

Investigation into Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of Learners with Hearing Impairment within Integrated School Setting in Ibadan, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated information needs and information seeking behaviour of learners with hearing impairment in integrated schools in Ibadan. The sample comprised 50 secondary school adolescents with hearing impairment. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling technique; the study used the descriptive survey research design was adopted for carrying out the study. Three research questions were raised for the study. The results of the study revealed that the various channels used in seeking for information by the respondents included 42% from family and friends sources as channel use in seeking for information were 22% from internet sources, 6% from mass media, 18% from information centres such as library among other channels. Further results revealed the format available for learners with hearing impairment which shows 44% of print as format for access, 20% of total communication and 32% of electronic channels. On the barriers faced by the learners with hearing impairment in the process of information seeking, 70% is shown on poor power supply while 40%, on outdated texts and 60% on discrimination as barriers faced by learners with hearing impairment in the process of seeking information. The study recommends that, availability of sign Language interpreters will enhance easy communication and understanding of facts on needed information by learners with hearing impairment, learners with hearing impairment should be ICT literate to be able to adapt easily when seeking information among many other recommendations.

Keywords: *Information needs, Information seeking behaviour, Hearing impairment, Integrated school*

Introduction

Men disseminate information as they interact with one another. Information sharing enables the understanding of ideas and thoughts. These poses difficulty for the person with hearing impairment who have problem in understanding acoustic sounds or spoken words which results into low or non-communication abilities, but who also need to have access to information hindered by their mobility to hear. Bagandanshwa (2006) corroborates this by stating that all human being have rights to receive information despite their disabilities, must receive needed information and conversant with relevant information. Thus, seeking for information needed, means or mode of seeking for the information determines ways or behaviour towards the needed information.

Likewise, Koren (1998) points out that information is needed by people no matter their physical nature. Therefore, man is considered to be information seekers irrespective of their age or condition. Oketunji and Oketunji (2016) explain that information is needed in all stages of human development, information seeking however is an expensive and time consuming with the time spent on irrelevant items in locating required piece of information. Lucey (1995) points out that seeking information particularly relevant information, helps in increasing the knowledge of the seeker(s), its usefulness for the purpose of seeking the information and its usefulness for the future as well as reducing uncertainty or doubt of mind and increases brain acceleration.

Therefore, information seeking behaviour can be described as reaction towards a felt informal information sources to satisfy a need for an information. Likewise, information needs according to Pao (1989) is the result of an unsolved problem by an individual who has insufficient knowledge to perform a particular task. Thus, information need arises from an information problem due to gaps in a person's knowledge on a particular area or concerning a particular issue.

Information need urgency and the importance of information determines the seeking behaviour. This was confirmed by Ashraf (2021), that information seeking behaviour involves personal reasons for seeking information the kinds of information which are sought, the ways and sources with which needed information are sought are all important part of the reasons for the user usage. Information needs and information seeking behaviour of learners with hearing impairment can therefore, be described as an eventful issue in their process of learning because learners with hearing impairment will aim for rich, explicit and multiplicity source of access to information needed; which will influence their needs for seeking the information. Thus information needs depend on the seeking behaviour of the person with hearing impairment need to avoid redundancy or unwanted information. Moreover, Haruna and Mabawonku (2001) submit that information need automatically originates from the desire to know to understand or to clear uncertainty and to make it serve as motivation that put a problem into useful need; also information need arises as a result of insufficient or lack of possession of knowledge which is lesser than the needed information to deal with issues.

In seeking for information, the behaviour of learners with hearing impairment towards the information need may be diversified which also, may originate from the desire to discover and understand new idea, to communicate with people (peers, friends and schoolmates), sign language interpreters, professionals and other relevant people who might be helpful in gathering information, understanding the nature of the information, the scope of the information, the extent of the information coverage and finding means of gathering the needed information to solve the problem of needed idea.

The study of information needs and information seeking behaviour of learners with hearing impairment is significant because learners with hearing impairment need to have access to many varieties of information concerning issues around them for their daily survival; so as to be able to develop their coping abilities or skills; because it is through understanding of information needs, that information seeking for many issues concerning their course contents, prosperous career, health, legal matters, business/occupational opportunities, skills acquisition, educational advancement channels, need to request for care and to be cared for. Therefore, access to information is a channel for the learners with hearing impairment to survive. This serve as alternative to their less or non-communication abilities so as to be well informed.

The means of gathering information needs of learners with hearing impairment and their behaviour towards the information seeking for certain particular information concerning their education, social or personal life are most times limited due to their communication differences. The channels used for the needed information mostly, may not be readily available, unknown or not valid enough and at same time, the learners with hearing impairment need to have frequent access to information; especially those who attend school amidst the hearing learners so as to improve on their wellbeing and to be updated. Information according to Moore (2000) in Mulauzi and Njobvu (2012) is described as a means to an end and something that enables one to make choices to improve oneself.

Therefore, the type of information need of learners with hearing impairment, format to use in seeking information, the barriers in the process of seeking for the needed information and how these learners make use of available channel of information are investigated in this study. Thus, this study investigated the information needs and information seeking behaviour of learners with hearing impairment within integrated school settings in Ibadan, Nigeria

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study are to:

- i. know the channels of information available for learners with hearing impairment;
- ii. identify the format of information available to learners with hearing impairment; and
- iii. identify the barriers faced by person with hearing impairments in seeking for information.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What are the channel(s) use to seek for information needed and the level of awareness of availability of some other sources?
2. What are the format of information available for the learners with hearing impairment?
3. What are the barriers faced by the persons with hearing impairment in the process of seeking for information need?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design method was adopted for the study. The research design was used in order to be able to explain, attain and bring to understanding the in-depth need of the learners with hearing impairment in seeking information and to establish the facts.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample of the study consist of (50) fifty in-school adolescents with hearing impairment who were selected from two (2) secondary schools namely: Ijokodo High School Ibadan and Methodist Grammar School, Bodija, Ibadan. Twenty-five (25) respondents were selected from each school comprising SS1 (5 respondents), SS2 (10 respondents) and SS3 (10 respondents) from each school; the respondents were selected with the use of purposive sampling Technique.

The instruments used for the study were interview guide and self-structured questionnaire which was validated by experts to ensure its validity.

Data Collection and Analysis

Questionnaire was administered on the respondents after short interview with the assistance of sign language who also serve as research assistance, interpreter to discuss on the importance of information to the success of the learners with hearing impaired livelihood, progress in life and how they source for information to be updated. The data collected were analysed with the use of statistics of frequency count and percentage.

Results

Table 1: What are the channel(s) used to seek for information needed and the level of awareness of availability of some other sources for learners with hearing impairment?

Channels/Sources	Frequency	Percentage
Family members and friends	21	42
Internet	011	22
Mass media (Television, Newspapers, magazines etc	03	06
Information centers	09	18
Others (email, computer, phone SMS)	06	12
Total	50	100

The result from table 1 shows that families and friends top the channel used to seek information by learners with hearing impairment, followed by internet, information centres (libraries, café), others like phones, computer, email and mass media (almanac television, Newspaper, magazines).

Table 2: What are the formats of information available for learners with hearing impairment to have access to?

Format	Frequency	Percentage
Print	22	44
Total communication (sign language. interpreter)	10	20
Electronic (computer, television, projector, phone etc.)	16	32
Others (pantomime, demonstration, etc.)	02	04
Total	50	100

The result on table 2 shows that the prints serves as the highest format for availability of information, followed by electronic (computer, television, phone) format, total communication, demonstration and pantomime.

Table 3: What are the barriers faced by learners with hearing impairment in the process of seeking for information needed?

Barriers	Frequency	Percentage
Outdated texts	20	40
Poor power supply	35	70
Inadequate information centres	15	30
Under equipped libraries	18	36
Sign language illiteracy	15	30
Discrimination	30	60
Age of seekers	10	20
High cost of electronic gadget	30	60

The result on table 3 shows that power supply is the highest barrier faced by learners with hearing impairment in the process of seeking information needed, followed by discrimination and high cost of electronic gadgets, out-dated texts, under equipped libraries, inadequate information centres, sign language illiteracy and the age of the information seekers.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings on table 1 show that the learners with hearing impairment mostly seek for information needed through their family members and friends because they are the closest people to them, and are readily available and easier to contact when they need any firsthand information which satisfies their personal needs and adds to their knowledge, this findings corroborated with that of Aina (2004) that stated that information needs are crucial for survival or to meet day to day activities and for the common good of the seekers. Other sources of information which are commonly used by the persons with hearing impairment are the internet, information follow centres, library, computers, SMS, (phones) followed by magazines or newspaper which is corroborated by Tucker's (2007) findings that most information needed by the special needs people are generally sources from the library.

The findings of the study on table 2 shows that the most available farms of gathering information needs of person with hearing impairment is mostly from print with 44% availability followed by information seeking through electronic sources and through total communication with 20% if they come across people that can sign or interpret to them their information need are sought easily and became more explicit this fact can be corroborate with Balogun (2018) recommendation that interpreters should be available to serve as link for the person with hearing impairment particularly in a mainstreamed school setting.

The ability to seek for needed information is primarily base on the seekers skills, abilities and level of literacy on ICT and most of the hearing impaired learners who need

information do not have skills on operating the electronic gadget and those that have could not access to them easily due to the power shortage which causes barriers to information seeking; this fact was corroborated with Mulauzi and Albright (2009) finding that state that effective and innovative use of information requires information literacy skills, information and communication skills, language ability and literacy.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicates that information needs and information seeking behaviour of learners with hearing impairment are particular to them based on their communication deprivation, to help them live a successfully life and have ability to carry out their day to day life activities as well. Learners with hearing impairment also need additional information due to their communication difficulty to be a functional member of their environment.

Information need and information seeking behaviour of learners with hearing impairment involves information on education, health, politics, breaking news, situational reports which they need to have access to more often; so as to be more conscious, and be at alert to cope in their surrounding, which can be achieve through availability of sign language interpreters or a more explicit channels like up to date texts.

Recommendations

Base on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Sign Language interpreters are to be made available almost everywhere, where, the persons with hearing impairment need information so as to make communication easier and accessible.
- ii. Regular electricity supply is a necessity for a functional ICT systems and all other channels of information, to make the information needs of the person with hearing impairment nearer and easier.
- iii. The learners with hearing impairment should be ICT literate. This will ease their burden when they are not close to friends or family, or when there is no interpreter to avoid inaccessibility of needed information,
- iv. Provision of alternatives to electricity such as solar power energy, inverters are necessary so as to supplement shortage of electricity supply and help the person with hearing impairment to have access to source(s) of information anytime they wish.

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