that impeded the utilisation of resources by the prison inmates, however, the inmates differed with the officials, as the officials felt they were capable of handling resources needs of the inmates but the inmates felt qualified library staff could do better.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the findings and conclusion drawn from this research work.

i.   The prison authorities should provide separate buildings for the libraries, and public spirited individuals and Non Governmental Organisations should be encouraged to assist the prison authorities in their library collections and providing information resources and services to prisons.

ii.   The prison authorities should recruit qualified library staff, and also provide opportunities for the staff to be trained as qualified library staff to enhance adequate, current, timely dissemination and utilization of the resources and services to the inmates.

iii.   There should be an increase in budgetary allocation to the prison authorities by the government and to also encourage donor agencies to procure more resources for the prisons.

iv.   Modern information technology should be installed such as satellite and internet facilities to keep the prison inmate abreast on current issues.

v.   Seminars, workshops, and current awareness programmes should always be organize to make prison inmates have better understanding of their information needs.

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