Provision and Access to Library Support Services for Distance Learners in Ladoke Akintola University, Nigeria

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**Abstract**

The study examined the provision and access to library support services for distance learners in Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of distance learners from LAUTECH. A random sampling technique was used to select 341 respondents as sample size of the study. Data was collected using an adapted questionnaire. Four research questions were answered by the study. A total of 341 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents with a response rate of 86.2%. The findings of the study revealed that the majority (90.2%) of the respondents agreed that the library offered support services except for documentary, borrowing and internet services to distance learners. Also, the findings revealed that the level of accessibility of library support services was slightly above average. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the level of satisfaction by distance learners is low. The study revealed that geographical isolation, poor Internet connectivity, difficulty in borrowing library and others affecting the use of library services. The study concluded that the LAUTECH library provided library services but inadequate to DLs. Based on the findings; the study recommended among others that library management should extend borrowing of books.

**Keywords:** Open education, Library support Program, Distance Learner, University, LAUTECH, Nigeria

1. **Introduction**

Education plays a key role in the empowerment of citizens and the development of any nation. Tertiary institutions are saddled with the responsibility of providing quality education. It is an institution that provides post-secondary school education on a full-time, part-time or distance basis. Examples of tertiary institutions are university, polytechnic and college of education. University could be described as an institution of higher learning, providing facilities for teaching and research and authorized to grant academic degrees (first degree, master’s degree, and doctoral degree). It is an apex institution for the acquisition and advancement of knowledge. University offers two main educational systems namely conventional and open distance education.

The conventional system of education cannot accommodate all because of the increasing number of the needed individuals that want to improve their level of education. This rise in request for higher education by learners of varying ages in the world led to the introduction of distance education (Mayende & Obura, 2013). As pointed out by United Nations Educational Scientific and Culture Organisation (2002) the two main factors that have caused an explosion of interest in distance learning are; the growing need for continual skills upgrading and retraining; and the technological advances that have made it possible to teach more subjects at a distance. Similarly, Biao (2012) reported that experience from nationally and internationally has shown that conventional education cannot meet the demands of the present-day socio educational milieu, especially for developing countries like Nigeria. At present, the numbers of students admitted annually into conventional universities in Nigeria are so low compared to the number of those yearning to have a university education (Damilola, 2013). This might be due to a lack of financial capacity and infrastructure facility of Nigerian universities which compelled an emergence of an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system. ODL as an innovative and cost-effective educational system is meant to cater to the gap in educational provision.

Transformation in global digitization by the Internet has propelled the concept of distance education in developed and developing nations (Owusu-Ansah & Bubuama, 2015). Education serves as a tool for the shaping of developed and developing nations. Library as one of the essential support systems that influence the quality of education provided through library support services and resources. The library is the heart of any educational institution because it facilitates the acquisition of materials, research, and independent thinking by the provision of resources to support teaching and learning activities. The library houses both materials in print and electronic formats for the use of their clientele. It is essential to put in place learning support services that help the distance educational curricula to bridge the existing barrier in the process of making distance learners have the same benefits from library support services like conventional students on campus. Academic library as a university established library must meet the information needs of all students and other stakeholders by providing equal library services (Association of College and Research Libraries-ACRL, 2008). Adding to this, ACRL (2008) explained that every member of faculty, student, administrator, non-teaching staff or the host community of an institution, is entitled to the library resources and services of that institution. This includes direct communication with the suitable library staff, irrespective of where they were enrolled, located and their connection with the institution. Hence, the academic libraries should meet the research and information needs of various categories of users, including the distance learners (DLs). Distance learning institutions are expected to provide solutions to educational problems. DLs could be defined as students who receive formalized learning on location outside the university campus (Adetimirin & Omogbhe, 2011). Also, Heaps (2009) opined that DLs are students separated by available time or separated by distance from the institution in which they are enrolled for a course of study.

According to Maboe (2017) the educational institutions have adopted the use of online technologies to enable teaching and learning, and to augment interactivity between the DLs, DLs and lecturers, DLs and study material, and DLs and the institution. This assertion corroborated findings by Karaduman and Mencet (2013) that the practices of distance learning are based on interactive and information technologies which spread more widely than previous traditional modes of teaching.

Distance learning has various features that need special attention to achieve the primary goal of wide and accessible education to all. Akintayo and Bunza (2010) characterized distance learners as adults with responsibilities; professional (jobs) or social (families). The researchers also classified DLs as having a limited formal education. Distance learning is now accessible in most countries in the world and quite several working adults choose distance learning to get qualifications and be certified in their chosen fields. The contending priorities of work duties, home responsibilities, and school duties have constrained adults to desire for education with a high rate of flexibility and accessibility (Dzakiria, Kasim, Mohamed, & Christopher, 2013). Therefore, the design of distance education offers students with maximum flexibility. It provides the learners authority over time, the place and the speed of their study.

Distance learning as a substitute, it must be rewarded to guarantee the effective and appropriate provision of library support services for DLs (ACRL, 2008). Library support services on the other hand include facilitating access to library collections, instructional, and reference support, including information literacy training (Brooke, 2011). The point of library support for off-campus programs in Nigeria is coming into prominence for the most part due to the development in distance education. This declaration is buttressed by Adetimirin and Omogbhe (2011) that there has been a gradual development in the size of distance learning at academic institutions in Nigeria. According to Molefi (2008), in distance learning, library support services are procedures that are carefully created and effectively used by an institution of higher learning to aid teaching and learning at a distance. Similarly, Owusu-Ansah and Bubuama (2015) regarded library support services as germane in helping distance learners to overcome difficulties and challenges that affect the quality of academic work. Also, Chattopadhyay, (2014) stressed that distance learner support services systems have to be developed in a way that does not hamper the institutional needs and institution ethics policy such as respect for students or timely response to the learners and accessibility of the library services.

Accessibility is the ability of the distance learners in attaining or having access to the services provided for them by the academic library to support their scholarly works and research needs. Moreover, Owusu-Ansah and Bubuama (2015) stated that distance learners access library services and resources in different ways. The researchers noted that access can be direct, in essence, face to face, or arbitrated by printed material, such as brochure, manuals, or mediated by technology, using an array of media such as radio, telephone, the Internet, and others. Successful direct access is distinguished by flexibility, availability, reliability, portability, efficiency, user-friendliness, and convenient of service.

Students should have continuous access to resources accurate to support their learning. Academic libraries are saddled with responsibility of provision of equal information access to meet the information needs of all students. For the adequate and equal provision of library services to all stakeholders, Jagger (2009) reiterated that librarians should embrace technologies to facilitate and promote library service provision.

Adoption of new technology by libraries has altered methods of service provision remarkably in recent times; enhancing libraries to reach out to the DLs in increasingly assorted ways (Casey, 2009). Thus, librarians would take into consideration the learning activities involved and distant learners before adopting electronic learning technologies. Moreover, the central objectives for DL librarians should be to intensely remove any obstacles in accessing services and resources, combined with enabling DLs to become independent learners and information literate (Jagger, 2009; Cooke, 2010).

Also, Draper and Turnage (2011) stated that the creative use of technology is vital to the academic library’s ability to assist DLs at the point of need. Several studies (Adetimirin & Omogbhe, 2011; Damilola, 2013; Owusu-Ansah & Bubuama, 2015) examined the provision of library support services to distant learners at various locations; however, based on researchers’ knowledge, it seems none of this study was carried out in Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH). Therefore, this study examined the provision and access to library support services for distance learners in LAUTECH, Ogbomoso, Nigeria. It is anticipated that the findings of this study would assist policy makers to formulate a policy that would improve library support services to DLs. Also, the findings of the study would improve the library practice by identifying gaps in support services that need urgent attention to facilitate quality library services to distant learners in the 21st Century.

1. **Statement of the problem**

Provision and access of library support services to all users, especially Distance Learners (DLs) service cannot be overemphasized. The academic library being the heart of the university system provides support services for research, learning, and teaching. The conventional system of education cannot accommodate all because of the increasing number of the needed individuals that want to improve their level of education. This increase in demand for higher education by learners of unpredictable ages in the world brought distance education (Mayende & Obura, 2013). Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH) library provides library services to support teaching, learning and research activities for various categories of library users.

 However, it is not yet established whether these services adequately extended to meet the special needs of distance learners. As supported by Damilola (2013) that enough attention has not been given to the provision and access of library support services for DLs in Nigerian universities. Therefore, the study examined the provision and access to library support services for distance learners in LAUTECH, Ogbomoso, Nigeria.

1. **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of the study is to examine the provision and access to library support services for distant learners at Ladoke Akintola University of Technology-LAUTECH, Ogbomoso. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. examine the library support services offered to distance learners at LAUTECH;

2. determine the level of accessibility of library support services by the distance learners at LAUTECH;

3. investigate the level of satisfaction of distance learners towards the existing library support services at LAUTECH; and

4. identify the factors affecting the use of library support services by distance learners at LAUTECH.

1. **Literature review**

The 21st Century is an age that has witnessed a lot of social, political, and technological changes. Globalization however seems to augment these developments and continue with an increasing efficiency (Dursun, Oskayba & Gökmen, 2013). In essence these growths and changes have major impacts on life's demands and the needs of people, while affecting behaviour and means of fulfilling those needs. Therefore, these developments in this century have opened our eyes to new approaches of understanding the education service. Education is generally perceived as germane to feasible social and economic development. African countries, however, face huge encounters, unlike other geographies and regions. The rapidly rising in demand for all levels and forms of education, conjoined with local and regional governments’ inadequate capacity to grow the provision of education through traditional bricks and mortar institutions, leaves Open and Distance Learning (ODL) as a viable option to address and match growing demand (Igwe, 2010)

Molefi (2008) noted that library support services in distance education are measures that are created to serve a particular purpose and effectively used by institutions of higher learning to support learning and teaching at a distance. The study also regarded support services as important in aiding the learners to overcome challenges that affect the quality of scholarly work. This essentially gives the learners the confidence that they are not being left to themselves but the institution is engrossed in their progress. Owusu-Ansah and Bubuama (2015) observed student support as more outplaying and involves the total background in which learning occurs, the courses that offer the knowledge learning support, the distance learners and the plans made for them, the learning and teaching process, and the evaluation of learning, programmes, and institution.

Studies conducted around the world relating to the provision and access to library support services for distance learners revealed several factors that deter distance learners from fully utilisation of library support services. It is necessary to note that, more challenges were reported in developing countries compared to developed nations.

Several studies (Kwafoa., Osoro, & Afful-Auther, 2014; Mirza & Mahmood, 2012) identified the factors affecting the use of library support services by distance learners as geographical barriers, lack of awareness for library services and resources, budgetary and staffing limitations, technological barriers, poor information literacy abilities, poor digital literacy skills, interlibrary loan, the issue of document delivery, acquisition and collection development problems. On geographical constraints, distance learners are located in different regions in the country.

Byrne and Bates (2009) findings supported the results in the earlier research that reported technological innovations would help librarians to offer distance learners with the same level of accessibility to services and resources as traditional on-campus students, and the knowledge needed to find the information they require.

Furthermore, Anaraki and Babalhavaeji (2013) noted that the continuous growth of technologies has caused an increase of electronic information in libraries and on the internet; therefore, there is need for training on the best methods of accessing the required information. Information literacy training empowers library users with the ability to identify an information need, to locate the needed information, evaluate and utilise the information effectively. Also, Obasuyi and Usifoh (2013) noted that awareness of e-library resources was low, mostly due to the inadequate of computer and internet literacy skills. Similarly, a research carried out in Uganda at the Mbarara University by Gakibayo et al. (2013) observed that the lack of computer skills and limited information literacy skills as main challenges hampering the students from utilising e-library resources.

According to Owusu-Ansah and Bubuama (2015), the delivery of library material is often times a complex issue. Similarly, Maboe (2017) examined the usage of online interactive tools in an open distance learning context. The findings revealed that distance learners were technologically challenged and the institution does not provide the distance learners with the required support to acquire the needed skills to use these technologies.

 Many scholars (Mirza & Mahmood, 2012; Kwafoa et al., 2014) identified challenges to include lack of awareness for library services and resources, geographical obstacles, lack of information literacy, technological barriers, problem of interlibrary loan, budgetary and staffing restraints. Also, the document delivery, acquisition and collection development are issues. Cohen and Burkhardt (2010) stressed that budgetary and staffing restraints are familiar to all libraries and librarians not just the ones who serve distance learners. This indicates that libraries are constantly fighting stagnant or shrinking budgets. Furthermore, the lack of awareness for library resources and services is an obstacle to accessing library resources. As buttressed by Brooke (2011) in Sheffield Hallam University- SHU in the UK that the distance learners at SHU had reasons for not using the library resources, among is insufficient awareness of the services offered.

1. **Methodology**

**5.1 Research design**

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. Bechhofer and Paterson (2012) opined that research design varies depending on the place(s) where the research was conducted, the methods used to gather data and the analytic techniques applied.

**5.2 The population of the study**

According to Best and Kahn (2010), the population is any group of individuals that have one or more features in common, which are of interest to the researcher. The total population in this study was 2,326 comprised of students enrolled in the distant learners programme as at 2017/2018 session (lodlc.lautech.edu.ng) (See Table1)

**Table 1: Population and sample size by department**

**Department Enrolment Figures Population Percentage Sample Size**

Nursing 1023 43.9 149

Computer Science 483 20.8 72

Accounting 453 19.5 67

Marketing 367 15.8 53

**Total 2,326 100% 341**

Source: LAUTECH Open and Distance Learning Center (2018)

**5.3 Sample size and sampling procedure**

A sample is a sub-set of a population that is selected for analysis. Sampling is the process of selecting units, subsets or parts (e.g. people, organization) from a population of interest so that by studying the sample, the researcher may fairly generalise the results back to the population from which they were chosen (Osuala, 2001).The sample size derived was 341 using the Raosoft software (<http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>). This study adopted the stratified random sampling technique to cater for each stratum of the population. The choice of stratified sampling technique was made because the population is composed of layers (strata) of discretely different levels of studies by distance learners.

**5.4 Research instrument**

The questionnaire adapted from Buruga and Osaima (2019) and Owusu-Ansah, and Bubuama, (2015) entitled Distance Learning Library Support Services Questionnaire (DLLSSQ) was used as data collection instruments. The semi-structured questionnaire was divided into five (5) sections.

Section A consists of 6 items on Demographic Information (gender, age, department, level of study, marital status, highest educational qualification and the occupation of the distance learners). Section B covers 8 items on library support services available. Section C contains 1 item on the level of accessibility of library services offered. Section D covers 7 items on the level of satisfaction by distance learning students. Lastly Section E contains 7 items on factors affecting the use of libraries by distance learners.

**5.6 Validity and reliability of the instrument**

Validity is the degree or the extent to which an instrument measures what it is expected to measure. To ensure the face and content validity of the instrument used for the collection of data, it was given to three experts in Library and Information course, test & measurement and statistics. The comments, observations and suggestions of the experts led to the adjustment of the items in the instrument. This adjudged the instrument to have done both face and contents validity thereby justified it as a valid instrument for use in this study.

Reliability on the other hand, as defined by Best and Kahn (2010), refers to the degree of consistency of a test or instrument if it measures what it claims to measure. To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire used for data collection, in this study, it was administered on 20 students of the DLs program from the University of Ibadan in Oyo State. This study was subjected to half-split reliability tests by administering twenty (20) copies of the questionnaire on 20 students of the DLs program from the University of Ibadan. Half-split reliability method was employed to divide the responses into two equal halve using odd and even numbers of items in the questionnaire. Thereafter, the responses collected were subjected to Cronbach alpha. The overall reliability coefficient of the whole 23 items instrument reported an r¼ 0.759 as coefficient value. This is high enough to some levels thereby confirming the instrument as adequate for this study. The reliability coefficients of each of the sub-scale are contained in Table 2

**Table2. Half-split analysis output for research instrument.**

**Variables Reliability Test**

 No. of Items Alpha

1. B 8 0.523
2. C 1 0.749
3. D 7 0.854

1. E 7 0.910

**Overall reliability 23 0.759**

 Therefore, the overall average reliability coefficient of the scales is 0.759.

**5.7 Procedure for data collection**

A total of three hundred and forty-one (341) copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents in their respective study centres. To make the administration of the questionnaire less unwieldy and to ensure a high response rate, researchers distributed questionnaire when the school was in session. Questionnaire copies were distributed and responses were collected immediately after completion. Out of the total number administered, 294 copies of questionnaire were properly filled and returned. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the demographic data as well as to answer the research questions.

**5.8   Response rate**

A total of 294 out of 341 participants responded and completed the survey questionnaire giving a response rate of 86.2%. Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) opined that a response rate of at least 50% is adequate for analysis of a survey, 60% is considered good while a 70% return rate is considered excellent. On this note, a response rate of 86.2% is considered to be excellent for this study.

##  **Demographic characteristics of the distance learners (N=294)**

Figure 1 revealed that out of 294 respondents, 131 (44.6 %) were males while 163 (55.4 %) were females. The findings of the study indicated that there were more female distance learners than male counterparts in this study.

**Figure 2: Age level of the respondents (N=294)**

Figure 2 showed that 32 (10.9 %) of the respondents were below the age of 25 years, 58 (19.7%) were between 26-30 years, 96 (32.7%) were between 31-35 years, 78 (26.5%) were between 36-40 years, 24 (8.2%) were between 41-45 years, and 6 (2.0%) were 46 years and above. The findings showed that the majority of the respondents were between the ages of 31-35 years.

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 **Figure 3: Level of the study of the respondents (N=294)**

Figure 3 showed the level of study of the respondents. 43 (14.6 %) of the respondents were 100 level students, 30 (10.2 %) were 200 level students, 43 (14.6 %) were in 300 level, 65 (22.1%) were in 400 level, and 113 (38.5%) were 500 level students. The findings indicated that the majority of the respondents were 500 level students.

N=294

 **Figure 4: Occupation of the respondents (N=294)**

Figure 4 showed that 192 (65.3%) of the respondents were government workers, 76 (25.9%) were employees of private organisations while 26 (8.8%) of the respondents were self-employed. The findings of the study established that the majority of the respondents are government workers.

**Objective** **1**: The objective sought to investigate the library services offered to the distance learners by the library as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Library support services offered to the distance learners (N=294)**

Note: Strongly Agree + Agree =Agree; Disagree +Strongly Agree=Disagree

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  **S/N** | **ITEMS** | **Strongly Agree** | **Agree** | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** |
|  |  |  F % |  F % |  F % | F % |
| 1 | Provide access to books | * -
 |  3(1.0%) | 117 (39.8%)  | 174(59.2%)- |
| 2 | Provide web-based reference services  | 193 (65.6%)  | 97 (33.0%) |  4(1.4%) | * -
 |
| 3 | Provide circulation service on library textbooks |  | - |  55(18.7%) | 239(81.3%) |
| 4 | Provide Internet facilities | * -
 | * -
 | 128(43.5%) | 166(56.5%) |
| 5 | Provide electronic databases |  92(31.3%) | 89(30.3%) |  105(35.7%) |  8(2.7%) |
| 6 | Provide information guide to materials provided to the learners | 186(63.3%) | 97(33.0%) |  8(2.7%) |  3(1.0%) |
| 7 | Provide library training (paper/print instruction)  | 226(76.9%) | 65(22.1%) |  3(1.0%) | * -
 |
| 8 | Provide document delivery services for the distance learners | * -
 | * -
 | 249(84.7%) | 45(15.3%) |

Source: Field Survey, 2019. KEY: F-Frequency, %- Percentage

Table 3 showed 291 (99.0%) of the respondents agreed that the library offered library training (user education) provided for the distance learners while 3(1.0%) disagreed. Also, 290(98.6%) of the respondents agreed that the library provided web-based reference services for the distance learners while 4(1.4%) disagreed. Moreover, 283(96.3%) of the respondents agreed that the library offered an information guide to access library materials while 11(3.7%) disagreed. Besides, 181(61.6%) of the respondents agreed that the library offered electronic databases while 113(38.4%) disagreed. Furthermore, 294 (100%) of the respondents disagreed that they were not offered internet facilities. Equally, 294 (100%) disagreed that they did not offer document delivery service. Similarly, 291(99.0%) of the respondents disagreed that library did not offer them access to library books while 3(1.0%) agreed, The findings of the study infer that distance learners were offered access to certain library services however, they did not offered access to, internet facilities, document delivery services and library physical books. This might lead to the denial of borrowing books in the library by distance learners.

**Objective 2:** The objective sought to determine the levels of accessibility of the library support services offered to the distance learners by the library as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Levels of accessibility of library support services (N=294)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Statements** | **Easily Accessible**  | **Not Easily Accessible** | **Never Accessible**  |
|  | **F (%)** |  **F (%)** |  **F (%)**  |
| Library services  | 148(50.3%)  | 101(34.4%) |  45(15.3%) |

 Source: Field Survey, 2019. Key: F-Frequency; %-Percentage.

Table 4 showed that 148 (50.3%) of the respondents agreed that library services were easily accessible. However, 101(34.4%) of the respondents indicated that library services were not easily accessible. Also, 45 (15.3%) of the respondents agreed that they never access library services provided by the LAUTECH library. The findings of the study indicate that the level of accessibility of library support services is above average. The finding implies that accessibility of library support services needs to be improved.

**Objective 3:** The objective sought to examine the levels of satisfaction of distance learners towards the existing library support services as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Level of satisfaction of library support services offered to distance leaners (N=294)**

**Note**: Highly satisfied + satisfied = Satisfied; Not satisfied + indifferent = Not satisfied

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S/N | Statements | Highly Satisfied | Satisfied | Not Satisfied  | Indifferent  |
|  |  |  F (%) |  F(% )  |  F(% )  |  F(% )  |
| 1 | Provision of social media services (Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp) | 62(21.1%) | 59(20.1%) | 145(49.3%) | 28(9.5%) |
| 2 | Provision of virtual reference services | 60(20.4%) | 83(28.2%) | 117(39.8%)  | 34(11.6%) |
| 3 | Provision of access to online or computerized system (OPAC)  | 19(6.5%) | 43(14.6%) | 98(33.3%) | 134(45.6%) |
| 4 | Provision of current awareness services provided through email, and telephone  | 189(64.3%) | 74(25.2%) | 26 (8.8) |  5 (1.7) |
| 5 |  Provision of access to inter-library loan services | * -
 |  - - |  143(48.6%) | 151(51.4%) |
| 6 | Provision of online user education services provided by the library (Library orientation) | 170(57.8%) | 45(15.3%) |  61 (20.8%) | 18(6.1%) |
| 7 | In overall, the level of satisfaction to library services and sources | 27(9.2%) | 65(22.1%) |  155(52.7%) | 47(15.9) |

 Key: F-Frequency, %-Percentage. Source: Field Survey, 2019.

Table 5 showed that distance learners’ satisfaction with the provision of current awareness services provided through email, and telephone scored the highest percentage, with 263 (89.5%) agreed to be satisfied while 31(105%)were not satisfied. Also, the findings of the study showed that 215(73.1%) of the respondents agreed that they were satisfied with online user education services provided by the library while 79(26.9%) were not satisfied. In addition, 143(48.6%) of the respondents agreed that they were satisfied with the library’s virtual reference service while 151(51.4%) did not satisfied. The findings showed that 121(41.2%) of the respondents were satisfied with the provision of social media services while 173(58.8%) were not satisfied. Additionally, 294 (100%) of the respondents were not satisfied with the provision of access to inter-library loan services. In the overall assessment, 202(68.7%) of the respondents were not satisfied with the library services provided by LAUTECH to distance learners. The findings of the study suggest that the level of satisfaction of library support services by distance learners is low. This might be due to the inability of distance learners to borrow books from the physical library and lack of face to face interactions with the DLs librarians.

**Objective 4:** The objective sought to identify the factors affecting the use of library support services by distance learners as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: Factors affecting the use of library support services by distance learners Note:** Strongly agree + Agree = Agree; Disagree+ strongly disagree =Disagree

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Statements** | **Strongly Agree** |  **Agree**  | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** |
|  |  |  **F (%)** |  **F (%)** |  **F (%)** |  **F (%)** |
| 1 | Geographical isolation affects my use of the library | 112(38.1%) |  139(47.3%)  |  25(8.5%) |  18(6.1%) |
| 2 | Poor Internet connectivity hinders my use of the library | 154(52.4%) |  116(39.4%)  |  20(6.8%) | 4 (1.4%) |
| 3 | Lack of library and computer training affects my use of the library |  42(14.3%) |  56(19.0%)  | 129(43.9%) | 67(22.8%) |
| 4 | Lack of IT tools affect my use of the library | 56 (19.0%) | 13(4.4%)  |  60(20.4%) | 165(56.2%) |
| 5 | Difficulty in obtaining study materials makes it uneasy to use the library | 141(48.0%) |  123(41.8%)  |  21(7.1%) | 9(3.1%) |
| 6 | Difficulty in borrowing library books affects my use of library | 142(48.3%) | 147(50.0%)  |  2(0.7 %) | 3(1.0%) |
| 7 | Inability to interact with library staff hinders my use of the library | 119(40.5%) |  35(11.9%)  |  52(17.7%) | 88(29.9%) |

 Key: F-Frequency, %-Percentage. Source: Field Survey, 2019.

Table 6 showed the majority 289 (98.3%) of the respondents agreed that difficulty in borrowing library books affects the use of libraries. This is followed by 270(91.8%) indicating poor internet connectivity as a factor affecting their use of libraries. Also, 264(89.8%) showed that they faced difficulty in obtaining study materials from the library. The other factors were rated in the following sequence: geographical isolation affects my use of the library 251(85.4%), inability to interact with library staff hinders my use of the library 154(52.4%), lack of library and computer training affects my use of the library 98(33.3%) and lack of IT tools (computers, phones) affects my use of the library was the least ranked factor with 69(23.5%) of the respondents agreed to it. This might be due to the availability of smart phones used by distance learners. The findings suggest that numerous factors that affect the use of library support services provided by the LAUTECH library to distance learners.

1. **Discussion**

The findings of the study revealed that LAUTECH library offered the distance learners several services such as web based reference and referral services, telephone-based services, information guide to access materials, web based instruction to the distance learners, use of library training, and access to electronic databases. However, distance learners were not offered an internet facility, documentary delivery service, and circulation service. The finding is in agreement with the results of earlier studies (Ahenkorah-Marfo & Nikoi, 2019; Brooke, 2011; Kramer, 2010; Parsons, 2010) that reported that services provided to distance learners are web-based reference and referral services, information guide to access materials, telephone-based services and many others.

The findings revealed that the majority of library services were accessible to distance learners except few like borrowing privileges to the library’s physical resources outside the library. The findings of the study corroborated the result by Mayende and Obura (2013) that library services are not accessible to most of open distance learners up-country. In addition, the findings revealed that the level of satisfaction of library services rendered to distance learners by the library is poor. The findings of the study supported Adetimirin and Omogbhe (2011) that in spite of availability and accessibility of library resources to distance learners, a majority of students rarely used the library due to lack of borrowing rights, inadequate search skills and students’ tight schedules.

Also, the study revealed the factors affected the distance learners’ use of the library support services as difficulty in borrowing library books, poor internet connectivity, difficulty in obtaining study materials, and geographical isolation. Moreover, the findings revealed that lack of library and computer training, inability to interact with library staff, and lack of IT tools (computers, phones) were considered as minor factors that affected the learners’ use of the library support services. These findings corroborated with the results from studies (Buruga & Osamai, 2019; Mirza & Mahmood, 2012; Kwafoa et al., 2014) that showed poor internet connectivity as a major factor that affected the use of the library support services. Similarly, the present findings supported the result of Adetimirin and Omo (2011) that the inability to borrow books in the library by distance learners is one of the major constraints.

## **Conclusion**

This study was undertaken to examine the provision and access to library support services for distance learners at Ladoke Akintola University of Technology-LAUTECH, Ogbomoso. The study concluded that the LAUTECH library provided several support services required by distance learners which are similar to those provided by other academic libraries. However, distance learners were not provided internet, documentary and circulation services. Despite the provision of a variety of initiatives by LAUTECH to support library services yet, the level of satisfaction of library support services by DLs is low. Therefore, there is a need to suggest means of improving library support services to satisfy distance learners in LAUTECH, Ogbomoso. Nigeria.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study and the drawn conclusion, the following recommendations were made as follows: The library should provide borrower’s privileges to distance learners like conventional students at other libraries (reciprocal services). The service would encourage the distance learner to use the resources and services of partner or sister libraries closer to them to satisfy their information needs. Also, the effective document delivery services should be provided. This will make it possible to deliver materials remotely to distance learners without geographical barriers. In addition, it will assist to curb the effect of geographical isolation, and encourage the learners to utilise the library services.

Furthermore, distance learners should provide internet facilities through a personal commitment by subscribing to a reliable networking provider using their smartphones. Moreover, University management should upgrade Internet connectivity to improve online library support services such as online library orientation, online information guides, and online tutorials for better performance.

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