Access and Utilisation of Information Resources by Inmates in Abia and Imo State Correctional Services

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Abstract

This study investigated the extent of access and utilisation of information resources by inmates in Abia and Imo States correctional services. Three research objectives were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study was 4396 of inmates, but 5% of the population participated in the study. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. 220 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to inmates, of which 208 copies were returned, representing 95% of distributed copies, which is a response rate. To analyse the data, descriptive statistics were employed using frequency tables, simple percentage and mean. The findings revealed that there are more male inmates than female inmates, between the ages of 26-30 years, and the majority of them have completed their O'level education. The study revealed that the more accessible information resources are computers, graphic materials, books, television, government publication, pamphlets, newspapers, magazines and radio. The findings further show that inmates utilised pamphlets, radio, computers, magazine, maps/atlases/globes, television, books and government publications. The study also revealed that inmates have factors that hinder their access and utilisation of these information resources; such as lack of conducive environment, inadequate facility, untrained staff, lack of interest by inmates and insufficient funding. The study concluded that the environment around the correction service is not conducive and therefore, does not encourage the full access and utilisation of information resources. One of the main recommendations made by this study is that authorities of the correction services should provide a conducive environment that would encourage learning and reading by inmates.

Keywords: Access, Correctional Services, Information Resources, Inmate, Utilisation.

Introduction

From time immemorial, humanity has employed information as a tool in the search for solutions to problems that he has come to grapple with. Humankind has found the information a veritable instrument in the constant search for knowledge and to attain development. Information is the result of processing, manipulating and organising data in a way that adds to the knowledge of the receiver. Information is the increase in knowledge obtained by the recipient by matching proper data elements to the variables of a problem (Ochai, 2007). Information being awareness on a given situation or phenomenon which propels one into action must be valid and usable. If accurate but not functional, it is obsolete or outdated. If usable but not correct, it is grapevine or

gossip. As information is vital in the life of all individuals for optimal development and the realisation of socio-political and economic activities, so it is for the survival of convicted persons during incarceration. Literature reveals that incarcerated persons have the same reading interest and, therefore, need information for their consumption like free members of the society (Dike, 2002).

With the recent trend of globalisation as one of the elements of ICT, the effectiveness in operations depends on a large extent of accessibility and utilisation of relevant information and records that are vital for operations. Accessibility is how prison inmates quickly obtain or locate information resources which include the catalogue cards, shelf-list, reading list, indexes, abstracts and bibliographies. Ugah (2008) had identified accessibility as one of the prerequisites of information utilisation. He also opined that the more accessible information sources are, the more likely they are to be used. Popoola and Haliso (2009), also affirms that information availability does not mean accessibility and use. Since there is growing concern in need for equal access to information, he argues that information generation, collection, organisation, recording and distribution, accessing and utilisation operate imperfectly.

Uhegbu (2007) asserts that "utilisation" is the actual putting into the appropriate use of acquired information. The utilisation of information differs from person to person and from one corporate organisation to the other according to their information needs and other socio-economic imperatives. It can be viewed within the context of need, accessibility and function performed. Utilisation varies among individuals, social groups, institutions, government agencies, organisations and establishments. 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) asserted that user understanding in terms of their age, gender, and educational background form the main principle of information utilisation. Information utilisation is referred to as the practical and maximum use of library information materials identified and acquired by a user to solve a problem.

Popoola and Haliso (2009), defined information resources as the information-bearing materials that are in both printed and electronic formats. Such as textbooks, journals, indexes, abstracts, newspapers and magazines, reports, CD-ROM databases, internet/e-mail, and videos, tapes/cassettes. Others are diskettes magnetic disk, computers, microforms etc. these information materials are the raw materials that libraries or information centres acquire, catalogue, stock and made available to their patrons as well as use to provide various other services. Information resources, the term 'resource' means a source of supply, usually in large quantity. A person is said to be "resourceful" when he or she is capable of handling difficult situations. Generally, resources are aids to the researcher. They are those materials, strategies, manipulations, apparatuses or consultations that help the researcher to enhance research and development. Information resources, therefore, include all forms of information carriers that can be used to promote and encourage practical research activities and developmental projects.

Although inmates are convicted and incarcerated for committing one crime or the other as a punitive measure, the inmates equally play a reformatory role as it pursues programmes that would enhance meaningful reintegration into the larger society upon release. Indeed, prisoners

constitute an important segment and could form a great workforce of any society. This is because the general profile of most inmates reveals that the majority of the inmates are youths of great strength and high intelligence who are often found to be within the age bracket of 18 and 45 years. They possess the capability to contribute to the meaningful development of their economy, particularly if their skills and talents are properly harnessed through reformation programmes (Chiemezie, 2005). Unfortunately, a great number of inmates are deficient in literacy as their weak educational background could be accounted for by their failing out of school and as such could not complete their education. Such a weak educational background often predisposes inmates to resort to a life of crime. Ameh (2010) reports that the correctional services are a "mixed grill" where both the poor and the rich, the highbrow and unsophisticated persons, the guilty and, sometimes, the innocent are kept, depending on the type of crime they have committed.

Today, society has shifted their focus from punishment of inmates to education, rehabilitation and the use of their time while serving in correctional services (Lehman and Locke, 2005). Rehabilitation in correctional services are means by which inmates are helped back to normal life during imprisonment. Education in prison is necessary because its provision will make the correctional services become places of continuous and informal learning rather than schools of crimes (Oreh, 2006).

Problem Statement

There are information needs of individuals in the correctional services which are to be met. Based on this, the enacted law of IFLA Guidelines for Prison Library reported that the Rule 40 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners states that every institution including prisons shall have a library for the use of all categories of prisoners. The library adequately stocked with a wide range of both recreational and instructional books, and prisoners shall be encouraged to make use of the resources (Grimes,2000).

The major objective of the correctional services is reformation and rehabilitation, which is the key element in correctional services to ensure that inmates are reformed and recovered from a life of crime (Akpe, 2004). Similarly, prisons were established to exploit devices and programs such as Adult and Remedial education for inmates, skills and vocational training, religious instructions, recreational and attitudinal change towards the achievement of reformation and rehabilitation of inmates to facilitate their social integration into the society after jail (Daramola, 2004). Information is essential in correctional services due to the vital role it plays in the reformation and rehabilitation of inmates. Prisoners, as members of the larger society, desire, and deserve information (Omagbemi 2007). No doubt, the correctional services are perceived to be more of custodian than rehabilitation because little and scanty attention is given to the need for library and information centres in correctional services (Enuku, 2000).Hence this study would examine the accessibility and utilisation of information resources by inmates in Abia and Imo State Correctional services of Nigeria.

Objectives

The general purpose of this study is to examine the extent of access and utilisation of information resources by inmates in Abia and Imo State Correctional Services.

The specific purpose is to:

1. determine the demographic characteristics of the Inmate of Abia and Imo State Correctional Services.
2. examine the extent of accessibility of information resources by inmates in Abia and Imo State Correctional Services.
3. determine the extent of utilisation of information resources by inmates in Abia and Imo Correctional Services.

Literature Review

Information resources are many, and they also vary but can be divided into two broad categories. The print and non- print resources, which include not only traditional print-on-paper media for instance books, journals, newspapers and maps, but also audiovisuals, CD-ROMS, computer software, online databases, internet, e-books, e-journals and other media (Halsey, 2005).

It is variously perceived that information resources are in various formats. Popoola and Haliso (2009) describe information resources as those information bearing materials that are in both print and non-print formats. The print is textbooks, journals, indexes, abstracts, newspapers, magazines, government publications, encyclopedias, gazettes, biographies, dictionaries, periodicals, maps/atlases, graphics, drawings and reports while the non-print formats are: CD-ROM databases, internet/e-mail, videotapes/cassettes, diskettes, magnetic disk, computers and microforms.

Information resources can also be seen as library materials including books, electronic books, grey literature (project reports, compendiums, bulletins, thesis and dissertations, statistical reports, manuscripts, government publications, journals, audio e-books, DVDs, Blu-rays console games, print and non- print materials).According to the University of Nottingham, they gave the following definitions and meanings of some information resources at http://www.universityofnottingham.html.

Books: Books may be textbooks at school or university level or more-detailed monographs.Textbooks provide:

- An in-depth overview of a subject
- A good grounding in a new discipline
- A comparison of differing ideas, theories and opinions
- Facts and figures

Books can become obsolete due to the length of time taken in the publishing process. This is more important in some subjects than others.

Dictionaries: It is good to have a dictionary nearby when you are reading a document, particularly if it is in a topic/area that is new to you. The types of dictionaries are specific and general, and they are useful in the following ways:

- Dictionaries are useful to find definitions of terms, subjects or topics
- Determine the subject context of a new topic to help with further searching
- Subject-specific dictionaries as types which provide definitions of specialist terms.
- Foreign language dictionaries translate foreign terms into English or vice versa.
- General which provide information on general knowledge.

Encyclopedias: Encyclopedias typically provide a little more detailed information than a dictionary, such as:

- A concise overview of the key aspects of a subject or concept
- A review of the history of a topic.
- References to further information
- Biographical details of key figures.

Some online encyclopedias you can explore are:

- Encyclopedia Britannica Academic edition http://www.britannica.com/
- Encyclopedia Africana http://www.
- eLS Citable reviews in the life sciences http://www.els.net/WileyCDA/ Encyclopedia of materials
- Many more in various subject areas.

Pamphlets: UNESCO (1994) defined pamphlets as "non-periodicals publications of at least five but not more than forty-eight pages, exclusive of the cover pages. Pamphlets are publications that address topics of current importance in any subject field, often in a controversial manner.

Magazines: Magazines are among the periodical publications because they appear at predetermined intervals, usually weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly. There is no indication as to when the last issue will appear. Magazines are mostly published by business concerns to maximise profit (Nnadozie, 2007).

Abdulsalami (2013), in his opinion, noted that the term "access" us used by different people with quite bits and pieces of the whole, as in "subject access, open access and knowledge access system". however, each refers to one or more aspects of providing means of access to information or in a fuller sense, knowledge and understanding.

Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), reveal that efforts are being made worldwide to promote access to information in all formats. They lament the attendant features of underdevelopment such as power failure, machine breakdown and lack of spare parts, and technicians which intermittently stall the performance of the modern gadgets of information storage and transfer in developing countries.

Garba (2009), posits that information resources can be accessed through the use of telecommunication and information technology. it enables access to information and services by minimising the barriers of distance and cost as well as the usability of interference. If the

resources are in-print format, but the user does not understand the language, which is written, it means the resources are not accessible. The accessibility of information resources depends on the ability of inquirer to make use of the resources effectively.

Information access is any means through which an information seeker gets the required information to meet his/her information need. Access has also termed the freedom and ability to obtain and make use of information resources. Accessibility is a general term used to describe the degree to which a system is usable by a wide range of users as possible. In other words, it is the degree of ease with which it is possible to reach a certain location from other locations.

Accessibility of information sources is an important recurring theme in the literature. Information access should be a priority in the prisons rather than punishing offenders and depriving them of their fundamental human rights to information. The Nigerian constitution of fundamental human rights still preserves the right of these prisoners access to information. This is further collaborated by the Freedom of Information Bill (FOIB) asserted by the former Nigerian President, Goodluck Jonathan, on the 28th May 2011 (Nigerian Tribune, 2011).Accessibility to useful information during jail terms should be given to inmates so that they can be more productive and useful economically, socially, politically and morally after jail term. Access to information can be achieved in the prison environment if the information channels are favourably intact, and prisoners are encouraged to access it.

The utilisation of information resources refers to the extent to which users make use of the resources of a library or information centres to meet their information needs. However, the type and nature of information resources utilise among inmates is the focuses of this study.

Greens (2003), maintains that information used in the libraries or information centres is an evasive action which may mean several things. Example; information is useful in facilitating development programmes in many countries. These help in supporting economic and social developments. Use of the information is important in dealing with the problem of utilisation in a library or information centre, especially when planned. Data obtained from the use of resources could be used in decision making regarding the collection. For a library or information centre to play its role effectively, it must support intellectualism and direct the growth of its collections and services to the need of its users.

Vickery (2004) noted that one the collection of a library or information centre had been established; it needs to be properly managed to improve its use. Collection management strategies need to be employed into consideration both the use of the resources and access to alternative sources of information to the users. To know the effectiveness of the use of information resources by patrons, it is important to know the opinion of the cross-section of the users. The more a library or information centre can meet patron's needs, the higher it must be rated, and a library or information centre that fails almost all the time to meet the patron's needs would be rated low. In likewise manner, the performance of the members of staff is rated good only when users have been satisfied. The correctional services information resources are also in the same format as other existing information resources are either in print, non-print or electronic forms.

Utilisation can be achieved if there is adequate access to information. Popoola (2003) observed that information utilisation leads to user's liberation from ignorance. Information accessibility which in turn leads to information utilisation helps individuals to behave or act in an informed manner (Uheghu, 2007).Every individual, whether literate or not has information needs such could be recreation, leisure or meeting tasks that are considered critical to survival.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey design which was used to carry out the study. The study population was made up of Four Thousand Three Hundred and Ninety-Six (4396) Inmates in both Abia and Imo Correctional Services. The sample size of the study is 220 (5%) from the total population of 4396.

Umuahia Correctional Services, 107 inmates were given questionnaires, and all 107 of the questionnaires were returned. For Owerri Correctional Services, 113 questionnaires were distributed, while 101 were returned. The total return rate for the two Correctional Service was 95%.

Findings and Discussion

Two hundred and twenty (220) questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, out of which 208 were completed, returned and found useful for the analysis. The tables below present the results of the data analysed.

Table 1: The Demographic Characteristics of Inmates in Abia and Imo State Correctional Services

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	193	88.1
Female	13	5.9
Total	**208**	**95**
Age		
18-25	63	28.8
26-30	71	32.1
31-35	33	15.1
36-40	27	12.3
41 above	14	6.4
Total	**208**	**95**
Level of Education		
FSLC	54	24.7
WASC/O'LEVEL	112	51.2
OND/ND/NCE	20	9.0
HND/B.Sc	21	9.6
M.Sc	1	0.5
Total	**208**	**95**

Source: ***Field Survey, 2018***

Table 1 presents the results of data analysis on the demographic distribution of inmates in frequencies and percentages. As for th00e gender, the table reveals that the majority of the inmates of this 193 (92.8%), were males, while 13 (7.2%) were females. The implication of this is the involvement of men in crime tends to be higher than the participation of the female. The table revealed that 63 (30.3%) of the inmates were between the ages of 18 to 25 years, 71 (34.1%) of the inmates were aged between 26 to 30 years, 33 (15.9%) were between 31 to 35 years, and 27 (13.0%) were between 36 and forty years, while the remaining 14 (6.7%) inmates were age 41 and above. This finding implies that the inmates in the study areas consist of energetic youths who can contribute their quota as citizens to the nation and its economy. The table also revealed that 112 (53.8%) of the inmates had completed their O'level education. This group of respondents were the highest.54 (26%) of the inmates First School Leaving Education (FSLC), 20 (9.6%) OND/ND/NCE certificates, 21 (10.1%) inmates had HND/B.Sc. and while 1 (0.5%) of the inmate had completed a Master Degree Programme. The implication of these findings is that majority of the inmates are not highly educated, which influence their information needs and use of the library due to the level of their educational qualification obtained.

The study found out that there are more male inmates than female inmates in the two prison studied. And the majority of the inmates have completed their O'level education. The study also shows that majority of the respondents were between the ages of 26-30 years. The implication of these is that most of the inmates are relatively literate and so could read and write, and they are mostly in their young ages. This agrees with the findings of Adegboye (2015) that there were more male inmates than the female counterpart out of the 229 samples in Correctional Services in the North Central States of Nigeria. That majority of the inmates were young and energetic.

Table: Extent of Accessibility of Information Resources by Inmates

S/N	Item Statement	VHE	LE	F	NE	Mean	Remark	Rank
1	Books	24	50	47	87	2.95	Accept	3
2	Newspaper	54	50	25	79	2.62	Accept	7
3	Pamphlet	35	58	61	54	2.64	Accept	6
4	Encyclopedia	38	87	58	25	2.34	Reject	10
5	Dictionaries	47	87	51	23	2.24	Reject	12
6	Illustrated books	58	89	44	17	2.10	Reject	15
7	Magazine	34	60	65	49	2.62	Accept	7
8	Tapes	96	58	25	29	1.94	Reject	17
9	Radio	51	37	82	38	2.51	Accept	9
10	Television	14	30	129	35	2.89	Accept	4
11	Video Cassettes	8	20	83	97	2.29	Reject	11
12	CDs	11	26	67	104	2.21	Reject	13
13	Computers	16	20	70	102	3.21	Accept	1
14	Journals	77	53	44	34	2.17	Reject	14
15	Government Publication	11	46	110	41	2.87	Accept	5
16	Graphic Materials	13	34	105	56	2.98	Accept	2
17	Maps/Atlas/Globe	9	31	112	56	2.05	Reject	16

Source: ***Field Survey, 2018*** **Criterion Mean=2.5**

Table 2 presents data analysis of the extent of accessibility of information resources by inmates in both the Umuahia and Owerri Correctional Services. From the table, there are seventeen (17) items with the various extent of their accessibility based on their mean scores. The accepted items show access to computers (3.21), graphic materials (2.98), books (2.95), television (2.89), government publication (2.87), pamphlets (2.64), newspapers and magazines (2.62) and radio (2.51) were all accepted due to their mean scores which were higher than the criterion mean of the study. However, items which include encyclopedia (2.34), video cassettes (2.29), and dictionaries (2.24). Others are CDS (2.21), journals(2.17), illustrated books (2.10), maps/atlases/globes (2.05) and tapes (1.94) were rejected due to their mean scores were below the 2.5 criterion mean. The findings portray the low level of accessibility of information resources by inmates.

The study found out that some information resources in Umuahia and Owerri Correctional Services are accessible to inmates. Accessibility of the resources means different things to different inmates. To some, the mere fact that they could see and can get close to these information resources mean accessibility, while to others accessibility is unrestricted access to the item in question. However, the resources that inmates reported having access to include computers, graphic materials, books, television, government publications, pamphlet, newspapers, magazines, and radio. Items such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, illustrated books, tapes, video cassettes and CDs, journals, maps, atlas and globes, were however not highly accessible to inmates.

This finding implies that inmates do not have access to the complete resources provided by the prison library. Since access is limited to specific resources, there is limited knowledge of developments outside the correctional services yard, and little opportunity for the interested inmates, to develop themselves. The very essence of the prison institution is for character reformation and successful reintegration of incarcerated persons into the society. This objective will be defeated if inmates are denied access to information resources. Therefore, accessibility to information plays a central role in the reformation process. Emasealu and Popoola (2016) revealed the set standards for the convicted inmates include treatment, classification and individualisation, privileges, work, educations and recreations, and social relations and aftercare.

Table 3: Extent of Utilisation of Information Resources by Inmate

S/N	Item Statement	VHE	LE	F	NE	Mean	Remark	Rank
1	Books	98	46	21	43	2.78	Accept	7
2	Newspaper	78	94	24	12	1.86	Reject	16
3	Pamphlet	6	9	77	116	3.46	Accept	1
4	Encyclopedia	31	97	61	10	2.33	Reject	10
5	Dictionaries	49	109	35	15	2.08	Reject	14
6	Illustrated books	54	101	42	11	2.05	Reject	15
7	Magazine	16	48	86	58	2.89	Accept	4
8	Tapes	19	48	98	43	2.41	Reject	9
9	Radio	8	34	90	76	3.13	Accept	2
10	Television	13	52	102	41	2.82	Accept	5
11	Video Cassettes	11	33	78	86	2.29	Reject	11
12	CDs	11	26	67	104	2.21	Reject	12
13	Computers	15	33	72	88	3.12	Accept	3
14	Journals	9	63	91	45	2.17	Reject	13
15	Government Publication	19	'60	92	37	2.71	Accept	8
16	Graphic Materials	87	97	17	7	1.73	Reject	17
17	Maps/atlas/globe	19	46	89	54	2.86	Accept	6

Source: ***Field Survey, 2018*** **Criterion Mean=2.5**

From table 3, responses to the question on the extent of utilisation of information resources by inmates of Umuahia and Owerri Correctional Services. The table contains

seventeen (17) information resource items which show utilisation based on mean scores. Pamphlets with a mean score of (3.45), radio (3.13), computers (3.12), magazine (2.89), maps/atlases/globes(2.86), while television (2.82), books (2.78) and government publications (2.71)were all accepted as being utilised, having mean scores above the 2.5 criteria mean used for this study. However, items such as tapes (2.41), video cassettes (2.29), encyclopedia (2.33), CDs (2.21), journals(2.17), dictionaries (2.08), illustrated books (2.05), newspapers (1.86) and graphic materials (1.73)were rejected, as their mean scores were below the criterion mean. This finding indicates that only a few of these information resources were fully utilised.

The study found out that though some information resources are accessible to inmates, their utilisation is not commensurate with the extent of accessibility. The study reveals that the information resources utilised by inmates are pamphlets, radio, computers, magazines, television, maps/atlases/globes, government publications, and books. The utilisation of pamphlets by inmates maybe since many Non-governmental Organisations (NGO) and religious groups visit the correctional services and distribute many pamphlet publications. And the utilisation of government publications by inmates suggests their interest in knowing the current government position about their incarceration.

The utilisation of television and radio suggests that these inmates may, from time to time, be brought together in considerable space and some television or radio programmes are used to entertain and enlighten them. However, inmates were not utilising information resources such as encyclopedia; dictionary; illustrated books; tapes and video cassettes. The inmates of Owerri and Umuahia Correctional Services are not using most information resources. This means that many of the resources are irrelevant, outdated and of less importance to inmates, which indicates that Umuahia and Owerri Correctional Services libraries have not fully met the standard for inmates in the libraries. The utilisation of information resources could be a useful tool to ensure the restoration of inmates into a socially acceptable life. This finding supports the findings of Ibikunle (2015) who reported that information resources are made available to inmates in Northcentral Correctional Services but that they are less utilised.

Conclusion

The result from this study revealed that information materials should be made accessible through library awareness programmes by the staff in the correctional facilities, thereby helping the inmates improve their lifestyle and knowing that most of them are in their young age. The utilisation of information resources will help the inmates be socially accepted since they are not in the outside world; it will make them aware of happenings in the outside world.

Recommendations

The study on the accessibility and utilisation of information resources by inmates of Umuahia and Owerri Correctional Services is recommending the following:

1. Information materials in Umuahia and Owerri Correctional Services libraries should be accessible to all categories of inmates.

2. Library staff in the Correctional Center libraries should develop programmes that will bring the inmates to utilise the information materials in a conducive environment that would encourage learning and reading by the inmates.
3. The government should improve on the funding to the Correctional Services libraries, and provide adequate information resources that are useful and relevant to the inmates.

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