

## Provision of Library Resources and Services to the Hearing Impaired in Special School Libraries in South-South, Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*This work focuses on the provision of library resources and services to hearing impaired students in special school libraries in South-South, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 60 hearing impaired students drawn from twelve public and private special schools in South-South, Nigeria. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 5 respondents from each of the schools. The instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire. Out of 60 copies of questionnaire administered, 56 were found valid for analysis. The data was analyzed using percentage and mean scores. The study revealed that there was a shortage of information resources in alternative formats and services, and a lack of skilled and qualified teacher librarians to provide suitable library services to support the hearing impaired students amongst others. The study therefore recommended that library resources and services for hearing impaired learners should be acquired, made available and accessible for use: library schools should include special education, especially sign language in the curriculum so as to ensure that libraries and librarians are skilled to meet the needs of special learners. Also special school management should take proactive steps to improve their libraries so that they can be more supportive of the needs of hearing impaired students.*

**Keywords:** Hearing impairment, Physically-challenged, School library, Special library, Information resources, Information services.

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## **Introduction**

There is ability in disability, if appropriate attention and care is accorded to the special people in the society. Libraries have different types of users including people with special needs, also called special users of the library. Special users range from visually impaired, deaf and hearing impaired, mental disabilities amongst others. A special user or patron is an individual that cannot utilize the information resources in the library without adaptive equipment (augmented or assisting equipment or resources). It is also a situation where there is inability to do what is considered 'normal' to a non disabled person. Specialneeds people or people with disabilities tend to pose some concern to the society in that they have some difficulty in performing tasks unlike the non- disabled people. However, like thenon-disable they too have some inherent abilities, aspirations, visions and dreams which if given the proper attention and guidance will be actualized. This is true in all areas of life including the area of library and information services.

Information is a unique and unavoidable attribute for sustainable development and self education in all its totality. Much of human intellectual achievements, civilization and growth are attributed to information material made available usually through library and information services or other information centers. It can therefore be said that information made available in a consistent and specific manner produces a professional or skilled man. It polishes and refines potentials for practice; it also serves as an integrating tool to the people living with disabilities by incorporating them into the socio-cultural, socio-economic and general development of the society. The Library is described as the collection of selected, acquired, organized and retrievable information resources made available for access and use. It is a potential tool to enhance and shape ability in disability because libraries provide a wide range of services that are aimed towards changing the thinking, behavior as well as improving the productivity of all kinds of people including the hearing impaired library users. According to Seth and Parida (2006) libraries perform an important function in enhancing disabled persons' intellect, mind and general understanding by making available to them information resources in alternative format. While special library and information services involve the provision of information services additional to, supplementary to and complementary to or different from those provided in the regular library services by a systematic modification

and adaptation of instructional techniques, resources and equipment to meet the needs of handicapped/special learners. It is to be borne in mind that the aim is to help them to become self-independent, and also less of a burden to their family and society.

### **Statement of problem**

Information is a basic requirement for humans to socialise, conceptualise and contribute to their environment, achieve or actualise their God given talents unhindered and so it is important for all classes of persons. Hearing impaired students like hearing students have dreams, aspirations, desires and their God-given talents that should be nurtured and well taken care-of, especially in the provision of library resources and services, if done properly, it will undoubtedly enhance their social integration, self-development and quality education. However, literature suggests that the provision of information resources and services to the hearing impaired in their various forms in special school libraries in Nigeria is inadequate and as such affects the quality of education that they receive. It is on this premise that this study seeks to investigate the provision of library resources and services to hearing impaired students in school libraries in south-south Nigeria. The findings of this study are expected to fill the gap in the area as well as provide special school management information that will enable them to improve the standard of their school libraries.

### **Research questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What types of information resources are available in alternative formats for the hearing impaired students in special schools libraries in South-South Nigeria?
2. To what extent is the information resources in alternative formats used in special schools libraries in South-South Nigeria?
3. What are the specialized library services provided for the hearing impaired students in special schools libraries in South-South Nigeria?
4. What are the information needs of the hearing impaired students in special schools libraries in South-South Nigeria?

5. What are the challenges of hearing impaired students in accessing information resources in special schools libraries in South-South Nigeria?

### **Literature review**

The provision and unhindered use of information are fundamental human right issues as contained in articles 19 and 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 10th December 1948. The Provision of library and information resources and services to hearing impaired is with a view to making them better informed, more useful and productive in line with the tenets of sustainable development. Hearing impaired people are in degrees or kinds as explained by Goldmann (2010). According to the author, hearing impairment is the most general term used to describe all types and degrees of hearing defects, ranging from slight loss to intense deafness. He described "deaf" individuals as those who cannot discern meaning in perceivable sounds. He further explained the degrees of hearing impairment; **(1)** Hard-of-hearing – describes individuals whose sense of hearing while deficient is still somehow functional. They can understand speech to some extent with or without a hearing aid, and generally depend on speech reading, facial expression, and gestures (sometimes including sign language) to complement what they do hear; **(2)** Congenitally deaf – those who are born with profound deafness, **(3)** Adventitiously deaf – having lost part or all of their hearing later in life at any time from infancy onward; **(4)** Pre-lingual deafness – describes the loss of hearing before the acquisition of language, usually before three years of age, and **(5)** Post-lingual deafness – describes hearing loss occurring after (often long after) language acquisition. According to Furst and Vogelauer (2012), students with hearing impairment are required to utilize library information resources just like their hearing contemporaries.

Badawi (1994), Aramide and Bolarinwa (2010), Onadiran (1998), Eisenman (2005), Forrest (2005) and Busari (2015) have separately investigated the availability, use and the provision of library services for the physically challenged students in libraries. The findings of the studies showed no satisfactory evidence of the provision of information resources in the libraries investigated. Iroeze, Chima, Nneka, and Opara (2018) in their research revealed

that the number of available information resources for the deaf and hard of hearing was significantly less than expected.

Eisner (2012) reported that over seventy percent of students who were deaf or hard of hearing attend a public school and enroll in a classroom with their hearing peers, the researcher recommended that teacher-librarians who work in these schools should improve their instruction by understanding not only what it means to be deaf or hard of hearing but also how deaf and hard of hearing students learn to read and what challenges they may encounter in the school library classroom. Eze (2014) focused on the extent of utilization of specialized resources by the hearing impaired in South East, Nigeria and found that tele-text/text messages and audio descriptive video were highly utilized. On the other hand, induction loop, computer assisted real-time captioning, digital accessible information system were used to a moderate extent.

Chima and Eskay (2013) in their research found that libraries and librarians, particularly in Nigeria still tend to be unprepared to cope with the special and varied communication needs of these patrons or to promote action toward making their facilities accessible to them. Moreover, in spite of the prevalence of hearing loss in the country, disability still remains a serious barrier to communication in the use of libraries. Atinmo (2012) observed that access to information is not equitable. She further emphasized that some group of users, especially people living with disabilities are marginalized in terms of access to information provision.

Ajogwu (2006) writing on the role of libraries and librarians in making information available to the hearing impaired or disadvantaged noted that this group of learners are viewed as learners with special needs, especially when it comes to the provision of information resources in alternative formats. This is because information needs to be reassembled so as to be easily accessible by this group. Learners with disability deserve to be cared for in a conducive and non-exclusionary environment in spite of their disadvantages (Onu, 2004). Atabor (2015) states that students with disability seek civic, spiritual, educational and vocational information that can be obtained by searching information resources such as government publications, textbooks, novels, journals and internet.

Abdulrazaq (2010) examined the means and ways librarians can effectively provide and create access to information and serve the various categories of disabled students in Nigeria. He noted that provision of library and information services to all is the key to the door of information and an essential ingredient of individual's basic needs. He also observed that the absence of information services to the disadvantaged group like the hearing blind people, hospital patients, mobility impaired, deaf and mentally retarded and prisoners will amount to neglect and discrimination in negation to the provisions of the National Policy on Education (NPE) and Federal Government Decree on Nigerians with Disability (1993), and the entire objective of the Universal Basic Education (UBE).

Ambali, Usma and Adesina (2018) observed that librarians are not skillfully equipped to handle the information needs of the hearing impaired in that they were not prepared for it in the course of schooling. Soroja (2000) in commenting on the library and information needs of the deaf and dumb readers recommended the provision of hearing aids centers, library resources in connection with their studies amongst others.

Agbaje and Olabode (2000) and Charles (2005) noted that it is clear that the level of development of libraries in our society in making materials available and accessible to the disadvantaged readers is a hard task yet to be overcome, and that in comparisons between what has been achieved and what should have been achieved, one will appreciate that a lot of ground still needs to be covered. They stated some of the teething problems militating against availability, accessibility and use of library and information resources by persons with disabilities to include: inaccessible library buildings, poor funding, inadequate training on special education, non-participation of the challenged persons in programme planning, poor statistics of persons with disabilities, and lack of appropriate facilities and assistive technologies. Agbaje (2000) noted the problem faced by the persons with disabilities include physical access to the library, lack of skilled personnel on disability issues and general paucity of funds to provide services.

## **Methodology**

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 60 hearing impaired students drawn from 12 public and private special schools in South-South, Nigeria. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 5 respondents from each of the special schools. A self-designed questionnaire using a four point likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) and High Usage (HU) = 4 points; Agree (A) and Usage (U) = 3 points, Disagree (D) and Low Usage (LU) = 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) and No Usage (NU) = 1 point was adopted. The questionnaire was titled "Provision of Library Resources and Services to Hearing Impaired Students in Special School Libraries Questionnaire" (PLRSHISSSLQ). The questionnaire was grouped into 5 clusters which sought to determine the types of information resources available in alternative formats for hearing impaired students in special school libraries, the extent of usage of information resources in alternative formats in special school libraries, the specialized library services provided for hearing impaired students in special school libraries, the information needs of the hearing impaired students in special school libraries and the challenges of the hearing impaired students in accessing information resources in special school libraries in South-South, Nigeria. Out of 60 copies of questionnaire administered 56 were found valid for the analysis. The data was analyzed using percentage and mean scores. Using the four-point likert scale, the mean was calculated as:  $4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10 \div 4 = 2.50$

**Decision Rule:** Based on the mean of 2.50, the decision was that any item with a mean of 2.50 and above was accepted while any item with a mean below 2.50 was rejected

## **Analysis and discussion of result**

**Research Question one:** What types of information resources are available in alternative formats for the hearing impaired learners in special schools libraries in south-south Nigeria?

**Table 1:** Types of information resources available for hearing impaired students in South-South Nigeria

Statement	Yes	No
Picture book	51 (91%)	5 (9%)
Video tapes	40 (71%)	16 (29%)
Sign language catalogue	3 (5%)	53(95%)
Sign language book	44(79%)	12(21%)
Sign language encyclopedia	6 (11%)	50 (89%)
Sign language dictionary	32(57%)	24 (43%)
Sign language journals	4 (7%)	52(93%)
Sign language magazine	5 (9%)	51(91%)
Sign language novel	22(39%)	34(61%)
Sign language textbooks	52(93%)	4 (7%)
Assertive listening devices	47(84%)	9(16%)
Audio descriptive video	6 (11%)	50 (59%)
Decoder	6 (11%)	50 (59%)
Kuzeweil reader	3 (5%)	53 (95%)
Induction loop	5(9%)	51(91%)
Craft book	24(45%)	32(55%)
Wall map	25(45%)	31(55%)
Computer assisted real-time captioning	25(45%)	31(55%)

Table 1 On the one hand shows the availability of information resources for the hearing impaired students in South-South, Nigeria. The table shows that sign language textbooks (93%), picture book (91%), assertive listening devices (84%), sign language book (79%), video tapes (71) and sign language dictionary (57%) were the information resources available for the hearing impaired students in special schools libraries in South-South, Nigeria; on the other hand, computer assisted real-time captioning (45%), wall map (45%), craft book (45%), sign language novel (39%), audio descriptive video (11%), decoder (11%), sign language encyclopedia (11), sign language magazine (9%), induction loop (9%), kuzeweil reader (5%) and sign language catalogue (5%) are poorly available. The results agree with the result of Iroeze, Chima, Nneka, and Opara(2018) that reported that the information resources that were not available in special school libraries were more than what was available. Badawi (1994), Aramide and Bolarinwa (2010), Aina (1996), Onadiran (1998), Eisenman (2005), Forrest (2005) and Busari (2015), in their independent research found that the provision of library services for the physically challenged students in libraries shows no satisfactory evidence of the provision of information.



**Research Question two:** To what extent is the information resources in alternative formats used in special schools libraries in south-south Nigeria?

**Table 2: Extent of usage of electronic information resources**

Statement	HU	U	LU	NU	Mean	Decision
Picture book	12	18	16	10	2.6	Accept
Video tapes	13	22	17	4	2.8	Accept
Sign language catalogue	-	7	11	38	1.4	Reject
Sign language book	8	23	23	2	2.7	Accept
Sign language encyclopedia	-	2	26	28	1.5	Reject
Sign language dictionary	2	10	15	29	1.7	Reject
Sign language journals	-	6	16	34	1.5	Reject
Sign language magazine	2	5	13	36	1.5	Reject
Sign language novel	4	8	14	30	1.8	Reject
Sign language textbooks	15	20	15	6	2.8	Accept
Assertive listening devices	13	18	18	7	2.7	Accept
Audio descriptive video	2	8	14	32	1.6	Reject
Decoder	2	10	15	29	1.7	Reject
Kuzeweil reader	-	5	14	37	1.4	Reject
Induction loop	-	3	9	44	1.3	Reject
Craft book	7	20	15	14	2.4	Reject
Wall map	5	19	17	15	2.3	Reject
Computer assisted real-time captioning	11	15	20	10	2.5	Accept

Table 2 shows, on the one hand the mean scores of the usage of information resources available for the hearing impaired students in school libraries in South-South Nigeria and shows the utilization level ranges for video tapes (2.8), sign language textbooks (2.8), sign language book (2.7), assertive listening devices (2.7), picture book (2.6), computer assisted real-time captioning (2.5). On the other hand craft book (2.4), wall map (2.3), sign language dictionary (1.8), sign language novel (1.7), decoder (1.7), audio descriptive video (1.6), sign language journals, sign language magazine and sign language encyclopedia (1.5) respectively, sign language catalogue (1.4), kuzeweil reader (1.4) and induction loop (1.3) have a low usage. It could therefore be stated that there was an overall low usage of electronic information resources by the deaf and hearing impaired in South-South Nigeria. This agreed with the study carried out by Iroeze, Chima, Nneka, and Opara (2018) that only sign language books subtitled DVD and videos, assistive listening devices and textbooks were being highly utilized by the special education students. On the other hand the results disagreed with the results of the study carried out by Eze (2014) that found out that the specialised resources for the hearing impaired used to a high extent were tele-text/text messages and audio descriptive video while, induction loop, computer assisted real-time captioning, digital accessible information system, were used at moderate extent.

**Research Questionthree:** What is the specialised library services provided for hearing impaired students in special schools libraries in south-south, Nigeria?

**Table 3: The specialized library services provided**

Statement	Yes	No
Do you have a librarian or teacher librarian	9 (16%)	47(84%)
Are you trained on how to use different information resources in the library	8 (14%)	48(86)
Are there those who translate printed information to sign language	52(93%)	4(7%)
Does your librarian assist you in accessing your needed information materials	9 (16%)	47(84%)
Do you have computer assisted information resources	18 (32%)	38(68%)
Are you satisfied with the information resources in your library	14 (25%)	42(75%)

Table 3 above shows the specialised library service provided for hearing impaired students. It reveals that the only library service provided was the translation of printed information to sign language (93%). Most of the respondents disagreed that provision of training on how to use different information resources in the library (86%), librarians who assist in accessing needed information materials (84%),teacher librarian (84%) and computer assisted information resources (68%)were provided to them. Also 75% disagreed that they were satisfied with the information resources in the library. These results disagreed with the findings ofEze (2014) thatsign language interpretation serviceswere part of the services that were not provided to the hearing impaired learners, while Ambali, Usma and Adesina (2018) found that librarians were not skillfully equipped to handle the information need of the hearing impaired because they were not prepared for it in the course of schooling.

**Research Questionfour:** What are the information needs of hearing impaired students in special schools libraries in south-south Nigeria?

**Table 4: information needs of hearing impaired students**

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
Disability information	27	29	-	-	3.5	Accept
Vocational training	21	35	-	-	3.4	Accept
Job and career choices	21	35	-	-	3.4	Accept
Politics	10	15	19	12	2.4	Reject
Education opportunities	17	19	18	2	2.9	Accept
Success stories of other disabled	9	22	18	7	2.6	Accept
Social life	9	23	16	7	2.6	Accept
Spiritual	7	29	15	5	2.7	Accept

Table 4 shows the mean scores of the information needs of hearing impaired and reveals that the hearing impaired students need information on disability situation (3.5), vocational training (3.4), job career and choices (3.4), educational opportunities (2.9), spiritual (2.7), social life (2.6), success stories of other disabled (2.6). Most of the respondents disagreed that they needed information on politics (2.4) as the mean score is below the criterion mean of 2.5. The results agreed with the research carried out by Atabor (2015), which found that disabled learners sought civic, spiritual, educational and vocational information. Also, Onyebukwa (2010) noted that information needs of the hearing impaired learners were more than those of the able-bodied learners.

**Research Questionfive:** What are the challenges of hearing impaired students in accessing information resources in special schools libraries in south-south Nigeria?

**Table 5: Challenges facing the hearing impaired students in accessing information resources**

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
Shortage of desirable information	27	29	-	-	3.5	Accept
Inadequate knowledge of the library	17	20	19	-	3.0	Accept
Inadequate skilled librarian	13	24	11	8	2.8	Accept
Erratic power supply	14	18	15	9	2.7	Accept
Lack of current awareness service	10	21	23	2	2.7	Accept
Lack of computer aided catalogue	19	23	7	7	3.0	Accept
Lack of computer assistive devices	25	31	-	-	3.4	Accept

Table 5 above shows the challenges that face the hearing impaired students in accessing information resources and reveals that shortage of desirable information (3.5), lack of computer assistive devices (3.4), lack of computer aided catalogue (3.0), inadequate knowledge of the library (2.8), inadequate skilled librarian (2.7) erratic power supply and lack of current awareness service (2.7) respectively were the challenges faced by the hearing impaired students in accessing information resources in their school library. These results were in line with Agbaje and Olabode(2000) and Charles (2005) who stated in their independent researches that the teething challenges militating against accessing information resources by persons with disabilities to included: inaccessible library buildings, poor funding, inadequate training on special

education, non-participation of the disabled in programme planning, poor statistics of persons with disabilities, and lack of appropriate facilities and assistive technologies. Furthermore, Agbaje (2000) also noted the problem faced by hearing impaired as; physical access to the library, lack of skilled personnel on disability issues and general paucity of funds to provide services.

### **Conclusion**

Hearing impaired students constitute part of the library users and libraries must provide resources and services to capture their information needs. However, the study which investigated the provision of library resources and services to hearing impaired students in special school libraries in South-South, Nigeria, revealed that the provision of library resources for hearing impaired students in school libraries in South-South Nigeria were limited and inadequate to promote effective use. The study showed that there were inadequate library services to hearing impaired students to ensure the effective satisfaction of their information needs. It also revealed that the hearing impaired students were faced with challenges like shortage of desirable information resources, skilled librarian amongst others. Hence, the study concluded that hearing impaired special school libraries should be equipped with the needed library resources and services to ensure a smooth integration of the users into the educational, socio-economic system of the society.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommended the following based on the findings in the study;

1. Information resources in alternative formats should be made available and accessible to hearing impaired students in special school libraries to enable them freely access information since information is a fundamental human right for every individual which helps to foster social integration of the people with learning impairments into the society.
2. The establishment of special school libraries for the hearing impaired should be given a special attention, while teaching of sign language should be fostered in regular schools to promote social integration among students with hearing impairment.

3. Library schools should include special education in their curriculum. This is to enable librarians to acquire the knowledge that will enable them skillfully provide information services to disabled students.
4. Government, school managements and non-government organizations should collaborate with publishers, interpreters and translators of sign languages to foster the production of information material that best suit hearing impaired students.
5. Boards of special education in Nigeria and beyond should be proactive on special school library matters.
6. Special schools management should employ trained librarians to man their school libraries.
7. Funds should be made available to ensure that library is not starved of adequate personnel and resources to enable them achieve high performance in service delivery.

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