USAGE OF ELECTRONIC RESOURCES BY STUDENTS IN OMUSATI REGION

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ABSTRACT: *For all citizens to have access to Information Communication and Technology (ICT) education and achieve lifelong learning, we must ensure the availability of such services both within the formal education community and beyond into the informal education community. Community Library users in Omusati region are currently struggling with the retrieval of electronic resources, which is evident at information centres such as Outapi, Okalongo, Okahao Community Libraries and Tsandi Community Learning and Development Centre as reports have shown. Hence the question; are we failing as librarians to introduce our users to the said resources? There are a wide range of library users that come to the said libraries to search for information, amongst them are students studying at higher institutions who constantly search for information on the unfiltered web. One now wonders if journal articles are no longer part of the frequently searched list or if the users are aware of the electronic information available. In the case where users are aware of available information, do they know how to use the information? Do they know that there are free online resources? How many have access to free online resources? Are they aware that their local libraries provide access to some of the biggest databases e.g. EBSCO? This paper highlights the challenges that users face when accessing electronic resources at the following centres: Outapi, Okalongo, and Okahao Community Libraries, and Tsandi Community Learning and Development Centre. The paper further seeks to find patterns of electronic information usage between users at the aforesaid centres and brings forth successes and challenges faced, including recommendations for effective access and usage of the said resources.*

KEYWORDS: *electronic resources, community libraries, Omusati region, Namibia.*

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The world is diverting to the electronic usage and at the time of study and during observation among the four Omusati Community libraries (Outapi, Okahao, Okalongo and Tsandi) it was observed that users normally do not ask for any type of electronic resources (e-resources). Thus, this research attempted to find out the level of awareness and the use of e- resources at the above stated libraries.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Access to information remains one of the top priorities in Namibia, therefore there is a need to continuously assess the use of e-resources in this digital era. This study brought to bear the utilisation of the available e-resource in the libraries. Ashikuzzaman (2014) defines e-resources as resources which require computer access or any electronic product that delivers a collection of data, be it text referring to full text bases, electronic journals, image collections, other multimedia products and numerical, graphical or time based, as a commercially available title that has been published with an aim to being marketed. In enhancing the use and access of e-resources in the twenty-first century, many institutions have put interventions to accelerate the use of e-resources, which entirely benefits the community at large. The University of Namibia (UNAM), amongst others is no exemption. Leonard (2015, 240) reveals that apart from UNAM developing their e-collection in meeting the user's demands when it comes to virtual access of resources, it has also started acquiring e-journals since 2003 to support the teaching, learning and research services of the University. According to Hamutumwa, Mutula, and Hoskins (2017, 150), e-resources are believed to ease the access of resources,

giving reference to distance learners utilising their study materials at any time anywhere. Nonetheless, in a study on the use of electronic resources by law students at the University of Namibia, Leonard, Hamutumwa, and Mnubi-Mchombu (2020, 60) highlighted challenges affiliated to e-resources, which includes bandwidth problems, irregular training and limited searching skills.

Most libraries started using e-resources around the 80s Miller (2000, 160). From the early 1980s to the present, libraries have moved into reliance on online systems, electronic databases, and vendor connections, directly impacting collection development decisions.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to identify the level of awareness and use of e-resources by the students who have access to the four Omusati community libraries.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research aims to:

- Discover the level of students' awareness towards e-resources;
- Identify the students who have access to e-resources;
- Assess the students' knowledge on how to use e-resources; and
- Determine challenges faced during the use of e-resources

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In Durrheim's (2006, 33) words, "Research design as a strategic framework for action serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research." The research designs are plans that guide the arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to research purpose. This research design focused on quantitative methods whereby questionnaires were distributed equally amongst the 4 community libraries in Omusati region.

Population and sample

A study population is believed to be a group of individuals who have the same characteristic Creswell (2008, 151). The population of this study constituted of students in Omusati Region. The sample for the study comprised students who had access to the mentioned community libraries. A total of 60 stundents, 15 students from each of the 4 community libraries were included in sample for the study.

Data collection and instruments

Primarily numerical data was collected using a questionnaire comprising of open ended and a few close ended questions. Fifteen questionnaires were distributed in each of the four designated Omusati libraries.

FINDINGS

Below are the findings of the study, arranged as per the research questions. Although the sample was 60 students, only 26 respondents filled in the completed the questionnaires. Therefore the findings and discussions are based on the 26 respondents.
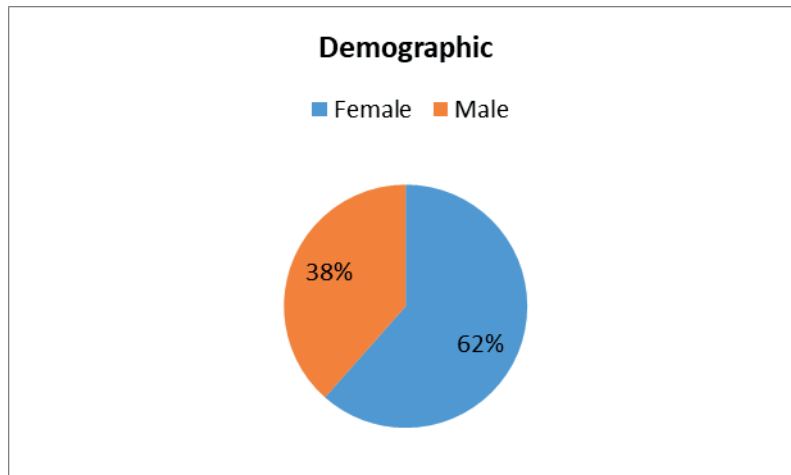
Demographic information

Figure 1: Gender information

The study shows that 16 (62%) respondents were female while 10 (38%) were male. The researchers went further to find out the age group of respondents as indicated below.
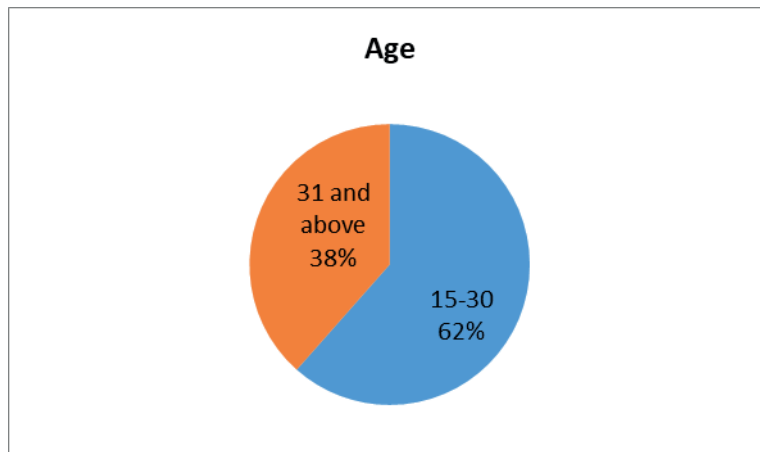

Figure 2: Age group

The figure above shows that the majority were between the 15-30 age group while only 10 (36%) were 31 of age and above.
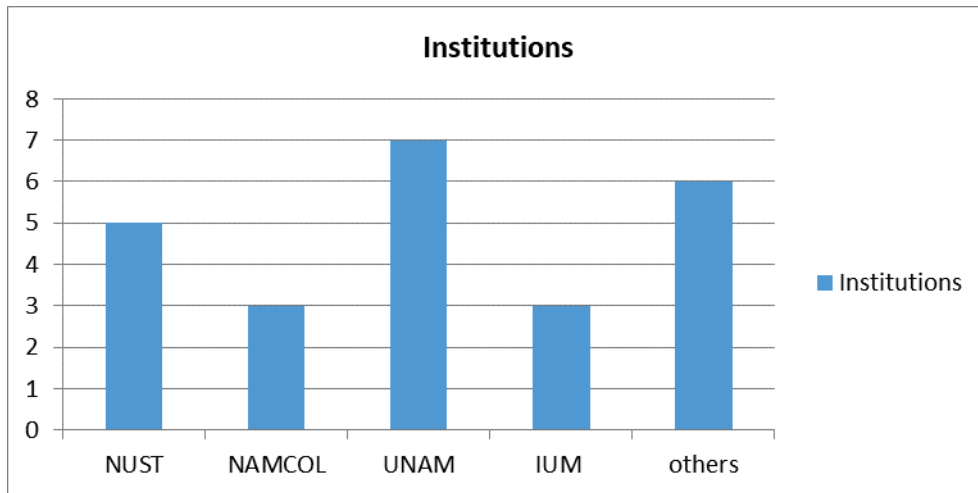
Figure 3: Name of the study institution

The study shows that the majority (7) were from UNAM, 8 from other institutions, 5 from NUST, and NAMCOL and IUM with 3 each. The researchers further asked which libraries the respondents access the e-resources from, as indicated below.
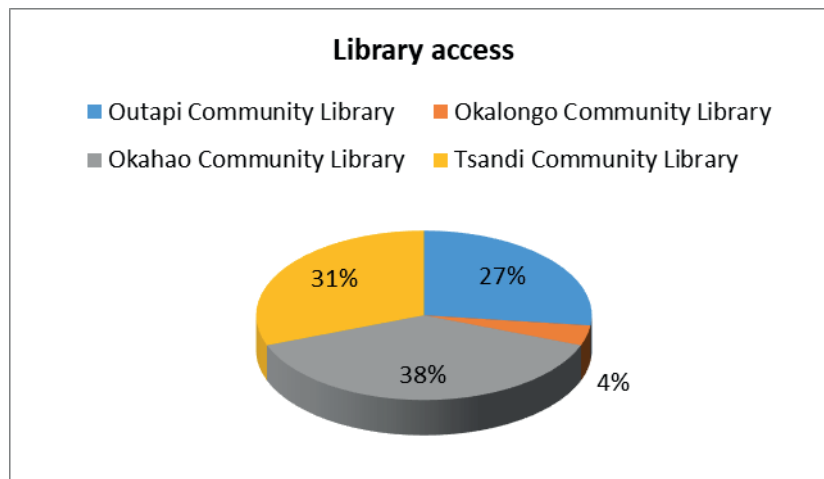

Figure 4: Library accessing

As per the figure above, Okahao has the most respondents that access e-resources from their library with 10 (38%), followed by Tsandi with 8 (31%), Outapi with 7 (27%) and lastly Okalongo 1 (4%).
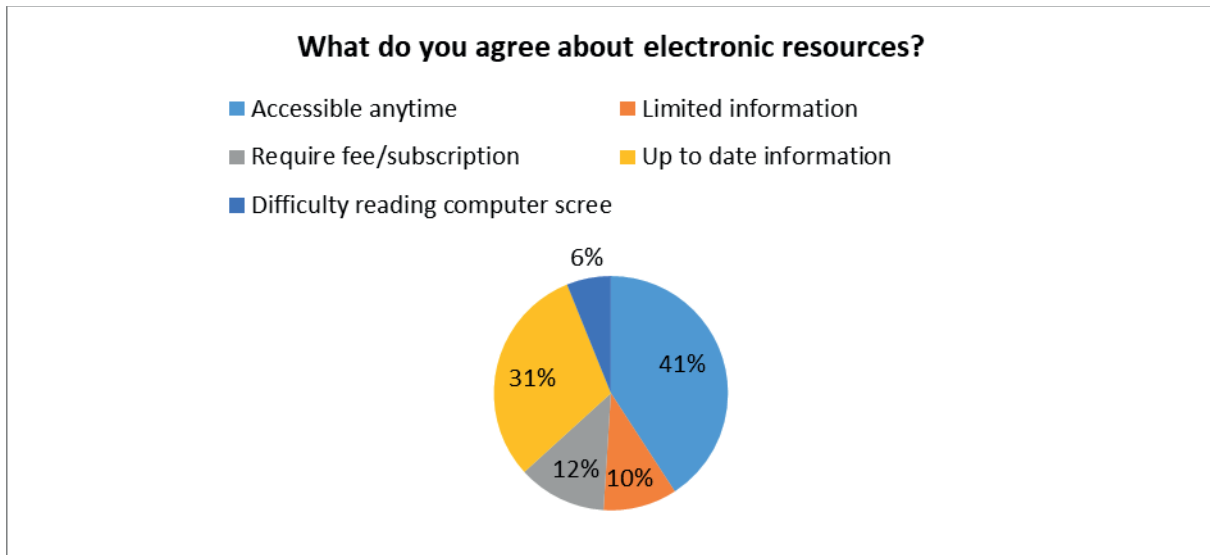
What do you agree about electronic resources?

■ Accessible anytime ■ Limited information
■ Require fee/subscription ■ Up to date information
■ Difficulty reading computer scree

Figure 5: Agreement on e-resources

Students were asked to choose on what they agree on about e-resources and the results are shown in fig. 5 above. The majority. 20 (41%) agrees with the idea that e-resources are accessible anytime, 15 (31%) consider up to date information, 6 (12%) for subscription, 5 (10%) limited information and lastly 3 (6%) for difficulty reading computers.
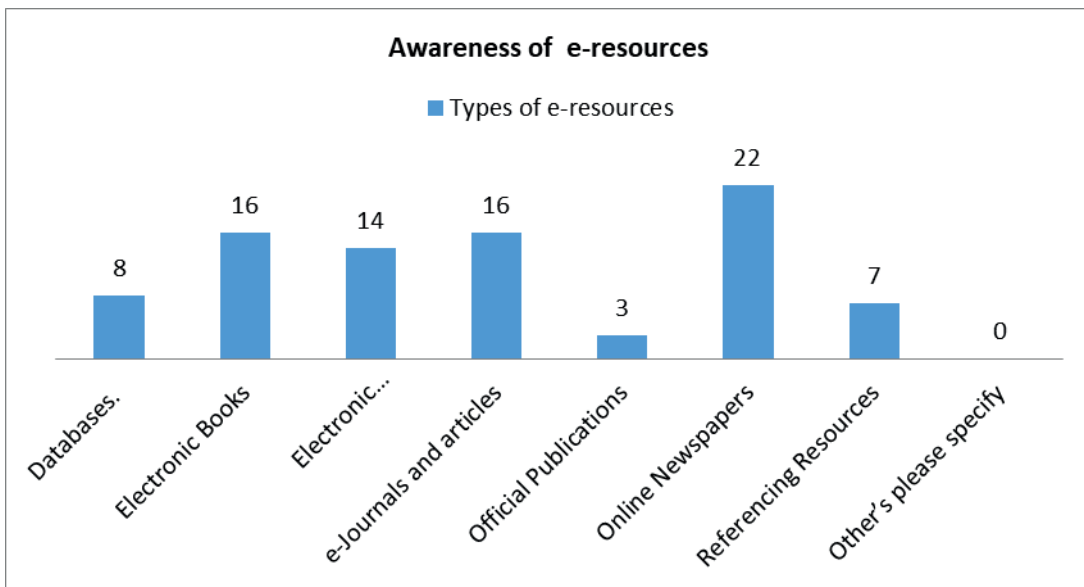
Awareness of e-resources

■ Types of e-resources

Figure 6: Awareness of electronic resources

The researchers asked whether the respondents were aware of the different e-resources available and this shows that the majority were aware of the online newspapers 22, e-journals and e-books both 16, e-dictionary 14, databases 8, referencing resources 7 and lastly official publications 3.
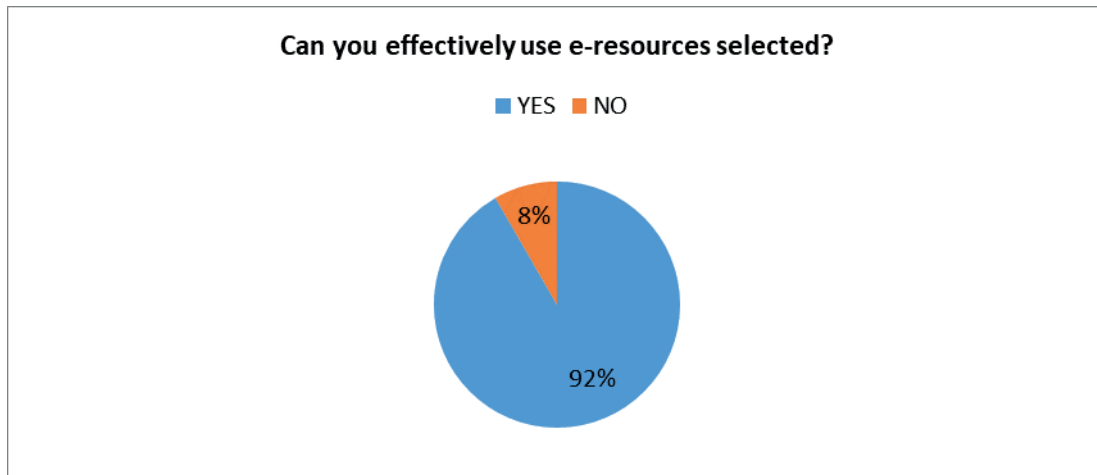
Figure 7: Effectiveness of e-resources

The students were asked to state whether they could effectively use the selected e-resources, and the majority (24) (92%) said yes they could use e-reources affectively and only 2 (8%) said that they could not.
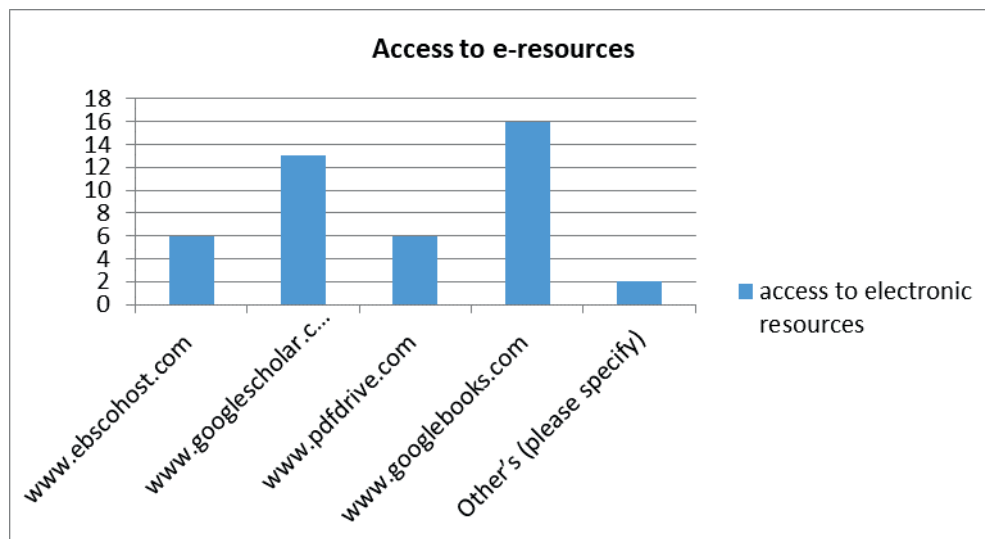

Figure 8: Types e-resources

The respondents were also asked from which of the above they could access e-resources from, and majority indicated googlebooks (16), followed by googlescholar (12), pdfdrive (6), ebscohost (6), and lastly others 2.

CHALLENGES FACED WHEN ACCESSING E-RESOURCES

- Slow internet was top in the list of challenges
- Power failure
- Poor reading skills
- Too much information
- Lack of searching skills
- Subscription fees
- Referencing academically for e-resources
- Lack of space in computer lab
- Limited information

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Looking at the data above, there were more male than female respondents, whereas the majority of respondents were below the age of 30. This could be because students at higher learning institutions are coming from high school thus, they are below the age of 30. Okahao reported the highest number of respondents, followed by Tsandi, Outapi and then Okalongo with only 1 respondent. Most of the respondents were from UNAM, and this could be due to the fact that UNAM has more campuses in the north. The majority of the respondents (22) were aware of the online newspapers, followed by e-journals and e-books and the lowest was official publications. Many respondents found e-resources convenient because they are accessible at any time. The study also revealed that most respondents had access to googlebooks. However there is need for training and raising awareness of the users on the available databases and how to access them. The challenges highlighted by the respondents include slow internet, lack of ICT skills and too much information, well known as information overload among others, and these could be among the factors contributing to low use of e-resources.

CONCLUSION

The study looked at the use and access of e-resources at the 4 community libraries in Omusati Region. This study revealed low usage of e-resources which could be because of the challenges they encountered when accessing e-resources, however the respondents showed a positive influence of e-resources highlighting the anytime access of resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that librarians in Omusati create more awareness on the available e-resources. It further recommends that librarians train students on how to access e-resources and finally, academic institutions should provide online tutorials and guides to students on how to access e-resources.

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