

## **A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF RESEARCHERS IN NIGERIA LIBRARIES: LIBRARIANS PERCEPTIVE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study investigates researcher's information seeking behaviour in Nigeria libraries. The design of the study is cross sectional survey of researchers in the libraries and the population consists of 364 (1st Conference of Certified Librarians) from various libraries and institutions across Nigeria by the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) held on the 18th–23rd May, 2014. The instrument used to generate data is the questionnaire and the data generated was analyzed using frequency, bar charts, percentages and mean. The outcome of the study reveals that researchers in Nigeria libraries seeking for academic/ research information, current awareness information, business information, industrials attachment/employment, sports/ entertainment and personal health information among other. It also noted that textbooks are the major information materials consulted by the researchers in the libraries. The results provide an insight into the challenges associated with information seeking behaviour of researchers in Nigeria libraries such as network fluctuate, inadequate knowledge of use of catalogue, insufficient librarian, incompleteness of records, lack of time to access information resources, nonchalant attitude of library staff and information scattered in too many sources among other.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Information is an important tool used in the realization of any objective or goal of the library. Information is an important factor in any library because they are needed by users. Every library user needs information of increasing variety and diversity of levels, frequencies, volume and with ease. Therefore, information need stems from a vague awareness of something missing and as culminating in locating information that contributes to understanding and meaning. Library Patrons seek information because they need information resources to survive in all sectors of life (Ajiboye and Tella, 2007, Fiankor and Adams, 2004, Fatima and Ahmad (2008)). The information need (or need for information) is a factual situation in which, there exists an inseparable interconnection with "information" and "need", information needs can therefore be said to be the amount of positive information an individual or group of users need to have for their work, recreation and many other like satisfaction. Thus, information need arise wherever individuals find themselves in a situation requiring knowledge to deal with the situation as they see fit. In other words, lack of information needed to accomplish a task results in information need which several authors have variously described and explained ((Singh and Satija, 2006; Fiankor and Adams, 2004; Adeniyi, 2007). Information needs are diverse and constantly changing and not amenable to generalization. Information needs can be social, economic, political, cultural or educational. However, information need is characterized mostly by the information seeking behaviour of the person in need of information. Information seeking behaviour is a broad term, which

involves a set of actions that an individual, such as undergraduates, takes to express information needs, seek information, evaluate and select information and finally uses this information to satisfy his/her information needs (Fatima and Ahmad, 2008). It is therefore described as an individual's way and manner of gathering and obtaining information for personal use, knowledge, updating and development. In other words, information seeking behaviour involves active or purposeful information as a result of the need to complete course assignment, prepare for class discussions, seminars, workshops, conferences, or write final year research paper. Though, Singh and Satija (2006) see information seeking behavior as a human process that requires adaptive and reflective control over the afferent and efferent actions of the information seeker in which information seeking behaviour results from the recognition of some needs, perceived by the user, who as a consequence makes demand upon a formal system such as libraries and information centres or some other person in order to satisfy the perceived information need. Thus, they pointed out that information seeking behaviour essentially refers to locate discrete knowledge elements concerned with the three basic resources namely, people, information and system.

Information seeking behaviour is an area of dynamic interest among librarians, information scientist, communication scientists, sociologist, and psychologists. Information seeking behaviour is expressed in various forms, from reading printed material to research and experimentation (Bhatti, 2010). Information users make active and intentional attempts to seek up to date information from the library resources, including, electronic sources. It is worthy to also note that the advent of information technology has revolutionized the field of library and information services and has brought about considerable changes in the information seeking behaviour of users. Though there seems to exist many reasons and sources of information to the information user, the academic library occupies a central position in the information seeking process of researcher's in Nigerian libraries.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century can best be described as an era of information revolution, with the presence of information bearing materials in diverse formats. Libraries and information centers are not only equipped with materials in traditional formats but also in electronic formats offering users a vast selection. With the array of information sources available in the Nigeria library, little wonder then that the library is known as the heart of the university (Odiase, Unegbu, and Haliso, 2001).

Information seeking behaviour according to Wilson (2000) entails the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information including active and passive information seeking. In the quest for information, different kinds of behaviour are manifested as students have different reasons for wanting information, different levels of search skill and preference for some types of information bearing materials. Leckie, Pettigrew & Sylvain (1996) affirm that information seeking involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being sought, and the ways and sources with which needed information is being sought.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study is to investigate researcher's information seeking behaviour in Nigeria Libraries which will enable libraries, stakeholders and academic librarians deliver standard services. It is also aimed to determine kinds of information are needed by the researchers, discovers the purpose for information seeking by researchers, as well as

determine most consulted materials in Nigeria Libraries and find out challenges faced by researchers while seeking information in Nigeria libraries.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What kinds of information are needed by the researchers in Nigeria Library?
- For what reasons do researchers seek information in the library?
- Type of information materials consulted by the researchers in the Library?
- What challenges associated with information seeking behaviour of researchers' in the Library?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Information seeking behaviour is an area of dynamic interest among librarians, information Scientist, communication scientists, sociologist, and psychologists. Information seeking behaviour is expressed in various forms, from reading printed material to research and experimentation (Bhatti, 2010). Information users make active and intentional attempts to seek up to date information from the library resources, including, electronic sources. It is worthy to also note that the advent of information technology has revolutionized the field of library and information services and has brought about considerable changes in the information seeking behaviour of users. Information behaviour is the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking and information use (Wilson (2000). The need for information is often understood as evolving from a vague awareness of something missing and as culminating in locating information that contributes to understanding and meaning (Kunhthau, 1993)). In the search for information, Marchionini (1989), notes, that the execution of an individual's information-seeking system for a particular information problem is considered an Information-Seeking Strategy (ISS). A well designed strategy will examine the problem and work out the best source of information that will match the information need.

Many researchers have shown interest in users' information seeking behaviour. Whitmire (2001) in such study found out that undergraduates use the library mostly as a place to study and make photocopies, but do not make great use of some of the available library services, such as interlibrary loan and the reference desk. In another study, Ajiboye and Adeyinka (2007) examined the information seeking behaviour of undergraduate students in the University of Botswana. The result of the study revealed that the internet is the most consulted source, followed by students' class notes and handouts. This finding is further confirmed by Valentine (1993) who conducted a similar study and found out that researchers looked for the fastest way that would lead to satisfactory results when doing research by going for electronic information sources first. Chikonzo and Aina (2006) researched into the information needs and sources of information used by veterinary students at the University of Zimbabwe. Findings from the study revealed that writing assignments and studying for tests or examination were the primary tasks for which they required information and the major sources used to obtain information were books, videos, lecture notes, handouts, the internet, projects, CD-ROM database and journals. The students confirmed making little use of indexes, abstracts and dissertations.

Mann (1993) notes that most students use a subject–disciplinary method in seeking for information which leads them to specific lists of resources on particular subjects. The author

points out that while this method allows students and researchers to find more specific sources, it limits their knowledge of the fact that work of interest to their subject appears within the literature of many other disciplines which impinges on how much they get out of the library system. Kerins, Madden and Fulton (2004), examined the information-seeking patterns of final year undergraduate engineering students split evenly between two engineering institutes in Irish universities. It was reported that engineering students seem to have a preference for channels that require the least effort, such as the Internet. They explained that the result was due to the fact that student engineers viewed the Internet as a speedy, current information source which fed initial information needs quickly. Ellis, Cox and Hall (1993), on the other hand, compared the information-seeking patterns of physical and social scientists and found out that there is no essential difference between the two disciplines. Covi (1999) analyzed information seeking behaviour of academic researchers in the field of molecular biology, literacy theory, and computer science and their use of digital libraries. The result of the study indicated differences in the search strategies employed and the types of material selected among the researchers in the various academic disciplines. Researchers like (Bates, 1996; Broadus, 1987) also investigated the information-seeking behaviours of people in the humanities. They generally reported that humanities scholars did not use indexes and abstracts or consult librarians.

Kamanda (1999) in a study at the East African School of Library and Information Science Library, Makerere University, Uganda observed that more than half of the students experience problems locating library information materials. He noted that the majority of them either located materials through browsing the shelves or sought assistance from library staff, but they did not make full use of the card catalogue. Ssendikadiwa (1996) made similar observation at Makerere University library. The author noted that although the catalogue was the most essential library tool in accessing library collections, it was the most avoided and least consulted by undergraduates. Taylor (1991), on the other hand identified problems associated with availability and access to resources. According to the author, what a user actually needs may not tally with what is practically available, due to constraints either within the stock or due to the users own inability. Hartmann (2001) in his study concluded that undergraduate students experienced difficulty in locating items from the library collection and did not understand the processes for retrieving journal articles. Adelani (2002) in his study drew attention to the fact that there are spectrums of factors affecting information needs and this include age, educational level and linguistic ability of the user as well as other job related factors such as rank and length of experience, the nature of work (i.e. management, research or teaching) the subject field, the stage that a project has reached, size of the immediate work team, nature of the institution where the user works (academic or industrial), size of the institution and the communication structure within the institution. People according to Safahieh (2007) essentially need information for five broad functions and these functions are the fact- finding function, which provides answers to specific question, the current awareness function, which keeps information up-to-date, the research function, which investigates a new field in-depth, the briefing function, which obtains a background understanding of an issue, and the stimulus function, which provides ideas to obtain stimulus.

Owalabi, Jimoh and Okpeh (2010) in their study of information seeking behaviour of Polytechnic students discovered that 285 (59.4%) of their respondents needs information in relation to their academic. It shows that students use information primarily for academic purposes. The study concluded that students at the polytechnic seek information to improve their academic performance. In a different study carried out by Fatima and Ahmad (2008), the findings show that 30 (50%) of the respondents seeks information on career development

and other reason include seeking information for problem solving, keeping up-to-date and the need to write an article or research paper. The study of Ajiboye and Tella (2007) conducted on university undergraduate's information-seeking behaviour show that 12% of the respondents (researchers) required information for their personal development, while 11.25% claimed that they sought for information on health matter, and 64.1% sought for information for their academic development, 9.3% seeks information to secure employment. Also, Bhatti (2010) using faculty members at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, respondents indicated their purposes of seeking information 88% sought information for teaching purpose (preparing class lectures), 68 percent for literature searches, 43% to borrow books or journal articles, fifty-four percent of faculty members consult the library for research and 43% for keeping their knowledge up to date, and 27 percent visit the library for reading newspapers and magazines (recreational purposes). This clearly show that nearly all the respondents use library resources or seek for information for teaching with more than half seeking for research and a smaller number for various other purposes. The study of Adeniyi (2007) reveals that lecturers of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ogun State seek for information in order to get information on teaching and research, while Oyediran- Tidings (2004) in her empirical research on information needs and seeking behaviour of library users reveals that greater percentage of the respondents usually seek for information concerning their course. To her, this is not unexpected because the quest for certificate in their respective field of study forms their primary aim of being in the college. From the various studies carried out by various authors in different places, it is quite obvious that the reasons why individuals seek for information varies in line with the educational and economic background of the individual. Therefore, it is not safe to generalize the reasons for seeking information. From the various studies carried out by various authors in different places, it is quite noticeable that the reasons why individuals seek for information varies in line with the educational and economic background of the individual. Therefore, it is not sound well to generalize the type and reasons for seeking information in Nigeria libraries. Factors that influence information needs and seeking behavior of researchers include age, gender, type of libraries, educational level, professional work experience and situation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study was carried out using a social survey method. The research instrument adopted for the study was questionnaire. The instrument was structured to compare relevant information about information seeking behaviour of researchers in Nigeria Libraries. It was validated using expert opinion. There, liability of the instrument was tested using test-retest method. Twenty five questionnaires were administered to librarians in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria. The completed questionnaires were returned and re-administered to the same set of librarians, and the responses were the same with the previous ones. The population of the study was 364 (1st Conference of Certified Librarians) from various libraries and institutions across Nigeria by the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) held on the 18th–23rd May, 2014. A total of 274 respondents were selected out of the total population. The researcher administered and collected the questionnaire from the respondents. Thus there was 92% response rate were completed and returned. The data collected through questionnaire are here by analyzed using simple percentages were adopted for easy analysis and interpretation.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Out of 274 copies of the questionnaire that were administered to, 1st conference of certified librarians in Nigeria, 253 (92%) were retrieved. The data from the retrieved questionnaire are hereby analyzed using simple statistic.

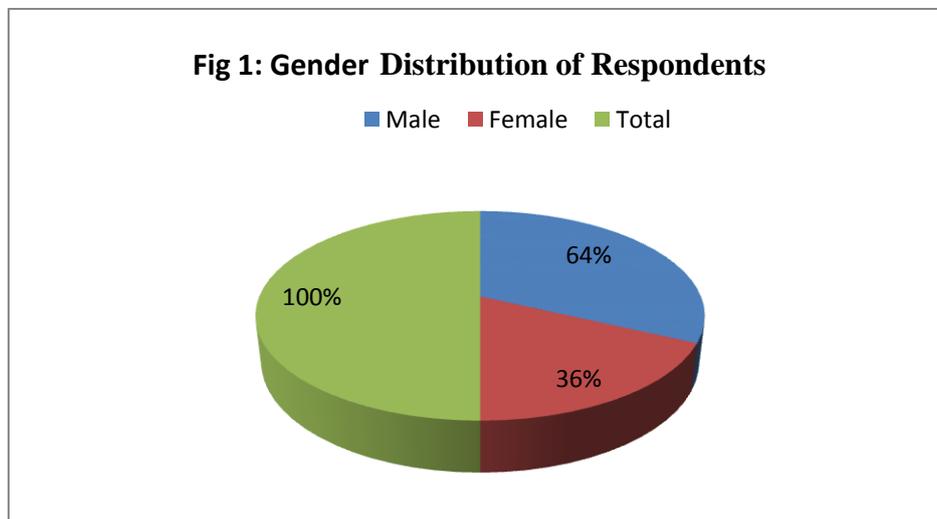


Fig. 1 shows that (64%) of the respondents are male while (36%) are female. This represents the gender distribution of participants involved in the survey.

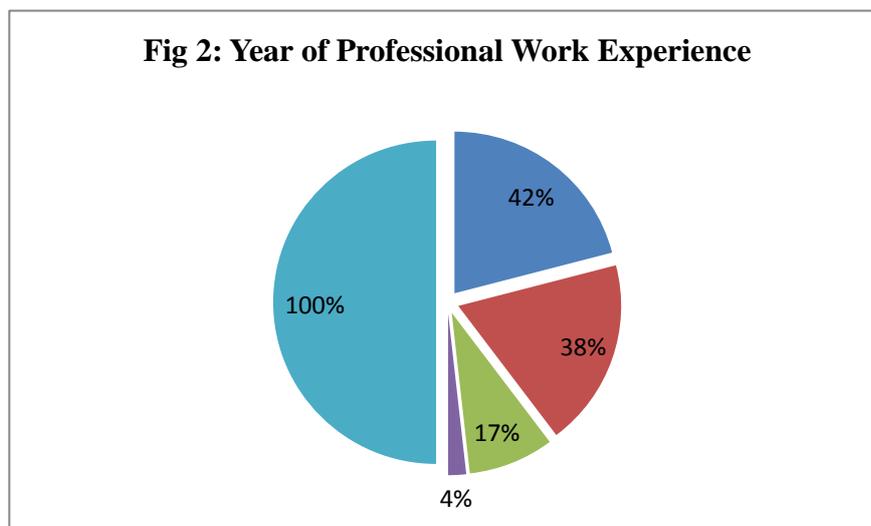
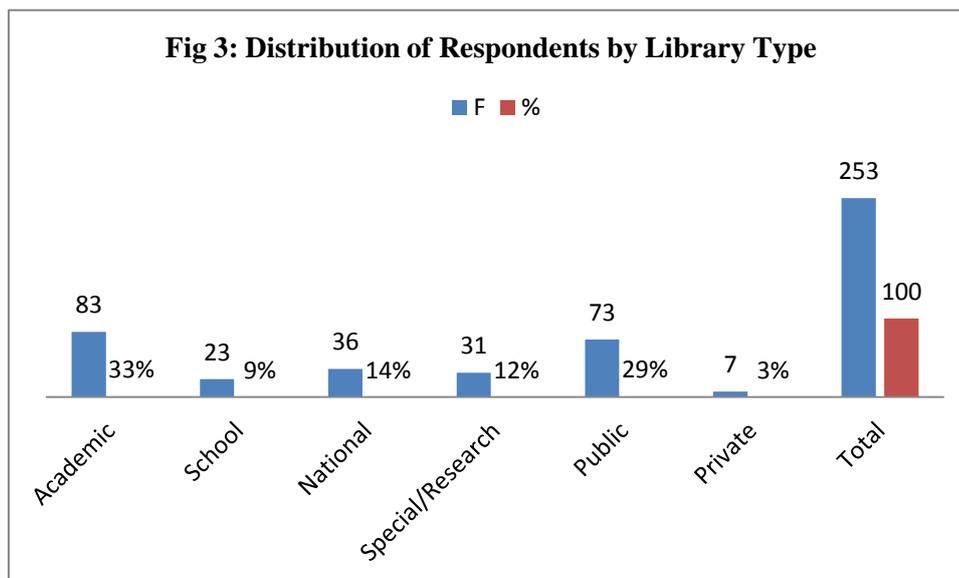
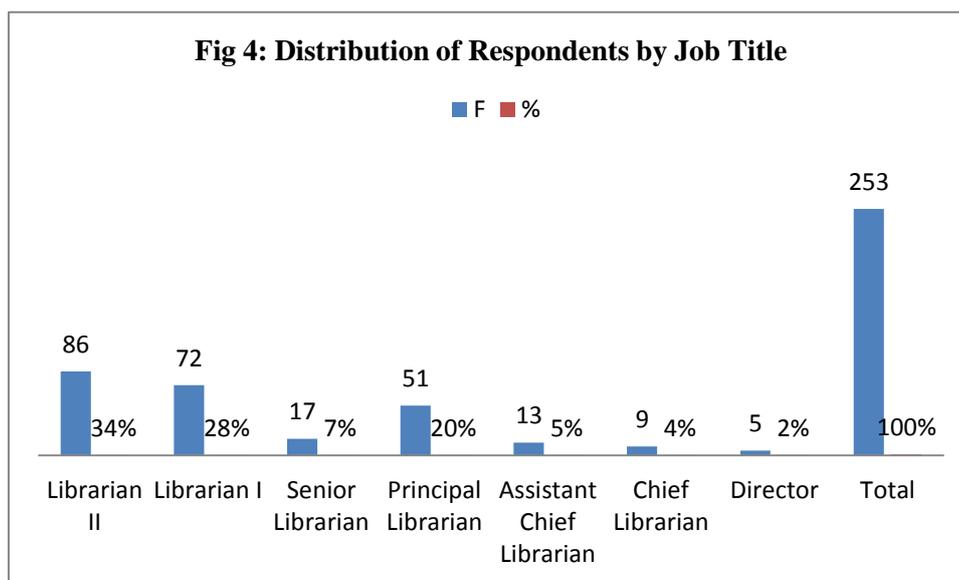


Figure 2 reveals that (38%) of the respondents had 6-10 years of experience, (42%) had <5 years of experience, (17%) of the respondents had 11-15 years of work experience while (4%) had above 15 years of experience. This indicated that most of the respondents have longer years of work experience.



It is obvious from fig 3 that majority (33%) of the respondents were from academic library while (29%) were from public library whereas (14%) were from national library while (12%) were from special/ research library and (3%) were from private library.



It is obvious from fig 4, that (34%) of the respondents were librarian II, (28%) of the respondents were librarian I, while (20%) of the respondents were principal librarian whereas (5%) of the respondent were assistant chief librarian, (4%) of the respondents were chief librarian while (5%) of the respondents were director from various libraries and institutions across Nigeria libraries.

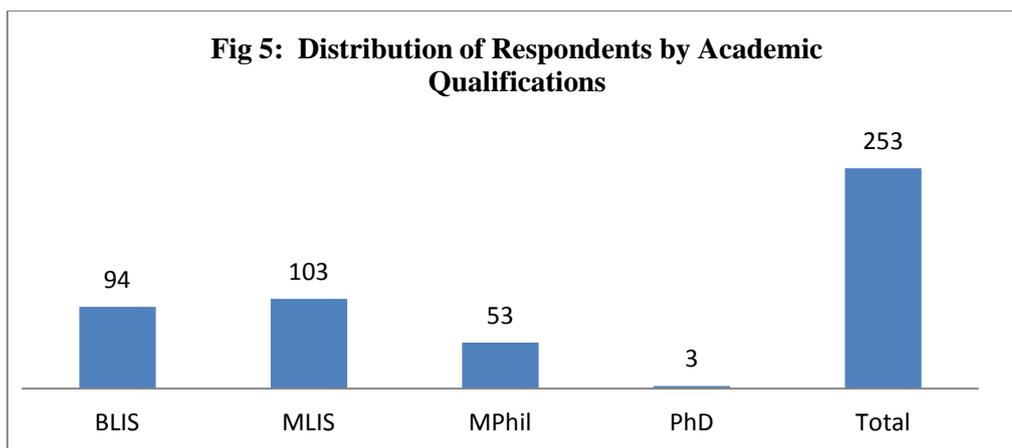
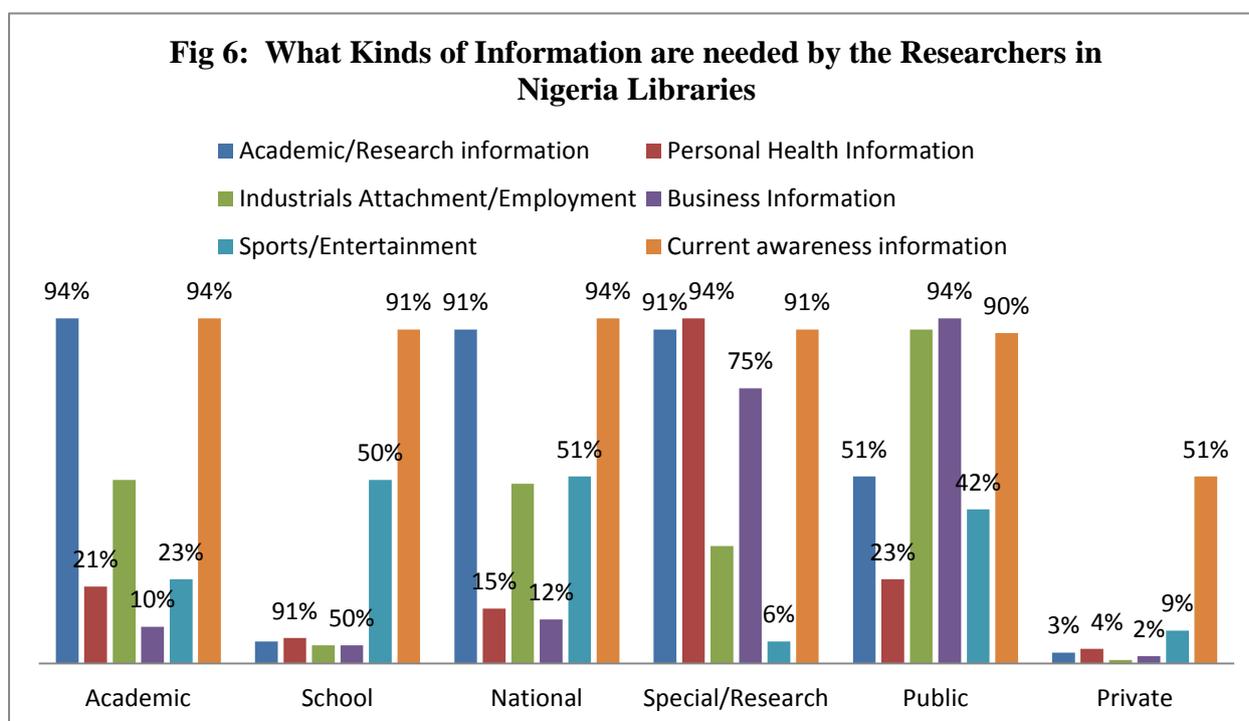


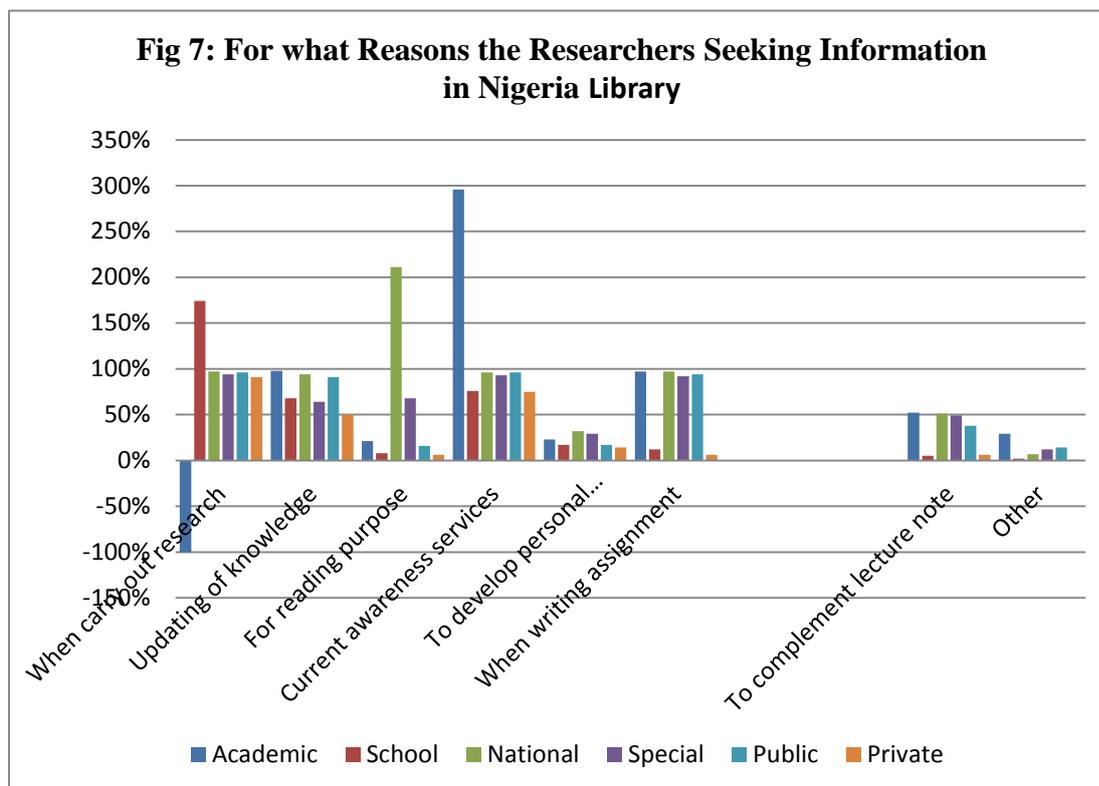
Fig 5, shows that majority (41%) of the respondents had master’s degree while (37%) had first degree in library and information science whereas (21%) had Mphil and (3%) had Doctorate degrees (Ph.D.)



N.B The participants were required to indicate more than one response to the items in the questionnaire.

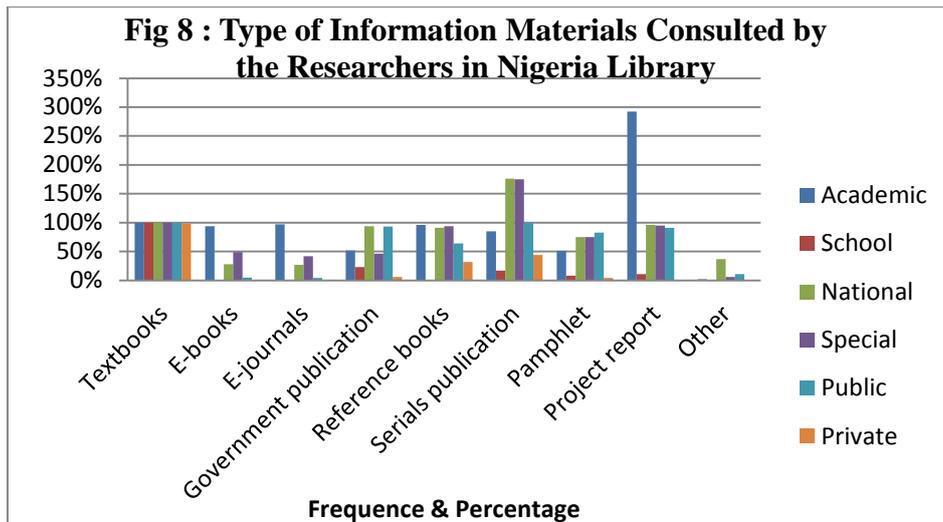
From fig 6, shows that (94%) from academic library, (51%) from public library, (91%) from national library and special/research library respectively indicated that they needed academic/research information. Also, (94%) from special/research library, (21%) from academic library while (23%) from public library reveal that they needed personal health information. (91%) from public library, (50%) from academic library, while (49%) from national library affirmed that they needed industrial attachment/ employment information whereas (94%) from public library, (75%) from special/research library needs business information. However, (51%) from national library, (50%) from school library while (42%) from public library respectively indicated that they needed sports/entertainment information whereas ((94%) from academic and national library indicated current awareness services

while (91%) from school library and special/research library respectively indicated that they needed current awareness information in Nigeria library.



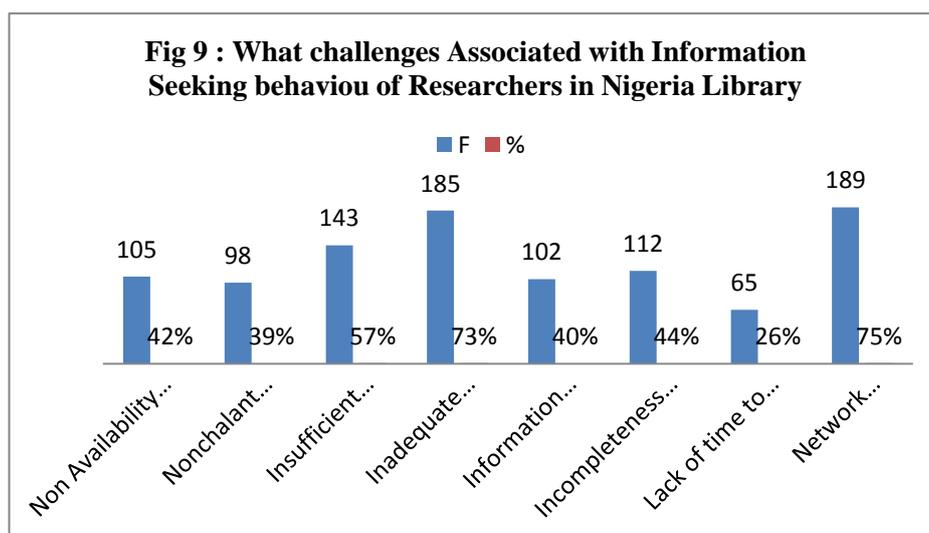
N.B The participants were required to indicate more than one response to the items in the Questionnaire.

From fig 7, analysis showed that (100%) from academic library are seeking for information when carry out research, (97%) from national library, (96%) from public library, (94%) from special/research library, (91%) from private library and (74%) from school library seek for information when carrying out research in Nigeria libraries. Also, (98%) from academic library, (68%) from school library, (94%) from public library and (50%) from private library seek for information to update their knowledge whereas (21%) from academic library, (8%) from school library, (11%) from national library, (68%) from special/research library, (66%) from public library while (6%) from private library seek for information for reading purpose only. Meanwhile, (96%) from academic library, national library and school library seek for current awareness services while (97%) from national and academic library seek for information when writing assignment.



N.B The participants were required to indicate more than one response to the items in the Questionnaire

From fig 8, analysis showed that textbooks (100%) are the most information materials consulted by the researchers in Nigeria libraries whereas (94%) from academic library consulted e-books, while (49%) from special/research library consulted e- books and (97%) from academic library consulted e-journals. Also, (42%) from specials/ research library consulted e-journals. (52%) from academic library consulted government publication whereas (93%) from public library consulted government publication. Also, (96%) from academic library consulted reference books while (91%) from national library consulted reference books and (94%) from special/research library consulted reference books whereas (85%) from academic library consulted serials publication while (100%) from public library consulted serials publication, (76%) from national library consulted serial publication while (75%) from special/research library consulted serial publication. Also, (92%) from academic library consulted project report, (96%) from national library consulted project report while (95%) from special/research library consulted project report and (91%) from public library consulted project report.



N.B The participants were required to indicate more than one response to the items in the Questionnaire

Figure 9 showed that (75%) identified network fluctuate as a major challenges associated with information seeking behavior of researchers in Nigeria libraries while (73%) emphasis on inadequate knowledge of use of catalogue, (57%) indicated insufficient librarians in the library while (44%) indicated incompleteness of records whereas (40%) indicated information scattered in too many sources and (39%) indicated nonchalant attitude of library staff while (26%) indicated lack of time to access information resources were some of the numerous challenges facing researchers seeking for information behavior in Nigeria libraries.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result shows that there is no statistical significant difference between academic, national and special/ research libraries opinion about kinds of information that needed by the researchers i.e. academic/research information are the most essential information needed by the researchers in Nigeria libraries. Whereas there is statistical significant difference between school and public libraries views about academic/research information simply because of service they render. Meanwhile, there is no statistical significant difference between academic, schools, national, special/research, public and private libraries opinion about current awareness services as kind of information needed by the researcher. Also, there is no statistical significant difference between researchers of public and special/ research libraries views about business information whereas there are statistical significant difference among others libraries while special/research libraries are more concerned about personal health information. However, public library is so much concerned about industrials/ attachment employment information.

The result indicated that there is no statistical significant difference between libraries opinion about reasons for seeking information in Nigeria libraries i.e. when carry out research, updating of knowledge, current awareness services and when writing assignment whereas there is statistical significant difference between libraries views about others reasons such as complement lecture note, for reading purpose, to develop personal competencies among others. It observed that textbooks (100%) are the most consulted information materials by the researchers in Nigeria libraries which indicated that, there is no statistical significant difference between libraries opinion about type of information materials consulted by the researchers in Nigeria libraries i.e. textbooks .Whereas academic library (94%) of e-books,(97%) of e-journals,(96%) of reference books,(85%) of serials publication and (92%) of project report. it shows that there is statistical significant difference between schools library and private library opinion about project report, schools library has (11%)while private library (1%).It also indicated that there is no statistical significant difference between academic, national, specials/research and public library opinion about type of information consulted in Nigeria libraries i.e. serials publication, academic library (85%), national library (76%), specials/research library (75%) while public library (100%). However, it shows that there is statistical difference between schools library and private library opinion about type of information consulted i.e. reference books, schools library (1%) while private library (32%).

The findings indicated that (75%) of the participants emphasis network fluctuating as major challenges associated with information seeking behavior of researchers in Nigeria libraries. (73%) indicated inadequate knowledge of use of catalogue while ((57%) indicated insufficient librarians. Also, (44%) indicated incompleteness of records while (40%) indicated information scattered in too many sources whereas (39%) of participants emphasis nonchalant attitude of library staff and (26%) indicated lack of time to access information behavior in Nigeria libraries.

## CONCLUSIONS

From above, it is evident that researchers seek information mainly when carry out research, updating of knowledge, current awareness services, when writing assignment and to complement lecture note among others. More so, the result indicated that, textbooks are the most consulted information materials by the researchers in Nigeria libraries. Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Library management should provide more textbooks and others related information resources that would enhance knowledge in Nigeria libraries.
- The researchers should be educated on the importance and use of catalogue so as to facilitate knowledge and enhance easy retrieval of information in the libraries.
- Training and retraining of staff is very essential.
- Information should be well organized, classified, accurately and entered in the catalogue to avoid incompleteness of the records.
- Qualify staff (Librarians) should employed to overcome inadequacy and incompleteness of the records.
- Network bandits should be improve so as to curb issues of system fluctuating.
- Introduction of computerized or digital catalogue: - Many researchers who used the library are ICT compliant. This calls for the need to introduced digital catalogue to the libraries understudy. When the libraries are automated, we can easily have access to information sources available in that library.
- Facilities such as e-books, e-journals and reference materials should be made available in the school's library and public library.

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