

Undergraduate Students' Perception of Service Quality of Readers' Services in a Nigerian University Library

Nijerya'daki Bir Üniversite Kütüphanesinde Lisans Öğrencilerinin Okuyucu Hizmetlerine İlişkin Hizmet Kalitesi Algısı

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ABSTRACT

The study evaluated users' perceptions of the service quality of the readers' service section of the University of Ilorin Library. A survey research design was used to conduct its analysis. The target demographic for the study is the 45,885 undergraduate students who attend the University of Ilorin in Ilorin, Nigeria. For the study, a simple random sampling technique was used, and a questionnaire served as the instrument for gathering data. The findings showed that lending and interlibrary loan services, provision of seating and study facilities, reference services, current awareness services, user education and information literacy programs, exhibition, display, and publicity, selective information dissemination, and digital library services are just a few of the ways that the University of Ilorin in Ilorin, Nigeria, provides readers' services. The university library has greatly improved the number of information services it offers to its users by integrating digital technologies to complement the conventional mode of information distribution. Although the study's finding was that the service quality of the University of Ilorin library's readers' service section is not yet outstanding, it is still somewhat satisfactory.

Keywords: Service quality, Readers' service, Undergraduate, University library, University of Ilorin, Nigeria

Submitted/Başvuru : 11.08.2023

Revision Requested/
Revizyon Talebi : 10.09.2023

Last Revision Received/
Son Revizyon : 12.11.2023

Accepted/Kabul : 09.01.2024



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ÖZ

Bu alıřma, kullanıcıların Ilorin Üniversitesi Kütüphanesinin okuyucu hizmetleri bölümünün hizmet kalitesine ilişkin algılarını deęerlendirmektedir. alıřmanın analizi için bir anket arařtırma tasarımı kullanılmıřtır. alıřmanın hedef kitlesi, Nijerya'nın Ilorin kentindeki Ilorin Üniversitesine devam eden 45.885 lisans öęrencisidir. alıřma için basit rastgele örnekleme teknięi kullanılmıř ve veri toplama aracı olarak da anket kullanılmıřtır. Bulgular, ödün verme ve kütüphaneler arası ödün verme hizmetleri, oturma ve alıřma olanaklarının saęlanması, danıřma hizmetleri, güncel farkındalık hizmetleri, kullanıcı eęitimi ve bilgi okuryazarlıęı programları, sergi, teřhir ve tanıtım, seçici bilgi yayma ve dijital kütüphane hizmetlerinin Nijerya'nın Ilorin kentindeki Ilorin Üniversitesinin okuyucu hizmetleri saęlama yollarından sadece birkaçı olduęunu göstermiřtir. Üniversite kütüphanesi, geleneksel bilgi verme biçimini tamamlamak için dijital teknolojileri entegre ederek kullanıcılarına sunduęu bilgi hizmetlerinin sayısını büyük ölçüde artırmıřtır. alıřmanın bulgusu, Ilorin Üniversitesi kütüphanesinin okuyucu hizmetleri bölümünün hizmet kalitesinin henüz olaęanüstü olmamasına raęmen, yine de bir ölçüde tatmin edici olduęunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hizmet kalitesi, okuyucu hizmeti, lisans öęrencileri, üniversite kütüphanesi, Ilorin Üniversitesi, Nijerya

1. Introduction

Unrestricted knowledge exchange is a fundamental tenet of society's development. In the contemporary fabric of our societies, information has assumed a position of ultimate importance and acts as a symbol of the core principles of modernity. The ambitions of all kinds of people, groups, divisions, and even entire countries are fueled by an unrelenting thirst for control over this rich resource. Libraries stand out in this persistent endeavor as unwavering bulwarks of knowledge, exerting a persistent effect that transcends the boundaries of information type and sparks significant innovation and multidimensional growth. The library takes on the role of an allegorical institution, acting as a curator of knowledge and carefully curating, arranging, and disseminating the information stream. Against the backdrop of this purposeful stewardship, the symbiotic relationship between libraries and higher education institutions unfolds with profound significance. It is a natural confluence, a harmonious alliance forged by the imperative to satiate the voracious appetite for information among users and society at large. In this grand orchestration, the library stands as the conductor, orchestrating the harmonious convergence of scholarly pursuits, elevating the art of teaching, amplifying the resonance of learning, propelling the frontiers of research, and extending the embrace of community service. Thus, the academic library finds its rightful place as an indispensable citadel of intellect, serendipity, and illumination, ensconced within the hallowed precincts of higher education institutions, etching its indelible mark on the narrative of human progress.

The progress of a society depends fundamentally on the availability of information, and modern cultures today place a high value on it as one of its defining qualities. People, organizations, parties, and nations all fervently desire to control the information that has become such a valuable resource. Libraries remain the most dependable sources of knowledge that have a large impact and inspire substantial innovation and growth, regardless of the type of information that is required. In order to primarily satisfy the information demands of users and society at large, the library serves as a metaphor for an institution that is in charge of collecting, organizing, and disseminating information. It is not unusual that higher education institutions have academic libraries given the importance of libraries in ensuring that the right information reaches the right users in the right format and given that these activities are primarily responsible for enhancing teaching, learning, research, and community services. University libraries need to improve their service quality to achieve high student satisfaction with the library services because the provision of information services has gone beyond merely directing users to where the books should be located (Makinde, Ogunbo, Dapo-Asaju & Ekeh, 2021).

The university library assumes a more prominent function as a dynamic nexus and intellectual hub of university teaching, learning, and research efforts as it is nestled at the center of the institution's intellectual heart. These well-known vaults open their massive informational holdings to effortlessly guide researchers, academics, and students through a world of learning and exploration inside the complex web of education. University libraries are more than just passive repositories; they exude a proactive vitality, a sentinel's

anticipation, and are prepared to anticipate and respond to the shifting needs of their users (Chukwuji & Umeji, 2020). It is the duty of university libraries to guarantee that patrons use their resources and services efficiently and without stress. In fact, university libraries should take the initiative to anticipate the requirements of their users and then provide the required resources and services in response (Gabbay & Shoham, 2017).

A university library typically consists of various divisions, sections, and units, each of which works hand in hand to ensure the smooth operation of the library, but an ideal university library should have an administrative division, a technical division, and a readers' service division, with each department housing various sections and units. Most importantly, the readers' service division constitutes the image-maker of the library, being the channel through which information resources in the library are circulated among the users (Otenekwu, Oyedokun, Komolafe, & Adewara, 2019). Users are given access to the library's extensive and varied collections here. In order for the readers' service division of the library to accomplish its service goal of meeting users' information needs, the technical division of the library is in charge of the selection, acquisition, arrangement, storage, and preservation of information resources.

The readers' service department provides various services to library users, which can be broadly classified into reference, documentation, and circulation services. Shelf management through the reading and re-shelving of books and other library materials, users' education on the use of libraries and information literacy, users' personalized information services through reference services that include selective dissemination of information (SDI), a current awareness service (CAS), publicity for and display of new arrivals in the library, as well as management of reading spaces and study room facilities (American Library Association, 2020). The primary goal of the readers' service department is to ensure that library materials are ready for use. To achieve this, libraries deploy mechanisms and procedures for charging and discharging library materials, as well as maintaining the proper records needed for users' needs assessment and collection evaluation. Recent literature emphasizes the importance of assessing library services to enhance their quality (Sanchez-Rodriguez, 2018). Libraries must be flexible in their collection development policies to encourage creative ways of meeting the educational mission of their institutions (Ashikuzzamani, 2013). Additionally, libraries must also consider security measures to prevent theft of library materials and other property (Akor, Ekere, & Akor, 2019).

Information service is a crucial function of libraries, and readers' services take pride in providing users with easy access to library materials. However, the increase in the general population of students poses challenges for libraries in delivering dynamic and quality information services. Enrollment in higher education institutions is growing faster than the capacity to plan and finance expansion, resulting in a sharp fall in library budgetary allocation. This leads to challenges such as a dearth of information resources (Nworie, Ubochi, Iwuchukwu, & Njoku, 2023). Despite dwindling library allocations, academic programs are expanding, but each program receives limited funds to purchase all required information materials. Library consortiums and inter-library loan cooperation could be successful in Nigeria, but individual libraries should prioritize meeting the needs of their registered and nearby users before extending lending services to users of other libraries. Moreover, the digitization of library materials, which facilitates easy resource sharing and multiple users' access, is still in its early stages. Most library materials are still in print and have not been converted into electronic format (Adeyi, Odubanjo-Francis, & Adelowo, 2018).

University library operations revolve around maximizing user satisfaction, making it a crucial component of librarianship. Regardless of the size and comprehensiveness of a library's collection and services, they can be considered a "white elephant project" if they are not successfully utilized by users. The successful use of information resources is essential for the library's purpose and effectiveness (Odunola & Tella, 2019). Library and information services encompass a wide array of services that cater to diverse user needs. Recent literature emphasizes the importance of user orientation and providing information literacy to help users make the most of library resources, services, and products (Okogwu, 2022). The use of technology, such as the Internet, plays a significant role in delivering library and information services. Libraries utilize internet resources as well as various ICT-based services to enhance user experiences and facilitate access to information. These services

aim to promote the use of library resources and bring together information sources and users through the efforts of library staff (Chiya, Onyancha, & Ezema, 2022). Buttressing the foregoing was Karim (2018), who posited that users' satisfaction encapsulates the whole activities and objectives of library operations. Before visiting the library, patrons have expectations, and if those expectations are not realized, they stop visiting. This suggests that users become frustrated when they are unable to achieve their goals. The management of the library is aware of and curious about whether their services meet users' expectations and regular reviews of users' requirements and levels of satisfaction with library services would give a clue as to whether or not they would return to patronize the library.

The University of Ilorin, founded in 1975 in Ilorin, Kwara State, is the focus of this study. The university library opened in May 1976, coinciding with the university's full operational launch. The primary purpose of the library is to meet the informational needs of its users. To achieve this goal, the library is divided into various divisions, each with its own set of responsibilities, from collecting library items to disseminating them to users. The University of Ilorin Library offers a wide range of services to cater to the needs of its users. These services include selecting, acquiring, and organizing books, periodicals, documents, newspapers, maps, and other print and electronic resources. The library also provides 24-hour services during examination periods. Efforts are being made to resuscitate inter-library loans and binding services (Officialtemy, 2019). The readers' service section of the library is particularly important as it allows users to directly interact with library personnel and oversee the delivery of information services to library patrons. It serves as a hub where library patrons and their resources come together. The quality of service provided by the readers' service section significantly impacts both the overall quality of the library's service and the level of customer satisfaction (University of Ilorin Library, 2023). Overall, the University of Ilorin Library plays a vital role in meeting the informational needs of its users. The readers' service section is particularly important in ensuring the delivery of quality services and customer satisfaction. The library offers a range of services and is continuously working to improve and expand its offerings. Additionally, it acts as a hub where library patrons and their resources congregate. As a result, the quality of the service offered by the library's readers' service section has a significant impact on both the quality of the library's service and the degree of customer satisfaction.

Assessing service quality within academic institutions is crucial in shaping the overall student experience and satisfaction (Camilleri, 2021). Recent literature emphasizes the importance of service quality in higher education institutions (Budiyanti, Patiro, Djajadi, & Astuty, 2019). Service quality is a key intangible asset for achieving student loyalty and must be managed to create a competitive advantage and differentiate itself from the competition in current markets (Kaur & Amanpreet, 2020). The consequences of quality education and the relationship between service quality and loyalty in the higher education sector have been studied by a few researchers (DelRio-Rema, Alvarez-Garcia, Mun, & Duran-Sanchez, 2021). The current study delves into the intricate fabric of student perceptions pertaining to service quality in the context of a university library environment. This study aims to unravel the multifaceted dimensions that underpin undergraduates' outlook on the quality of services rendered by the library, a critical resource hub for learning and research. Employing a comprehensive research framework, researchers seek to illuminate the intricate interplay of factors that contribute to students' discernment of service quality, encompassing aspects such as accessibility, resource availability, staff responsiveness, and overall user experience. By meticulously investigating the nexus between students' expectations and their perceived reality, researchers endeavor to provide valuable insights that can inform strategic enhancements in the provision of readers' services within the Nigerian university library.

University libraries have a responsibility to serve the needs of students, lecturers, alumni, and members of the university community. In service quality standards, providing exceptional customer service as viewed by the user is given top importance. The effectiveness of a library's readers' service can be used to determine how much disconnect there is between users' expectations and what they actually receive. Any study conducted in this department becomes extremely essential and relevant since the readers' service section of any library is a crucial and fundamental part of that library, both to its image and to the information demands of its users.

As a result, the study's findings will be useful in identifying issues with the readers' service section's ability to provide excellent services. This will help the library take the appropriate corrective measures and make the necessary changes and activities to resolve the issues. The study will also help to bridge the gap between the service delivery of the section and the information needs and expectations of the users by making the expectations of library users regarding the readers' service section known. The results of this study will, in the end, contribute to the corpus of knowledge in this particular field or branch of study.

2. Statement of the Research Problem

The University of Ilorin Library's Readers Service Division, which has taken possession of information items that had been processed in the technical service division of the library, is the subject of this study's investigation. This section of the library interacts directly with patrons and makes sure that information resources are always accessible. This division, which includes the circulation, reference, documentation, and bindery sections, coordinates the operations of the units below it. This division serves as the library's public relations arm, and all of its tasks and endeavors are user-focused. Therefore, the impression of the entire library is reflected in how the users perceive the services provided by the readers' service.

Despite the primary obligation of university libraries to serve the teaching, learning, and research of students and faculty, the increase in the general population of students poses challenges for university libraries in delivering dynamic and quality information services (Nworie, Ubochi, Iwuchukwu, & Njoku, 2023; Odunola & Tella, 2019). The University of Ilorin Library, like many academic libraries in Nigeria, faces management problems and limited resources that hinder the effective provision of services. The library's readers' service section is particularly important in ensuring the delivery of quality services and customer satisfaction. It was observed recently that an exponential rise in the student population has put a significant strain on the library's readers' service division's ability to continue doing their tasks successfully and efficiently. In the meantime, university library management thought about how to manage reader services efficiently since the quality of library services and the degree of user satisfaction are a reflection of the quality of service offered by the reader services department of the library. This antithesis has led the researchers to concentrate their attention primarily on the Readers' Services Department of the University of Ilorin Library. However, there is a need to evaluate undergraduate students' perceptions of the service quality of the readers' services in the University of Ilorin Library to identify areas for improvement and enhance the overall user experience.

3. Research Objectives

The study objectives are to:

1. ascertain users' awareness of services provided by the readers' service department;
2. determine if the readers' service department of the University of Ilorin library is meeting the perceived service quality expectations of users;
3. investigate challenges mitigating against effective service quality in the readers' service section of the University of Ilorin Library;
4. examine possible solutions to the successful reader service quality issues.
5. examine if there is a difference in the mean score rating of male and female undergraduate students with respect to their awareness of services rendered in the readers' service department of the University of Ilorin library; and
6. examine if there is a difference in the mean score ratings of male and female undergraduate students with respect to their perception of the quality of service rendered in the readers' service department of the University of Ilorin library.

4. Literature Review

In the realm of higher education, university libraries emerge as repositories of scholarship, indispensable to the pursuits of teaching, learning, research, and community enrichment (Li, Song, Lu & Zhou, 2020).

Beyond the traditional role of guiding visitors to bookshelves, these institutions have evolved into dynamic hubs of innovation, fueling intellectual growth and inquiry. In the modern academic landscape, the imperative for university libraries extends beyond mere provision; it is the pursuit of excellence in service quality that underpins the satisfaction of students. The realm of information services has transcended the realm of mere logistics, heralding an era where libraries are architects of knowledge and experiences. It is in the quest for this very excellence that university libraries strive to exceed expectations, enhancing the academic journey and enriching the educational tapestry. Indeed, the role of libraries in our evolving society is not static; it is dynamic, adaptive, and irreplaceable. They are, and shall forever remain, the guardians of our collective wisdom, the torchbearers of innovation, and the sanctuaries of knowledge-seeking souls.

University libraries are widely recognized as the focal point for teaching, learning, and research endeavors. Their primary aim is to cater to the informational requirements of scholars, students, and researchers (Chaudhry, Bhatti, Shahzad, Sulehri, Hussain, & Ullah, 2021). Presently, users' expectations from libraries have escalated due to the proliferation of information on the internet, web-based information providers, and easily accessible information databases, which serve as rapid and alternative sources of information. As custodians of this knowledge domain, librarians bear the responsibility of comprehending the evolving information needs of users and addressing them accordingly. To enhance the quality of reader services, it becomes essential to evaluate and enhance such services. Since the primary purpose of the library revolves around satisfying users' information demands, these library users become the central focus of all library services, thereby justifying the creation and continued existence of the library.

The core responsibilities of the library's readers' service division primarily encompass lending services and the circulation and dissemination of information. This division undertakes a diverse range of tasks and activities, including user registration, handling the borrowing and returning of library resources, providing selective dissemination of information (SDI), delivering current awareness services, educating users on information literacy, offering reprographic services, managing document delivery, providing reference assistance, managing repair and binding services, facilitating interlibrary loans, and overseeing shelf and reading space management. The readers' service department's primary objective is to match users' information needs with the most appropriate information resources available, granting library users easy access to pertinent information. As the primary user inquiry point, this department serves as the users' initial contact when seeking assistance. For users looking for reliable information sources, the library's readers' service section is the most reliable guide. This section comprises a bindery unit, circulation desk, reference section, and electronic resources, and all its information services revolve around identifying and resolving users' information gaps (Otonekwu, Oyedokun, Komolafe, & Adewara, 2019).

The perspective of users with regard to the service quality of the library's readers' service section has been the subject of numerous research studies. The majority of this research, however, only addresses one or two units of the section rather than the section as a whole. Therefore, the goal of the current work is to examine the empirical research on these individually handled units and provide the findings as a whole. To begin with, using a survey approach and a questionnaire to gather data, Khan (2015) conducted a study with the goal of determining how the Central Public Library of Bahawalpur's patrons perceived the quality of its services. The study's results indicated that the library provides its patrons with high-quality services. The majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with the following library services: books, journals, dictionaries, encyclopedias, Internet services, special collections, periodical collections, reference services, adult education programs, reading room amenities, library environment, hours of operation, and the attitude of library staff toward patrons.

In Udem, Ikenwe and Ugwuamoke's (2020) extensive investigation into the perceptions of library services' quality and value among undergraduates in 21st-century Southeast Nigeria, the predominant discovery suggests that undergraduates generally held a favorable opinion of the quality of library services extended to them. However, a notable contrast emerged as they expressed dissatisfaction with the reprographic and Internet services provided, indicating a substantial need for significant upgrades in these areas. The research shed light on various barriers contributing to a diminished perception of library service quality. Notable

challenges included the absence of up-to-date information resources, an unwelcoming staff demeanor, low internet connectivity, restricted access, outdated facilities, inadequate training in technology use, and erratic power supplies. These findings underline the imperative for comprehensive improvements, addressing both technological infrastructure and staff training to elevate the overall quality of library services. Importantly, the study observed no statistically significant difference between male and female undergraduates in their perceptions of library services' value and quality. This finding underscores a level of consistency in how both genders perceive the services provided, emphasizing the universality of the identified challenges and the need for inclusive strategies in enhancing the library experience for all students.

The reference services provided by the surveyed university libraries were cited in Otonekwu, Saliu, and Oyedokun's (2019) study of users' satisfaction with reference services in selected federal university libraries in Southeast Nigeria as a service quality that has not yet reached an optimal level of satisfaction. Users emphasized that they are dissatisfied with services like interlibrary loans, translation, the Internet, and open access (OPAC). Similar research was conducted by Uganneya, Ape, and Ugbagir (2012) to determine how satisfied users were with the reference and circulation services offered by Nigerian agricultural research libraries. According to the study, agricultural research libraries in Nigeria provided a high level of reference and circulation services, and the majority of users were satisfied with both the reference and circulation services provided by the agricultural research libraries. The management of the bookshelves and the referral service, however, received low satisfaction ratings.

In their study of the circulation unit at Nigerian university libraries, using the University of Ilorin as a case study, Saliu and Abdussalam (2014) identified various factors hindering the delivery of effective and efficient services. These factors included student overpopulation, insufficient relevant information materials, cases of overdue books not returned by users, limited reading space and facilities, and inadequate academic standards. Similarly, Uganneya, Ape, and Ugbagir (2012) found obstacles to user satisfaction in their research on reference and circulation services provided by Agricultural Research Libraries in Nigeria. These obstacles encompassed unreliable and expensive Internet services, outdated content, and unresponsive staff. Additionally, their study highlighted concerns like slow data processing, insufficient user education, a lack of communication tools, subpar photocopiers, and a limited opening window for services. In consonance with the foregoing, Khan (2015) asserts that customers' inability to use the services offered in the readers' service section is primarily a result of inadequate help from library personnel. The lack of sufficient funding for the procurement of library resources, facilities, and information infrastructure is the root of all problems, upon which others depend.

Madukoma's (2015) study on users' perceptions of Babcock University Library's electronic reference service revealed that registered library users enjoyed a range of services, including loan services, digital and print reference assistance, interlibrary cooperation, photocopying, bibliographical support, binding, lamination, printing, internet access, CD-ROM search, and readers' advisory services. Surprisingly, the majority of users did not utilize this service, mainly because they were unaware of its existence and accessibility. Okeke, Oghenetga, and Nwabu (2013) found that students' underutilization of reference services and sources could be attributed to the section's outdated inventory and unskilled employees. Moreover, students faced challenges such as inadequate reference resources in their courses, a lack of literature search skills, inappropriate book stacking, and a lack of support from a reference librarian or other staff members. In their study of library service utilization among undergraduates at Lagos State University in Nigeria, Ilori and Owolabi (2020) underscored the significance of these services in meeting the information needs of students. They recommended improvements in existing services and the provision of more relevant materials in the reference section to enhance library usage.

In a separate study on library resources and service utilization at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Akole, and Olatunji (2023) found that most students did not visit the library regularly, primarily using it for research purposes. They heavily relied on Internet sources and faced time constraints as a major challenge. The study concluded that stakeholders should address these challenges proactively. Another study by Nworie, Ubochi, Iwuchukwu, and Njoku (2023) focused on the challenges and prospects of library and information

services in academic libraries across Nigeria. It stressed the responsibility of academic libraries to cater to the needs of students, lecturers, alumni, and the university community. The article highlighted the changing landscape of academic libraries, adapted to technological advancements for improved services, and urged libraries to view these changes as opportunities. Odunola and Tella's (2019) research explored the influence of information technology skills on library patronage among undergraduate students in South-west Nigeria. The study showed that students' IT skills significantly impacted their library usage. It also stressed the importance of promoting information literacy to enhance library patronage and user experience. Similarly, Ihejirika, Goulding, and Calvert (2021) investigated undergraduate students' engagement with library social media at selected Nigerian universities. Their findings emphasized the importance of utilizing social media to interact with users, increase the library's visibility, and promote its services effectively.

The literature presented above provides valuable insights into the challenges and prospects of library services in Nigerian universities, particularly in the context of meeting the information needs of undergraduate students. The studies discussed highlight the importance of library services in supporting teaching, learning, and research endeavors within academic institutions. One of the main themes emerging from the literature is the increasing expectations of library users due to advancements in technology and the availability of alternative information sources. As the internet and digital resources become more prevalent, users expect libraries to adapt and provide seamless access to information. This highlights the need for continuous evaluation and enhancement of library services to meet evolving user demands effectively. Several studies focus on specific aspects of library services, such as reference assistance, circulation, and electronic resources. While some services are perceived positively by users, others face challenges. For example, reference services may not always meet user expectations due to outdated resources or unskilled staff. Identifying these specific areas for improvement can aid in refining the overall service quality and enhancing user satisfaction.

The literature also stresses the significance of information literacy in promoting library patronage and enhancing the overall user experience. Students' information technology skills play a crucial role in determining their library usage, and promoting information literacy can empower users to make effective use of library resources and services. Another important theme that emerges from the literature is the financial constraints faced by libraries, which can impact their ability to procure adequate resources, facilities, and information infrastructure. Insufficient funding may hinder the development and improvement of library services, making it crucial for stakeholders to address these financial challenges to ensure better service delivery. Moreover, the role of social media in engaging with users and increasing the library's visibility is emphasized. Utilizing social media platforms can effectively connect with users, promote services, and create a more interactive library experience. In summary, the literature highlights the vital role of meeting the information needs of undergraduate students and the challenges faced by libraries in delivering quality services. It stresses the need to address management issues, promote information literacy, ensure service quality, and embrace social media engagement to enhance the overall user experience.

5. Methodology

This study employed a comprehensive survey research design to delve into the multifaceted aspects of the subject matter. The target population of this research encompassed the diverse body of undergraduate students enrolled at the esteemed University of Ilorin, located in the vibrant city of Ilorin, Nigeria. As of the commencement of the 2022/2023 academic session, this academic community numbered an impressive 45,895 undergraduates. To ensure a representative sample that could accurately reflect the sentiments of this vast population, a meticulous approach was undertaken. The research team employed a method of simple random sampling, thereby guaranteeing a fair and unbiased selection process. The determination of the sample size adhered to the rigorously vetted Israel sample size determination table, aligning with best practices in statistical analysis.

For the collection of primary data that would underpin this study's findings, a meticulously designed questionnaire was utilized. It's noteworthy that the questionnaire underwent a rigorous validation process, and was meticulously examined and approved by three distinguished research experts, ensuring its reliability

and effectiveness as a research tool. In terms of ensuring the instrument's reliability, a robust assessment strategy was executed. The split-half method of reliability testing was employed, where twenty administered questionnaires were methodically divided into two equivalent sets and correlated. The results of this rigorous process demonstrated a commendable Cronbach's alpha correlation coefficient of 0.78 for the awareness section, 0.82 for service quality, 0.68 for challenges, and an impressive 0.87 for potential solutions to address issues related to the quality of reader services. These high-reliability coefficients affirm the consistency and dependability of the questionnaire as a data collection tool.

To facilitate the seamless administration of the questionnaire and ensure that the data collection process adhered to the highest standards of ethics and professionalism, four competent research assistants were meticulously chosen. These assistants, who were library staff members well-versed in the academic environment and familiar with the nuances of the university library, played a pivotal role in the data collection process. The distribution of the questionnaire to the target audience, the undergraduate students, was thoughtfully timed to maximize the quality and authenticity of the responses. It took place during the students' visits to the university library, allowing them to reflect on their experiences and perceptions while utilizing its services. In terms of data analysis, the study employed a robust array of statistical techniques. Descriptive analysis involved the calculation of frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores, providing a comprehensive snapshot of the data. Additionally, inferential statistics, specifically the t-test, were utilized to draw meaningful inferences from the data, allowing for a deeper understanding of the relationships and dynamics at play within the research variables. In essence, this research methodology underscores the rigorous and meticulous approach taken in the pursuit of knowledge, ensuring the integrity and reliability of the findings that will contribute to the academic discourse and potential improvements in the quality of library services.

6. Analysis and Interpretations

As we delve into the intriguing realm of "Undergraduate Students' Perception of Service Quality of Readers' Services in a Nigerian University Library," we embark on a journey of discovery and insight. In this segment of our research journey, we transition from the meticulous data collection phase to the equally vital phase of data analysis and interpretation.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents (N=397)

S/N	Demographic Variable	Demographic Data	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	175	44%
		Female	222	56%
		Total	397	100%
2	Age	Below 20	183	46%
		21 – 30	198	50%
		31 and above	16	4%
		Total	397	100%
3	Faculty	Agriculture	51	13%
		Arts	21	5%
		Communication and Information Sciences	28	7%
		College of Health Sciences	16	4%
		Education	59	15%
		Engineering and Technology	32	8%
		Environmental Sciences	28	7%
		Life Sciences	23	6%
		Law	15	4%
		Management Sciences	32	8%
		Pharmaceutical Sciences	13	3%
		Physical Sciences	23	6%
		Social Sciences	47	12%
Veterinary medicine	9	2%		
Total	397	100%		
4	Course Level	100 Level	57	14%
		200 Level	89	22%
		300 Level	108	27%
		400 Level	102	26%
		500 Level	41	11%
		Total	397	100%

The table above presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. On the basis of the distribution of the study participants, the female students, 222 (56%), constitute the majority over their male counterparts, who represent 175 (44%). This suggests that the library is more popular and frequented by female students at the University of Ilorin. Subsequently, among the faculties of the respondents, the majority are from the Faculty of Education, which constitutes 59 (15%) undergraduate students, followed by the Faculty of Agriculture with 51 (13%), the Faculty of Social Sciences with 47 (12%), the Faculty of Management Sciences with 32 (8%), the Faculty of Engineering and Technology with 32 (8%), the Faculty of Environmental Sciences with 28 (7%), the Faculty of Communication and Information Sciences with 28 (7%), and the Faculty of Life Sciences with 23 (6%). Participants from the Faculty of Physical Sciences represent 23 (6%), the Faculty of Arts, 21 (5%), the College of Health Sciences, 16 (4%), the Faculty of Law, 15 (4%), and the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, with 13 (3%) respondents. Meanwhile, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine has the fewest respondents, which constitutes 9 (2%) students. The foregoing implies that faculties of education, agriculture, social sciences, engineering, and technology, as well as management sciences, have the largest student populations in the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. On account of the academic year of the respondents, the majority in 300 levels constituted 108 (27%), followed closely by those in 400 levels with 102 (26%). Others are in the 200, 100, and 500 levels with 89 (22%), 57 (14%), and 41 (11%), respectively. Third and fourth-year students are the most prominent users of the library services, while first-year students are relatively less represented. The interpretation of the demographic data indicates that the University of Ilorin Library is more popular among female students and that certain faculties and academic years have a higher concentration of library users. These findings can be valuable for the library management to tailor their services and resources to meet the specific needs and preferences of the majority of its users. Additionally, it provides insights into potential areas of improvement to attract a more diverse student population to utilize the library services effectively.

Table 2: Users' awareness of services provided by the readers' service department of the University of Ilorin Library (N=397)

S/N	Services Rendered	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Rank	Decision
1	Reader's enquiry services	142	116	37	59	43	3.64	7	Agree
2	Circulation of library information materials	177	128	15	42	35	3.93	3	Agree
3	Shelving and shelf reading	171	126	10	53	37	3.86	4	Agree
4	Users' education for information literacy	182	107	45	35	28	3.96	2	Agree
5	Exhibition, display and bulletin services	160	109	21	62	45	3.70	6	Agree
6	Current awareness services (CAS)	102	100	65	72	58	3.29	10	Not quite sure
7	Selective dissemination of information (SDI)	100	95	72	69	61	3.26	11	Not quite sure
8	Library rules, regulations and instructions	158	112	27	63	37	3.73	5	Agree
9	Reprographic services (scanning, printing and photocopying)	122	108	52	65	50	3.47	9	Agree
10	Lending and interlibrary loan services	103	115	89	56	34	3.50	8	Agree
11	Internet services	178	108	56	30	25	3.97	1	Agree

Table 2 presents users' awareness of services provided by the Readers' Service Department of the University of Ilorin Library, based on a sample size of 397 respondents. The table includes various services, and each service is evaluated based on users' responses across different categories, such as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The mean scores, ranks, and overall decision for each service are also provided. On a scale of 1 to 5, none of the eleven services scored in the range ($X = 4.21-5.00$) "strongly agree". However, nine of the services fell within the range ($X = 3.41-4.20$) "agree."

Internet Services (Rank 1, Mean 3.97) received the highest mean score and was ranked first. Users overwhelmingly agreed with and demonstrated a high level of awareness regarding the Internet services offered by the Readers' Service Department. Users' Education for Information Literacy (Rank 2, Mean 3.96) exhibited a strong awareness and positive perception of educational services for information literacy, as

indicated by the high mean score and second-place ranking. Circulation of Library Information Materials (Rank 3, Mean 3.93) was well-received, with users expressing a favorable opinion, leading to a high mean score and a third-place ranking. Shelving and Shelf Reading (Rank 4, Mean 3.86) also garnered positive responses, securing a fourth-place ranking with a commendable mean score. Library Rules, Regulations, and Instructions (Rank 5, Mean 3.73) indicated users had a positive awareness of library rules and regulations, contributing to a fifth-place ranking with a relatively high mean score.

Other agreed-upon services include Exhibition, Display, and Bulletin Services (Rank 6, Mean 3.70). Users generally agreed with exhibition and bulletin services, leading to a sixth-place ranking. Reader's inquiry services ranked seventh, with a mean score of 3.64. Lending and Interlibrary Loan Services (Rank 8, Mean 3.50), users generally agreed with lending and interlibrary loan services, contributing to an eighth-place ranking. Reprographic Services (Rank 9, Mean 3.47), received a positive response and ranked ninth. Neutral or ambiguous services include Current Awareness Services (CAS) which ranked tenth with a mean score of 3.29, and Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) which ranked eleventh with a mean score of 3.26.

Table 3: Perceived service quality expected of readers' services at the University of Ilorin (N=397)

S/N	Service Quality	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Rank	Decision
1	The library portrays easy to follow library guides and instructions	156	102	72	38	29	3.75	8	Agree
2	The library catalog presents accurate sources of information about materials in the library	158	128	75	25	11	4.00	2	Agree
3	Librarians are approachable when users need assistance in retrieving information	142	104	63	51	37	3.66	9	Agree
4	Information materials held in the library are adequate and curriculum supportive	150	128	65	35	19	3.93	4	Agree
5	The library stalks are easy to navigate and locate materials on the shelves	164	130	43	37	23	3.95	3	Agree
6	Materials are properly placed on the shelf and reshelved promptly.	168	118	66	38	7	4.01	1	Agree
7	Lending and interlibrary loan services are efficient and effective in the library	101	117	77	64	38	3.45	10	Agree
8	Multimedia and other information facilities are readily available	161	101	55	47	33	3.78	7	Agree
9	Access to Wi-Fi and Internet services are mostly efficient	170	100	56	51	20	3.88	6	Agree
10	List of new arrivals and services in the library are promptly brought to the awareness of library users	86	73	96	82	60	3.11	11	Not quite sure
11	Users are educated and trained on information literacy for the use of library and information search strategies	174	100	59	42	22	3.91	5	Agree

Table 3 shows users' perceived quality of services rendered in the readers' service section of the University of Ilorin Library. On a scale of 1 to 5, none of the eleven services score in the range ($X = 4.21-5.00$) "strongly agree". However, ten of the services scored within the range ($X = 3.41-4.20$) "agree." Information materials properly placed on the shelf and re-shelved promptly ranked first with mean score 4.01, followed by the library cataloged an accurate source of information about materials in the library ($X = 4.00$) ranked second, and the library stalk is easy to navigate and locate materials on the shelf ranked third with a mean score of ($X = 3.95$). The library's information materials are adequate, and the curriculum is supportive, ranking fourth with a mean score of $X = 3.93$; users are educated and trained on information literacy for the use of the library and information search strategies, ranking fifth with a mean score of $X = 3.91$; Wi-Fi and Internet services ranked sixth with a mean score of $X = 3.88$; and the availability of multimedia and other information

facilities ranked seventh with a mean score of $X = 3.88$. However, the perception that lists of new arrivals and services in the library are promptly brought to the awareness of users ranked eleventh with a mean score of $X = 3.11$, which accords with the benchmark ($X = 2.61-3.40$). The interpretation of the table shows that users perceive most of the services in the readers' service section of the University of Ilorin Library positively, with the majority falling within the "agree" range. However, there is a need for improvement in promptly bringing new arrivals and services to users' awareness, as this aspect scored relatively lower. This finding can guide the library management in addressing this area of concern and further enhancing the overall perceived quality of services provided to library users.

Table 4: Challenges militating against effective delivery of quality readers' services (N=397)

S/N	Service Quality	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Rank	Decision
1	The reading area should be expanded because it is currently too modest to accommodate users.	101	99	97	65	35	3.42	5	Agree
2	Remote access to library digital information resources is problematic.	120	118	88	36	35	3.64	1	Agree
3	There are not many reputable sources of current information, and what is provided is outdated.	103	115	79	45	55	3.42	4	Agree
4	The interaction between library personnel and patrons needs to be more professional.	99	60	121	65	52	3.22	6	Not quite sure
5	The use of the university library is discouraged by fines for late returns of books.	100	130	67	55	45	3.47	3	Agree
6	Chaotic online users' experience with the university digital library services.	120	118	59	51	49	3.53	2	Agree
7	The way the books are arranged on library shelves is disorganized and not logical.	76	64	67	96	94	2.83	8	Not quite sure
8	The university library Web-OPAC can be challenging to use and occasionally inaccessible.	69	91	107	78	52	3.12	7	Not quite sure

Table 4 above presents challenges militating against effective service quality in the readers' service section of the University of Ilorin Library. On a scale of 1 to 5, none of the eight identified challenges scored in the range ($X = 4.21-5.00$) "strongly agree". However, five of the challenges scored within the range ($X = 3.4-4.20$) "agree", and three within the range ($X = 2.6-3.40$) "not quite sure". Remote access to library digital information resources is problematic, ranking first with a mean score of 3.64, followed by chaotic online users' experiences with the university digital library services, which ranked second with a mean score of 3.53. The use of the university library is discouraged by fines for late returns of books ranked third with a mean score of 3.47, there are not many reputable sources of current information ranked fourth with a mean score of 3.42, and the reading space is too modest ranked fifth with a mean score of 3.42. Unprofessional and unethical interaction between librarians and users ranked sixth with a mean score of 3.22; library Web-OPAC being occasionally unavailable ranked seventh with a mean score of 3.12; and the way information materials are arranged on library shelves is disorganized and not logical ranked eighth with a mean score of 2.83. The interpretation implies that while there are challenges affecting service quality in the readers' service section of the University of Ilorin Library, they are not overwhelmingly severe as none of them received a "strongly agree" rating. However, there are areas of concern that respondents agreed upon, particularly related to remote access to digital resources, chaotic online experiences, and fines for late book returns. These findings can help the library administration in identifying areas for improvement and addressing the most critical issues affecting service quality.

Table 5: Resolving users' dissatisfaction and service quality challenges of readers' services of the University of Ilorin Library (N=397)

S/N	Service Quality	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Rank	Decision
1	Even within an online setting, professional librarians should always be available to assist library patrons.	168	110	68	30	21	3.94	4	Agree
2	A service quality policy that serves as an evaluation standard ought to be in place at the university library.	142	128	52	40	35	3.76	8	Agree
3	The university library should provide the relevant and adequate print and electronic information resources for teaching, learning, and research.	198	88	45	46	20	4.00	3	Agree
4	The university library offers information infrastructure and capabilities that allow for access to information from locations other than the library building.	186	112	46	40	13	4.05	2	Agree
5	The university library needed to prioritize meeting users' information demands as quickly and affordably as possible.	195	99	54	35	14	4.07	1	Agree
6	The university library needed to collaborate with other libraries through networking and consortium for resource sharing	150	136	55	37	19	3.91	6	Agree
7	Open access programs should be used to promote the free flow of information.	155	127	56	38	21	3.90	7	Agree
8	User-focused services should be prioritized in the library.	167	107	67	36	20	3.92	5	Agree

Table 5 above presents a quick fix to the challenges working against effective service quality in the readers' service section of the University of Ilorin Library. On a scale of 1-5, none of the eight identified resolution scores fall within the range ($X = 4.21-5.00$) "strongly agree". However, the overall score for purposeful intents falls within the "agree" range ($X = 3.4-4.20$). Fulfilling the information needs of users in a timely and cost-effective manner ranked first with a mean score of $X = 4.07$, followed closely by access to information from locations other than the library building with a mean score of $X = 4.05$, which ranked second. Also, the university library should provide relevant and adequate print and electronic information resources with a mean score of $X = 4.00$, which ranked third. Other solutions included librarians being available to assist library patrons, even remotely, which ranked fourth with a mean score of $X = 3.94$; prioritizing user-focused services, which ranked fifth with a mean score of $X = 3.92$; collaborating with other sister libraries for resource sharing, which ranked sixth with a mean score of $X = 3.91$; free flow of information via open access, which ranked seventh with a mean score of $X = 3.90$; and finally, a benchmark for service quality in the form of policy guidance should be put in place, which ranked eighth with a score of 3.76.

Note: To determine the minimum and the maximum length of the 5-point Likert type of scale, the range is computed by using the formula $(5-1=4)$ and then divided by five (5) as it is the greatest value of the scale ($4/5=0.80$). After that, the number with the lowest value on the scale was regularly added in ranges, with 1-1.80 denoting strong disagreement, 1.81-2.60 denoting disagreement, 2.61-3.40 denoting uncertainty, 3.41-4.20 denoting agreement, and 4.21-5.00 denoting a strong agreement.

Table 6: T-test result of the difference between male and female undergraduate mean scores on awareness of services in the readers' service section of the University of Ilorin Library.

Undergraduate	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	T	A	Df	P-value	Remark
Male	175	41.01114	8.56616	0.108	0.05	395	.236	Accepted
Female	222	42.0721	9.05160					

Table 6 shows that the calculated t-value of .108 has a P-value of .236, which is greater than the 0.05 significance level ($t = .108, p > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, which stated that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female undergraduate students with respect to their awareness of services rendered in the readers' services section of the University of Ilorin library.

Table 7: T-test result of the difference between male and female undergraduate mean scores on their perception of service quality in the readers' service section of the University of Ilorin Library.

Undergraduate	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	T	A	Df	P-value	Remark
Male	175	41.0629	8.19458	8.134	0.05	395	.688	Accepted
Female	222	41.4279	9.56907					

Table 7 shows that the calculated t-value of 8.134 has a P-value of .668, which is greater than the 0.05 significance level ($t = 8.134, p > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, which stated that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female undergraduate students with respect to their perception of the quality of service rendered in the readers' services section of the University of Ilorin library.

7. Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings from the study at the University of Ilorin in Nigeria aligns with the literature review on various aspects of library services and user perceptions. The literature emphasizes the crucial role of university libraries as centers for teaching, learning, and research, catering to the informational needs of scholars, students, and researchers. It also highlights the evolving expectations of users due to the proliferation of the internet and easily accessible information sources, making it imperative for libraries to adapt and enhance services to meet user demands effectively (Chaudhry et al., 2021).

The study's findings focus on the readers' service division of the University of Ilorin Library, which encompasses lending services, circulation, and information dissemination. It reveals a diverse range of tasks and activities performed by this department, including user registration, document delivery, reference assistance, interlibrary loans, and management of the reading space. The primary objective is to match users' information needs with appropriate resources, offering easy access to pertinent information. This aligns with the literature's emphasis on the responsibility of academic libraries to serve users' needs comprehensively (Otonekwu, Saliu & Oyedokun, 2019). Furthermore, the study highlights users' awareness and assessment of the quality of services in the readers' service section, with a specific focus on reference services. Users' education on information literacy emerges as an important aspect, indicating the significance of promoting information literacy to enhance library patronage and user experiences, as emphasized in previous research (Otonekwu, Saliu, & Oyedokun, 2019).

The literature also discusses users' satisfaction with reference and circulation services provided by various types of libraries, including agricultural research libraries in Nigeria. Studies indicate that while users generally express satisfaction with these services, specific areas such as interlibrary loans, Internet services, and open access face some dissatisfaction (Uganneya, Ape, & Ugbagir, 2012). Both the study and literature review identify challenges faced by university libraries in Nigeria, such as student overpopulation, inadequate resources, limited reading space, and financial constraints. These challenges can impact the delivery of effective and efficient services (Saliu & Abdussalam, 2014; Uganneya, Ape & Ugbagir, 2012). Inadequate funding is particularly emphasized as a root cause of problems that affect library services and infrastructure, aligning with previous research (Khan, 2015).

The study also sheds light on gender differences in library usage, indicating that more female undergraduates utilized the university library. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that gender does not significantly impact library service utilization, highlighting the importance of inclusive service provision (Udem, Ikenwe & Ugwuamoke, 2020). Overall, the findings from the study at the University of Ilorin

complement and reinforce the literature review, providing additional insights into the utilization and perception of library services among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. The alignment between the study's results and previous research emphasizes the shared challenges and opportunities for academic libraries to continuously enhance service quality and meet the evolving needs of users.

8. Conclusion

The University of Ilorin Library, Nigeria, provides a comprehensive range of reader services, including lending and inter-library loan services, seating and study facilities, reference services, current awareness services, user education, information literacy programs, exhibitions, displays, and selective dissemination of information. To ensure high-quality library and information services, it is crucial to identify and address user needs, ensuring that their expectations are met effectively. Quality offerings are those resources and services that successfully fulfill users' needs and expectations. The university library has successfully embraced digital technology to complement traditional information delivery methods, thereby expanding the array of information services available to users. The study concludes that while the quality of services in the readers' service section of the University of Ilorin Library may not be optimal, it still provides a moderately satisfying experience to users. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of avoiding gender distinctions in library services, advocating for equal treatment and equitable services for all users, regardless of gender. Moving forward, the library can further enhance its services by continuously evaluating and addressing user needs, leveraging digital advancements, and striving to meet the expectations of its diverse user community.

9. Recommendations

In light of the study's findings, the following suggestions have been made in order to improve the quality of services rendered in the readers' service section of the University of Ilorin Library:

1. Meeting users' information demands as quickly and affordably as possible should be prioritized.
2. The university library should have the infrastructure and tools necessary for information access from locations other than the library facility.
3. For efficient teaching, learning, and research, the university library should offer enough pertinent print and electronic information resources.
4. Professional librarians should always be accessible to help library users, even in an online environment.
5. In the library, user-focused services ought to take priority.
6. The university library should begin working with other sister libraries to share information, expertise, and knowledge through networking, cooperating, and building a consortium.
7. Open access initiatives should be used to encourage the free exchange of information in the library.
8. The university library should have a service quality policy in place that acts as an evaluation benchmark.
9. Students should be granted amnesty for the late return of library material to further encourage patronage.
10. Digital library services should be encouraged to solve the issue of reading space in the library.

Peer Review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Author Contributions: Conception/Design of Study- T.T.O.; Data Acquisition- T.T.O.,J.O.A., G.O.B., J.W.A.; Data Analysis/ Interpretation- T.T.O.,J.O.A., G.O.B., J.W.A.; Drafting Manuscript- J.O.A.; Critical Revision of Manuscript- T.T.O.,J.O.A., G.O.B., J.W.A.; Final Approval and Accountability- T.T.O.,J.O.A., G.O.B., J.W.A

Conflict of Interest: The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

Grant Support: The authors declared that this study has received no financial support.

Hakem Deęerlendirmesi: Dıř baęımsız.

Yazar Katkıları: alıřma Konsepti/Tasarım- T.T.O.; Veri Toplama- T.T.O.,J.O.A., G.O.B., J.W.A.; Veri Analizi/Yorumlama- T.T.O.,J.O.A., G.O.B., J.W.A.; Yazı Taslaęı- J.O.A.; İerięin Eleřtirel İncelemesi- T.T.O.,J.O.A., G.O.B., J.W.A.; Son Onay ve Sorumluluk- T.T.O.,J.O.A., G.O.B., J.W.A

ıkar atıřması: Yazarlar ıkar atıřması bildirmemiřtir.

Finansal Destek: Yazarlar bu alıřma iin finansal destek almadıęını beyan etmiřtir.

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How cite this article / Atıf Biçimi

Adewara, J.O., Oyedokun, T.T., Babafemi, G.O., Abdulreheem, J.W. (2023). Undergraduate students' perception of service quality of readers' services in a Nigerian University library. *Bilgi ve Belge Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 20, 1-17. <http://doi.org/10.26650/bba.2023.20.1340177>