



INFORMATION NEEDS AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF STUDENT OF CENDASNER IN NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY AWKA.

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ABSTRACT

The study determined information needs and information seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe university Awka. Four research questions guided the research the study adopted case study research design. The population of the study was made up of 50 students with disabilities in CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe university Awka, no sampling technique was adopted for the study because the number was manageable. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire, data was analyzed using descriptive statistics percentage and mean scores. The findings of the study revealed the information needs of students of CENDASNER were physical accessibility of resources, availability of materials, educational and among others. The information seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER were that they prefer to seek academic-related information from university websites or online portals, among others. The challenges that hinder information needs and information seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka were that they struggle to find learning materials or university resources in accessible formats among others. The solutions to the challenges that hinder information seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER is that the university should provide learning materials in multiple accessible formats among others. The study recommended the university should establish a dedicated disability resource center that provides easy access to essential learning materials.

Keywords: Information, Seeking behavior, CENDASNER and Nnamdi Azikiwe university

Introduction

Students with disabilities are individuals enrolled in academic institutions who experience physical, sensory, cognitive, or emotional impairments that may hinder their ability to engage fully in academic activities. Disabilities can range from visible impairments like mobility challenges to invisible ones such as learning disabilities or mental health issues (Lang & Mavrou, 2019). In



Nigeria, the National Policy on Education advocates for inclusive education, ensuring that students with disabilities receive equal opportunities to learn in mainstream educational settings (Obi, 2021). The importance of recognizing the diverse nature of disabilities is essential for developing effective support mechanisms that cater to their unique academic and social needs (Onwuegbuzie, Collins, & Jiao, 2020), as well as their varying information needs. Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, has established the Center for Disability and Special Needs Research (CENDASNER) to address the unique needs of students with disabilities. CENDASNER focuses on research, advocacy, and the provision of support services aimed at improving the educational outcomes of students with disabilities. The center offers resources such as accessible learning materials, assistive technologies, and tailored academic support, ensuring that these students can effectively participate in all aspects of university life. Moreover, CENDASNER collaborates with other departments and external organizations to promote disability awareness and foster an inclusive academic community. This implies that these students with disabilities should be supported with information needs that will enhance their education. Information needs are an individual or group's desire to locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious or unconscious need. Information needs refer to the requirements of individuals for information to support their academic, personal, and professional activities (Kumbhar, 2017).

Information needs are shaped by various factors, including the individual's interests, goals, and context. Students with disabilities in CENDASNER have diverse and specific information needs that must be addressed to ensure their academic success and personal development, (Fefoame, Gillespie-Sells, & Keith, 2017) These needs can include access to specialized formats of textbooks, availability of sign language interpreters, and access to digital resources that are compatible with screen readers and other assistive technologies. Research indicates that meeting these information needs is crucial for fostering an inclusive educational environment where all students can thrive (Olaniyan, 2022). Universities must therefore prioritize the development and implementation of policies and resources that cater to the unique information requirements of students with disabilities in CENDASNER as well as build their information seeking behavior. Seeking behavior can be defined as the patterns of behavior that people display when they experience information needs, make choices about where and how to look for information, and reflect or act on the information they see. Information seeking behavior refers to the ways in which individuals search for, access, and use information to meet their needs (Hjørland, 2015). It involves various activities, including searching, browsing, and evaluating information. Seeking behavior is shaped by various factors, including the individual's information needs, knowledge, and context (Kascus, 2017).

The seeking behavior of students with disabilities in CENDASNER encompasses the various ways these students identify, access, and utilize information to meet their academic and personal needs. This behavior is influenced by the type and extent of the disability, which can include visual, auditory, physical, or cognitive impairments (Fefoame, G.O, Gillespie-sells, K., & Keith, L. 2017). Research by Ellis (2022) indicates that students with disabilities often rely on assistive technologies such as screen readers, Braille displays, and speech-to-text software to facilitate their information seeking activities. Furthermore, these students may face unique challenges, such as navigating physical spaces and accessing digital content, which can impact their ability to effectively seek and utilize information (Chukwu and Oji 2024). Therefore, the



university library has a role to play in supporting the information needs and information seeking behavior of these students with disabilities in CENDASNER

However, several factors influence the information needs and seeking behavior of students with disabilities in CENDASNER, including accessibility, availability of resources, and support services. The availability of resources, such as specialized databases and adaptive technologies, also plays a significant role in determining how effectively these students can seek information (Ezeani 2022). Furthermore, the presence of support services, including librarian assistance and specialized training, can greatly enhance the information seeking experience for students with disabilities (Chukwu and Oji 2024). In view of the foregoing, it is clear that Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, like other higher education institutions, they have a responsibility to provide equal access to information resources and services for all students, including those with disabilities in CENDASNER. At present, it is unclear if this assertion is the current practice in the institution. It is also uncertain if students with disabilities in CENDASNER are adequately supported to access their information needs and provided with platforms that will enhance their seeking behavior. These uncertainties are what motivated the need for this study. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the information needs and seeking behavior of students with disabilities in CENDASNER Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka.

Statement of the Problem

In an ideal situation, students with disabilities in university would have equal access to information resources and services, enabling them to fully participate in academic activities and achieve their goals. The university library would provide accessible facilities, resources, and services, and librarians would be trained to support students with disabilities. Students would be able to independently access and use information resources, and their information needs would be met in a timely and effective manner. Previous studies have investigated the information needs and seeking behavior of students with disabilities, but there are significant gaps in the literature. Most studies have focused on students with visual impairments, neglecting other types of disabilities. Additionally, few studies have investigated the specific challenges faced by students with disabilities in university libraries in Nigeria but none has been done using the students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. This study therefore aims to address these gaps by investigating the information needs and seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka.

Research Questions

1. What are the information needs of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka?
2. What is the seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka?
3. What are the challenges that hinder information needs and seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka?
4. What are the solutions to the challenges of that hinder information needs and seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka?



Methods

The study adopted A case study research design. A case study is an in-depth, intensive analysis of a specific bounded subject or “case”-within its real-world context. The case can be an individual, a group, a project, an event, an organization or a specific phenomenon. It is deemed suitable for this work since it will describe and find out the Information needs and Seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. The area of study is Center for Disability and Special Needs Research (CENDASNER) in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. The population of the study comprised of students with disability in CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. No sampling technique was used as the population is small and manageable. The main instrument used for data collection is questionnaire. The instrument was designed on a 4-point scale of SA- Strongly Agree, A- Agree, D- Disagree, SD - Strongly Disagree to answer the items on the questionnaire

Presentation and Data Analysis

Research Question 1: What are the information needs of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka?

Table 1: Mean responses onthe information needs of students of CENDASNER

S/NO	Items	Mean	Decision
1	Physical accessibility of resources	3.60	Agree
2	Availability of materials	2.81	Agree
3	Educational environment	2.99	Agree
4	Educational opportunities	2.72	Agree
5	Assistive technology	2.80	Agree
6	Specialized support	2.75	Agree
7	Awareness of educational materials	2.93	Agree
8	Adequate training in use of technology	2.64	Agree
	Cluster Mean	2.90	Agree

The table shows the information needs of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka as respondents attested with a mean score above 2.50 that the information needs of students of CENDASNER were physical accessibility of resources, availability of materials, educational environment, educational opportunities, assistive technology, specialized support and awareness.



Research Question 2: What is the Seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka?

Table 2: Mean responses on the Seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER

S/NO	Items	Mean	Decision
1	I prefer to seek academic-related information from university websites or online portals rather than directly from professors or staff.	3.52	Agree
2	I often rely on my peers or fellow students for information related to my academic needs and disability services.	3.12	Agree
3	I frequently search for updates or new information regarding disability accommodations, support services, or other university resources.	3.76	Agree
4	When I need specific information related to my disability, I actively seek assistance from university personnel, such as disability service coordinators or librarians.	3.64	Agree
5	I encounter difficulties or barriers when seeking information related to my studies or disability services (e.g., complex websites, lack of clear communication).	3.71	Agree
6	I use assistive technologies (e.g., screen readers, voice commands) to access information necessary for my academic success.	3.62	Agree
7	I actively search for information on how to request and manage accommodations that address my disability-related needs in coursework and exams.	3.28	Agree
	Cluster Mean	3.52	Agree

Table 2 shows the Seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka as respondents attested with a mean score above 2.50 that the seeking behavior of students in CENDASNER were that they prefer to seek academic-related information from university websites or online portals rather than directly from professors or staff and among others.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges that hinder information needs and Seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka?

Table 3: Mean responses on the challenges that hinder information needs and Seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER

S/NO	Items	Mean	Decision
1	I struggle to find learning materials or university resources in accessible formats (e.g., braille, audio, large print, or captioned content).	1.96	Disagree
2	There is a lack of sufficient or timely support from disability services when I seek information about accommodations or resources.	2.69	Agree
3	I am not adequately informed about the resources and services available for students with disabilities on campus.	1.64	Disagree
4	University online portals are not user-friendly for students with disabilities, making it difficult for me to access necessary information.	3.11	Agree
5	I often experience delays when trying to get information on accommodations from faculty staff.	1.60	Disagree
6	There is a lack of clear communication from the university regarding how I can request or access the accommodations and services I need.	1.11	Disagree



7	I hesitate to seek support due to fear of stigma or negative reactions from university staff or peers regarding my disability.	2.54	Agree
	Cluster mean	2.09	Disagree

The table shows the challenges that hinder information needs and Seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka as respondents agreed with a mean score above 2.50 that the challenges that hinder information needs and seeking behavior of students in CENDASNER were- that there is a lack of sufficient or timely support from disability services when they seek information about accommodations or resources, university online portals are not user-friendly for students with disabilities, making it difficult for them to access necessary information and among others .

Research Question 4: What are the solutions to the challenges of that hinder information needs and Seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka?

Table 4: Mean responses on the solutions to the challenges of that hinder information needs and Seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	The university should provide learning materials in multiple accessible formats (e.g., braille, large print, audio) to better meet the needs of students with disabilities.	2.96	Agree
2	The university should improve disability support services by offering more personalized assistance to help students access accommodations.	3.12	Agree
3	Providing regular training to staff on how to effectively communicate students with disabilities would improve access to information.	2.84	Agree
4	University online portals should be redesigned with accessibility in mind, ensuring that they are easy to navigate for students with disabilities.	3.01	Agree
5	The university should establish clear communication channels for students with disabilities to receive timely information about available resources and services.	2.91	Agree
6	Creating a centralized hub for disability-related information would make it easier for students with disabilities to find what they need.	3.21	Agree
7	Developing peer mentorship programs where students with disabilities can share information would help improve access to support.	3.62	Agree
	Cluster Mean	3.09	Agree

The table shows the solutions to the challenges of that hinder information needs and seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka as respondents agreed with a mean score above 2.50 that the solutions to the challenges that hinder seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER is that the university should provide learning materials in multiple accessible formats (e.g., braille, large print, audio) to better meet the needs of students with disabilities, the university should improve disability support services by offering more personalized assistance to help students access accommodations and other.



Discussion of Findings

The finding shows that the information needs of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka were physical accessibility of resources, availability of materials, educational environment, educational opportunities and many others. This aligns with the findings of Olayinka (2015), who emphasized that students with disabilities often prioritize physical accessibility to resources and materials. Olayinka pointed out that the absence of easily accessible academic materials and conducive environments hampers students' ability to meet their educational goals. The finding shows the Seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka were that they prefer to seek academic-related information from university websites or online portals; they often rely on their peers or fellow students for information related to their academic needs and disability services; they frequently search for updates or new information regarding disability accommodations, support services, or other university resources among others. This result tallied with the study of Baro et al. (2013) who affirmed that students with disabilities increasingly rely on digital platforms to meet their information needs due to the convenience and accessibility these platforms offer. Furthermore, Nawe (2006) supports the idea that peer networks are an important resource for students with disabilities when they cannot access official university services effectively. The finding also shows that the challenges that hinder information needs and seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka were lack of sufficient or timely support from disability services when they seek information about accommodations or resources; university online portals are not user-friendly for students with disabilities, making it difficult for them to access necessary information; and among others. This result is in line with the study of Kavanagh et al. (2014) who noted that one of the major challenges students with disabilities face is the lack of accessible learning materials, including braille, audio, and large print. This limitation significantly affects their academic progress and their ability to fully participate in learning activities. The finding shows that the solutions to the challenges that hinder information needs and seeking behavior of students of CENDASNER in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka were that the university should provide learning materials in multiple accessible formats (e.g., braille, large print, audio) to better meet the needs of students with disabilities; the university should improve disability support services by offering more personalized assistance to help students access accommodations; providing regular training to staff on how to effectively communicate students with disabilities would improve access to information; and others. Similar recommendations were made by Williams et al. (2018), who found that providing learning materials in formats such as braille, large print, and audio significantly improved the academic performance and satisfaction of students with disabilities. The finding also supports that of Obi (2021) who emphasized the need for personalized assistance in disability support services, noting that students with disabilities benefit greatly from one-on-one guidance that helps them access necessary accommodations and navigate university systems more effectively

Conclusion

The study concluded suggests that the university must take proactive steps to ensure learning materials are available in multiple accessible formats to accommodate students' diverse needs. Furthermore, improving disability support services through personalized guidance and increased



awareness efforts can help bridge the information gap. By adopting these solutions, Nnamdi Azikiwe University can enhance the academic experience of students of CENDASNER, promoting equal access to educational opportunities and fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

Recommendations

The university should establish a dedicated disability resource center that provides easy access to essential learning materials. This center should be equipped with both physical and electronic resources tailored to students' needs, ensuring availability of necessary academic materials.

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