

# Utilization of Lusaka Apex Medical University Libraries by Undergraduate Students

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## ABSTRACT

*The study surveyed utilization of the Apex Medical University library by undergraduate students at the University. Using a survey research design, 230 students were selected to participate in the study using convenient sampling. Findings revealed that many students (54.7%) utilized the library occasionally. Among the majority, the findings further showed that 39.6% utilized the library to read to improve personal competence. Concerning the challenges, 42.6% of students stressed the inadequacy of relevant materials. The need for librarians to be available to aid students seeking information for different purposes was recommended. This was seen as a way through which many students would have access to the available information in their field. It must also be pointed out that there must be continuous orientation and sensitization to students on how to access both physical and online materials. This would increase the use of library services as well as improve the performance of students. Lastly, it was recommended that a study on the digital literacy of students be done to ascertain their competence and search skills in sourcing information on library platforms.*

**Keywords:** library resources, library usage, students, Lusaka Apex Medical University, Higher Education Institution, academic libraries

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, the need for information has acted as a basis for which critical decisions are made. In medieval times, old men and women relied on Indigenous Medical Knowledge (IMK) to treat different diseases in the non-existence of conventional knowledge generated through scientific research (Mvula & Hamooya, 2022). The origin and continued advancement in Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) across all fields demand a new approach to creating, organizing, and presenting information to users. In the academic context, libraries in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have the mandate to adopt approaches that meet the information needs of users to support teaching, learning, research, and innovation. The university libraries aid in publicising information that is recorded, either in printed materials or digitized materials. These resources appear in different formats ranging from hard copy books, journals, e-resources, periodicals, newspapers, diaries, and manuscripts among others. In playing their supportive role to the university, academic libraries are mandated to provide necessary

services to supplement the efforts of their parent institutions.

Information and Communication Technologies are expected to provide accessibility to a broader range of information services such as reference services, circulation, cataloguing, and classification services, develop a relevant collection consistent with programmes offered at the university as well as embed ICTs in services provided. These according to Nnadozie (2014) are pillars through which philosophies, news, symbols, and sound are stored and circulated across time and space appearing in various sections within the library. However, the provision of these services and the success of academic libraries depends on the extent of user satisfaction. Library users are seen as persons who visit the library to use its resources to fulfill their information needs (Nwalo in Anyira, 2011). They are referred to as people who make themselves available to the services provided by a library. A library user includes numerous terms such as information users, patrons, clients, consumers, information seekers, consumers, and readers among others. These terms can be used interchangeably because they all relate to those

pursuing the services of a library. In this study, library users are undergraduates enrolled at Lusaka Apex Medical University who seek information from the library to satisfy their information needs. These undergraduates are students studying for their first degree in university.

### 1.1 Background and Statement of Problem

Lusaka Apex Medical University (LAMU) was incorporated in June 2008 by 8 indigenous Zambian professionals. The genesis of this initiative was to complement the Government's efforts in providing medical education through training high quality human resources in the medical field.

The establishment of the University has therefore full support of the National Authorities under the Public-Private Partnership arrangement. It pushes the bar upwards by focusing on relevant training in line with developments of technologies and techniques in the medical and health field globally. It brings inefficiencies associated with the private sector.

Lusaka Apex Medical University established a library to meet the growing number of students. Due to the high demand for Medical Education, the institution embarked on a project to build a large library with a capacity of more than 200 study spaces which was opened in 2016 at the main Chalala campus. To date, LAMU has five libraries located on five different campuses namely Pharmacy, Nutrition, and Dietetics in Tick, Chalala Main Library, Medicine and Surgery in Roma, Health Sciences in Foxdale, and Radiography in Olympia. However, there has been a reduction in the number of students attending the library facilities on all campuses. This study therefore attempts to find out why this is the case and further recommend what can be done to promote library usage as well as the need to utilize other services provided in meeting the demands of users.

### 1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the utilisation of the library at Lusaka Apex Medical University by undergraduate students. In doing so, the study specifically sought to:

- i) determine how often undergraduate students use library resources at LAMU.
- ii) ascertain the determinant for undergraduate use of library resources at LAMU.

- iii) determine the challenges faced by undergraduate students in accessing library services at LAMU.

### 1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

- i) How often do LAMU undergraduate students use library resources?
- ii) What is the determinant for which LAMU undergraduate students use library resources?
- iii) What challenges do undergraduate students at LAMU have in accessing library resources?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In academics, libraries are determined to serve the users by sharing the information as well as seeking the information needed which in turn paves the way for success (Murgatroyd & Calvert, 2013). Students' success in most Higher Education Institutions entirely depends on the quality of information they acquire from academic and institutional repositories. This poses a responsibility on students to have good information seeking attitudes and skills to enhance their chances of obtaining the requisite information to meet their academic needs. This is because information seeking is central to learning, and students who lack information seeking skills may be deprived of the information they are looking for. Mishra et al (2015) did a study that looked at the information needs of health science students at Deemed University, in India. The findings revealed that many students (64.76%) used e-resources for information retrieval through the internet/e-library rather than other retrieval processes. Text reference books were cited as the second most frequented information source. It is clear from the findings how impactful ICTs are on information access and services.

Similarly, a study by Dastani et al (2019) revealed that many students at Gonabad University of Medical Sciences were searching for information about the type of sickness and their treatment, and this information was mostly sought from the internet by practicing doctors. The findings indicate clearly that there is also a tacit information source where students had to search for information through those practicing it. The studies have both shown the desire for information

which is sought in different formats because of the genesis of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in academic libraries. However, information seeking dictates where and how users can acquire the information they need. A study by Datsani et al, is a notable example. In the absence of documented experience (tacit information), users opted to seek information from those living the experience.

On the other hand, some local studies have shown less utilization of library resources and services, especially those in electronic format. For instance, a study done at the University of Zambia on utilisation of e-resources by natural science students revealed that 44.4% of participants were not using e-resources (Mvula & Nkunika, 2017). Similarly, a study at the Livingstone International University of Tourism Excellence and Business Management (LIUTEBM) revealed that the majority (83.3%) of students used the library occasionally and they visited the library to read books related to improving personal competence (Mvula, 2023).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a survey research design. This is a design in which a structured questionnaire is used to collect data from a sample of participants. The study targeted students from the faculties of pre-medical sciences, nursing and midwifery science, medical radiation, medicine and surgery, health sciences and pharmacy, nutrition, and dietetics at LAMU. The sample size for this study was 230 students who were selected using convenient sampling. Data was collected using Google form questionnaires which were distributed in various WhatsApp groups of different faculties and data was analyzed using a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

### 4. FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Characteristics of Respondents

The study surveyed the gender, age, and programmes of study of the students who participated. The findings on gender showed that 51.1% were males while 48.9% were females. This clearly shows the increase of males in pursuing health related programmes. Furthermore, the majority were those aged between 16 and 22 years who recorded 54.6%. 38.4% was recorded for those aged between 23 and 30 years. 3.1% was recorded for aged between 31 and 35 years while

36 and above showed 3.9% as indicated in table 1 below.

Table 1: Characteristics of Respondents

Demography	Item	Respondents	Percentage
Age	16-22	125	54.6%
	23-30	88	38.4%
	31-35	7	3.1%
	36 & above	9	3.9%
Gender	Male	112	48.9%
	Female	117	51.1%

Regarding programmes of study, the majority (40.8%) were in Pre-Medical Science Nursing and Midwifery Science 14.5% were pursuing Pharmacy, Nutrition, and Dietetics recorded 14%, Medical Radiation Sciences had 9.2% students while Medicine and Surgery recorded 5.7%

Table 2: Programmes pursued by the students

Faculty	Pre-Medical Sciences	93	40.8%
	Health Sciences	36	15.8%
	Nursing & Midwifery Sciences	33	14.5%
	Pharmacy, Nutrition & Dietetics	32	14%
	Medical Radiation Sciences	20	8.8%
	Medicine & Surgery	13	5.7%

#### 4.2 Frequency of Accessing Library Resources and Services

The survey asked students to indicate how often they used the library. Findings showed that many students (54.7%) used the library occasionally. 20.9% indicated three times per week, those who frequented daily indicated 16% while those who visited the library once in two days accounted for 8.4% as shown in the figure below.

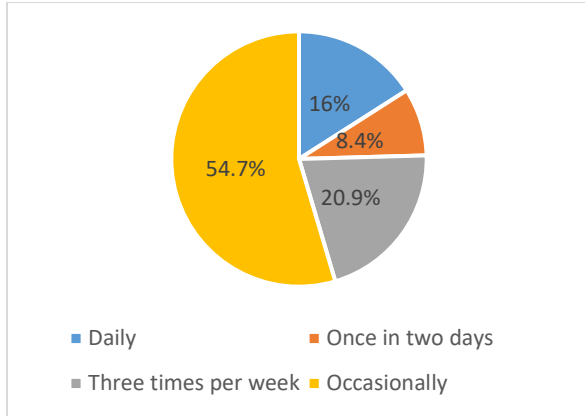


Figure 1: Frequency of library use among students

#### 4.3 Common Purpose for Using Library Resources and Services

The survey solicited students to indicate the purpose for which they used the library. Findings showed that many students (39.6%) used the library for reading to improve personal competency. 24.2% indicated searching for data/information to use, those who went to study for the exams indicated 16.7% while those who visited the library to prepare for tests/lectures accounted for 19.4% as shown in table 3 below.

Table 3: The purpose for which students use the library

Purpose for a library visit	Frequency	Percentage
Preparing for tests/lectures	44	19.4%
Studying for the exams	38	16.7%
Searching for data/information to use	55	24.2%
Reading to improve personal competency	90	39.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.4 Information Sources Utilised by the Students

The survey solicited students to indicate the major source of information in the library. Findings showed that many students (34.7%) used physical books as a major source of information. 30.7% indicated accessing through other internet sources, those who accessed through online books/journals accounted for 30.2% while those

who accessed information via online institutional repositories accounted for 4.4% respectively.

Table 4: Sources of Information/data

Most consulted source	Frequency	Percentage
Online books/journals	68	30.2
Physical books	78	34.2
Institutional Repository	10	4.4
Other Internet sources	69	30.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.5 Device for Information Access

Accordingly, many students (62.2%) indicated accessing the information using their smartphones. 21.1% indicated using their laptops, those who used Personal Computers (PCs) accounted for 14.5% while those who used Epad/Tablet accounted for 1.8% as shown in the table below.:

Table 5: Device Used for Information/Data Access

Device most used	Frequency	Percentage
Personal Computer	33	14.5
Laptop	48	21.1
Smart Phone	142	62.2
lpad/Tablet	4	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>100</b>

The findings have revealed that despite accessing several materials online, many students indicated that physical books were the most available sources of information. The study further established that the majority of those who accessed online information used their smartphones. These findings are influenced by different factors. The frequent use of information accessed through physical books can be necessitated in three ways. One is by non-ownership of a smart gadget which forces the students to depend entirely on physical books. The second factor would incorporate the first, thus a student does not have a smart gadget and lacks the skills to operate one. Therefore, this student cannot make use of the computers made available in the library. The third factor brings to light the

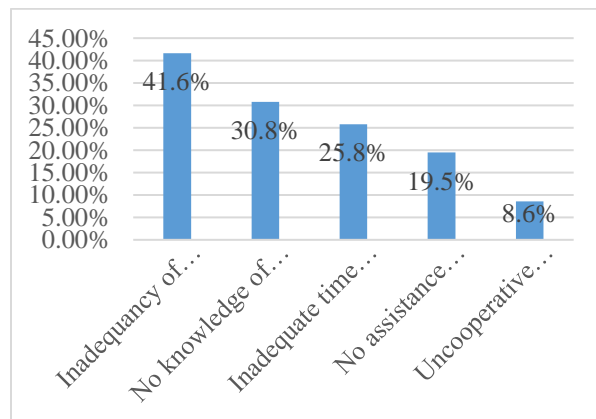
restrictions of internet access to personal gadgets such as smartphones.

On the other hand, many smartphones in accessing information may be necessitated by the fact that most gadgets are faster when downloading materials or accessing needed sites. The smartphone also makes it easier to share information with others using WhatsApp, emails, etc.

#### 4.6 Challenges in Accessing Library Resources and Services

The survey solicited students to indicate the challenges faced when accessing library services. Findings showed that many students (42.6%) stressed the inadequacy of relevant materials. 30.8% indicated not knowing where and how to obtain the needed materials, and those who stressed inadequate time to seek the needed information accounted for 25.8%. 19.5% were for those who indicated a lack of assistance from library staff while those indicating an uncooperative attitude of the library staff accounted for 8.6% as shown in the figure below.

**Figure 2: Challenges in accessing library services**



### 5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings in this study have revealed that many students used library resources and services occasionally. One of the factors that could have necessitated the findings is the use of the internet to download information using mobile devices which can be done at students' convenience outside library services. The findings are supported by a study conducted at Gonabadi University of Medical Sciences which showed that most

students opted to use the Internet to get information on treatment procedures. Even though students are physically absent in library facilities, ICTs are providing services that go beyond geographical locations (Dastani et al, 2019). Notably, these results could be looked at from two perspectives. The first one unfolds the need to make students aware of the services the library offers that go beyond providing a quiet reading space such as e-resources access, verifiable sites for information search, etc. The second is the continuous orientation of students on how they can locate the materials needed for their assignments, test preparations, tutorials, labs, research writing, etc.

The study established that many students used library resources and services to improve personal competency. These findings may be influenced by the fact that most students don't find the materials they seek; hence they prefer using the library as a reading space for other personal competencies rather than school related activities. Accordingly, this is made possible through the provision of internet access which allows them to browse for non-academic activities. These results concur with those found by a study at LIUTEBM which also revealed that many students used the library occasionally and used the facility to read books related to improving personal competence (Mvula, 2023).

On the other hand, a similar study by Mishra et al (2015) presented different findings. The researchers established that the purpose for which many Deemed University students used the services offered by the library, was to retrieve e-resource information relating to their area of study through the internet/e-library. The difference in the seeking behavior of materials could be necessitated by the level of awareness as well as the state of ICT infrastructure.

The study established that there was an inadequacy of relevant materials provided by the library. The findings indicate the need to make available relevant resources for students through different formats. On the other hand, lack of awareness on the part of students has revealed two factors. Firstly, most students view librarians as guards of information and not custodians. This therefore makes it unnecessary for them to frequent the offices of the librarians in search of help with the information needed. Another factor



may be the unavailability of the custodians or their attitude towards students, which may lead to fear of inquiring if they need information that is available but cannot locate it.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study findings revealed that many of the respondents were males, this indicates some major dominance of males in health programmes. Further, many of the respondents were enrolled in Pre-Medical Sciences. Many participants used the library occasionally and most read to improve personal competency. Their major source of information as indicated by the majority was physical books. The majority of those who access information online are stressed using smartphones. Among the challenges faced, the majority emphasized the inadequacy of relevant materials. Given the above findings, the following have been recommended.

- i) There is a need for librarians to make themselves available to aid students who seek information for different purposes. This was seen as a way through which many would have access to the available information in their field.
- ii) There is a need for proper orientation and sensitization to students on how to access both physical and online materials. This would increase the library's use as well as improve the performance of students.
- iii) A need to conduct a study on the digital literacy of students to ascertain their competence and search skills in sourcing information.

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