

# Assessing Users' Satisfaction of Public Libraries in Northern Nigeria: A Case Study of Zaria Public Library

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## Abstract

*A public library is an agency for continuing education or a people university, open to everyone on an equal basis, regardless of his or her religion, ideological, ethnic, age or educational differences, to serve them intellectually and educate them formally. This research aims to study ways to retrofit public libraries to meet user satisfaction. The following factors from literature were used, physical environment, morphological configuration, spatial organization, maintenance mechanism, quality of service, social factor, and traditional factor. A pilot survey was carried out in Zaria Public Library where 50 questionnaires were distributed with 49 retrieved. These were employed for statistical analyses using frequency distribution and means for Likert scale questions, and descriptive analysis was used for open ended questions. Results indicate that Information and Communication Technology, ICT (Mean of 4.54), group discussion (Mean of 4.51), and Informal Learning Spaces, ILS (Mean of 4.48) gave the users highest satisfaction level with the present public library, while interior appearance (Mean of 2.11), maintenance facility (Mean of 2.00), and toilet facilities (Mean of 1.67) gave users the lowest satisfaction. Analyses in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 shows good reliability of instrument with 0.73 Cronbach's Alpha value. The study implies that ICT, group discussion spaces, and ILS are important determinants of user satisfaction and their availability enhances patronage to public libraries. And this will serve as a framework for new designs and strategies for improving the quality of existing public libraries so as to ensure an informed, educated and civilized society.*

**Keywords:** Northern Nigeria, Public Libraries, User's Satisfaction, Zaria Public Library

## INTRODUCTION

Public library is an agency for continuing education or a people university, open to everyone on an equal basis, regardless of his or her religion, ideological, ethnic, age or educational differences, to serve them intellectually and educate them formally. Public library in every society carries its great importance. It acknowledges the society from its preserved intellectual heritage. Usually such types of libraries are established by public funds at Governmental level to fulfil the educational as well as other literary needs of a society. Public libraries are such democratic institution that serves the society regardless of any benefit. Thus, these are considered as those serving institutions that work by the public and for the development of the public. Lamptey(2010), mentioned that, due to its importance there is need for highly visible and accessible spaces and should serve as a focal point for the interface between users in the community and the world of information, it should have a direct connection to current educational resources.

Due to the change in human satisfaction over the years, the public continually demands more complex buildings than in the past. They must serve more purposes, last longer, and require less maintenance and repair. As in the past, they must look more attractive (Usman, 2016). This is the beginning of retrofitting; to improve/change an existing feature that leads to an addition, modification or redevelopment of the feature in other to enhance user satisfaction (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014). User's satisfaction of public library is the measure of fulfilment of users' desires, expectations or need during library visit. The main reason why buildings are conceived and built should be for user satisfaction (Kirah, 2014).

Library in this 21st century has gone beyond a store for collection of books to a more social and interactive environment. Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Social Interaction and informal learning spaces are new features of the 21st century to be incorporated in Libraries so as to enhance patronage (Adeniran, 2015). Therefore, the approach to meeting these needs are peculiar. Several public libraries have become vacant/abandon due to the fact that the act of measuring human satisfaction level have been neglected over the years (Ezeala and Yusuf, 2016).

A lot of studies have been carried out on lighting, acoustics and thermal comfort of libraries especially in countries like United States, United Kingdom and Australia (Ellis & Goodyear, 2016), but few on user satisfaction in Nigeria especially Northern part of the country. It is not clear what these new requirements are in Nigeria and has therefore lead to the abandonment of public libraries. Olajide and Fabunmi, (2017) opined that lack of satisfaction with the library facilities due to the changing nature of humans brought about low patronage. It is to this end that this research was conceived to identify, study and develop parameters through architectural design, to meet the demand of the present and future users, so as to bring forth an informed society.

### **Users Satisfaction**

According to Aslam and Seher, (2018) User's Satisfaction in public library can be defined as the measure of fulfilment, expectations or need derived from visiting a public library which is supposed to satisfy their users' through their resources, services and facilities. The User Satisfaction Survey is a very important tool for measuring user satisfaction levels in order to have complete information on user needs, satisfaction level, and information on future statistics planning and development (Khozaei, Hassan, and Razak, 2011).

### **Architectural factors which enhances User Satisfaction**

There are several factors which contribute to the overall satisfaction of users in public library, however this factors are grouped into seven categories as identified from previous researches (Roizen and Davis, 2013; Abubakar and Ahmed, 2015; Sriram and Rajev, 2014; Najib *et al*2011; Strange, 1991; Dunfu, 2015; Nimako 2013; Joachin et al, 2010; Padmavathi, Ningaiah& Kavita, 2017; Motiang, Wallis, &Karodia, 2014) as identified below:

- a. Physical environment
- b. Social factors
- c. Quality of Service
- d. Maintenance mechanism
- e. Morphological configuration
- f. Spatial Organization
- g. Traditional barriers (Gender norm/ social exclusion)

### **Physical Environment**

The physical environment refers to the level of upkeep, ambient noise, lighting, indoor air quality and/or thermal comfort of a physical building and its location within the community

(Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014). The influence of the physical environment towards human behaviour is well established in the literature (Abbas & Ghazali, 2011). The physical aspect/components include spaces, amenities, convenient living facilities and services (Khozaei *et al*, 2011 and Najib *et al*, 2011).

### **Morphological configuration**

This deals with the building form, Aesthetics, traditional elements of the region, and the expression of meaning to observers. Morphology is concerned with the form, shape and/or structure of anything made up of interdependent parts. In a study carried out by Roizen and Davis (2013), it was observed that one of the strongest determinants of satisfaction was resident hall type. Also, in a similar survey, by Najib *et al* (2011) the morphological configurations of residence halls predicted resident satisfaction with more than half (53%) of the sample population indicating dissatisfaction with residences, as such, the morphology (arrangement) of buildings and its parts is a determinant of satisfaction and should be given its proper place in the plan form, organizational layout shape and form of residence halls, Martins (2012).

### **Spatial Organization**

Dursun (2009), posits that space is formed by the needs of users, their preferences, requirements and movement patterns. Over the years, buildings have changed following the various changes that man has undergone to address his contextual needs. Building's primary purpose used to be to provide protection, security and comfort to the occupants, but gradually the function of the building grew to not only that but also to satisfy other needs fit into the indigenous people in their context. This is made possible by the manipulation of the building spaces, form and relationship with other spaces.

### **Social factors**

Social factors are said to be the facts and experiences that influences individuals' personality, attitudes and lifestyle (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014). They are variable which arises from culture, environment, community, family, organization, society, government, the state, the media, technology, religion, ideology, discourse, language, communication, and which influences the individual to think and act in a certain way. So basically, factors which serve to inform and/or constitute individual identity. Traditional media is still relevant in a technological age contrary to the pervading belief that students on campus generally prefer digital media, traditional media of learning are still commonly used for learning purposes (Maina 2017). Informal learning spaces (ILS) sometimes called social learning spaces are spaces where learning occurs without formal supervision and instruction by a teacher or instructor.

### **Quality of Service**

Service quality in its contemporary conceptualization is a comparison of perceived expectations of a service with performance. It can also be seen as an assessment of how well a delivered service conforms to the client's expectations (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014). Dunfal (2015) opined that the issues of user satisfaction become questionable where service quality and products provided/availability is not given adequate attention. Nimako (2013) classified service produced into core service products and supplementary service elements. Core service will entail variables such as rooms, while supplementary service elements consist of supplementary services also considered as auxiliary services include utility facilities such as water, electricity etc.

### **Maintenance Mechanism**

Due to the educational growth and technological advancement in the world, new ideas and innovations are developing in maintaining public buildings, which are difficult to maintain

due to the nature of users and the population it accommodates Kantiok, 2017). Maintenance is an indispensable aspect of any facility as it helps to preserve such facilities to a state where it can perform its intended function(s) (Joachim and Olachi, 2010). Such maintenance could either be planned or unplanned maintenance which should be carried out regularly in order to prevent available facilities from breaking down and getting to a level of dilapidation or deplorability that will be beyond repairs (Ibid). Keeping public facilities in good conditions and under check gives it a good impression and satisfaction to its users.

### **Traditional barriers**

According to Zion and Kozleski (2005), culture is a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artefacts that the members of society use to interact with their world and with one another. Many diverse socio-cultural factors influence the value that parents attach to their daughters' education. Gender norms and stereotypes exclude women and girls from decision-making, community participation and control over their own lives in many areas (British council 2014).

## **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

The methodology used for this research work was descriptive analysis and the primary source of information was obtained by administering questionnaire to the library users. Case study selection criteria was purposive to help reflect the state of mind of Northern Nigerians and also depends on the function of the building, services, facilities available, size, location and relevance to the research.

### **Study Area**

Zaria Public Library is a branch public library and property of Kaduna State Government, it was commissioned on February 1980 together with 7 other branched libraries. The building is located on 11°05'00.6" N 7°43'27.6" E coordinates. It is bounded by the Zaria Fire Service Area, Zaria Motor Park, Kofan Doka towards the West, North, and East respectively.



Figure1: Front view of Zaria Public Library

### **Questionnaire Survey**

A total of fifty (50) questionnaires were distributed at random based on the number of respondents available as at the time of visit to the public library. A total of forty-nine (49) questionnaires were retrieved. The questionnaire consists of three (3) sections: Demographic information of respondents, general/familiarity and likert scale question section.

Likert scale questions presents the importance of a factor on a scale of 1-5 (1 being strongly disagree to 5, strongly agree) were employed to assess the respondents' level of satisfaction with the present Public Library. The total Actual Scores(AS) for each factor was divided by a product of the number of responses and the Maximum Possible Score (maxPAS) to calculate

the Relative Importance Index(RII) mathematically expressed as  $RII = \frac{AS}{\max PAS}$ . These were then employed to rank the order of importance of factors. Factors with RII of 0.76 and above were considered highly important in this study.

Table 1: Guide to degree of importance of factors

DEGREE OF INFLUENCE	RII SCORE/RATING
Highly influential	0.76 above
Influential	0.66-0.75
Low influence	0.45-0.65
Not influential	0.44 - below

Instrument reliability test was done. According to field (2013), The Cronbach Alpha test for instrument reliability with value of 0.7 and above is reliable. This was done to check the validity and reliability of the instrument of data collection (questionnaire).

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic data reveals that most respondents are male (90%) with mostly educational attainment level of SSCE to second degree. About 4.1% of the sample has attained third degree (Table 1). This result also supports the assertion that the Hausa's tradition most times restricts the movement of their females. The age range of respondent together with their marital status are also evenly distributed.

Table 2: Demographic data of respondents

Variables	Categories	Number (49)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	45	90.0
	Female	4	8.0
Age Range	16 - 20	12	24.0
	20 - 25	10	20.0
	26 - 30	1	2.0
	31 - 36	17	34.0
	36 Above	9	18.0
Occupation	Student	46	92.0
	Non-Student	3	6.0
Educational Level	SSCE	14	28.0
	First Degree	18	36.0
	Second Degree	8	16.0
	Third Degree	2	4.0
Marital Status	Single	27	54.0
	Married	22	44.0

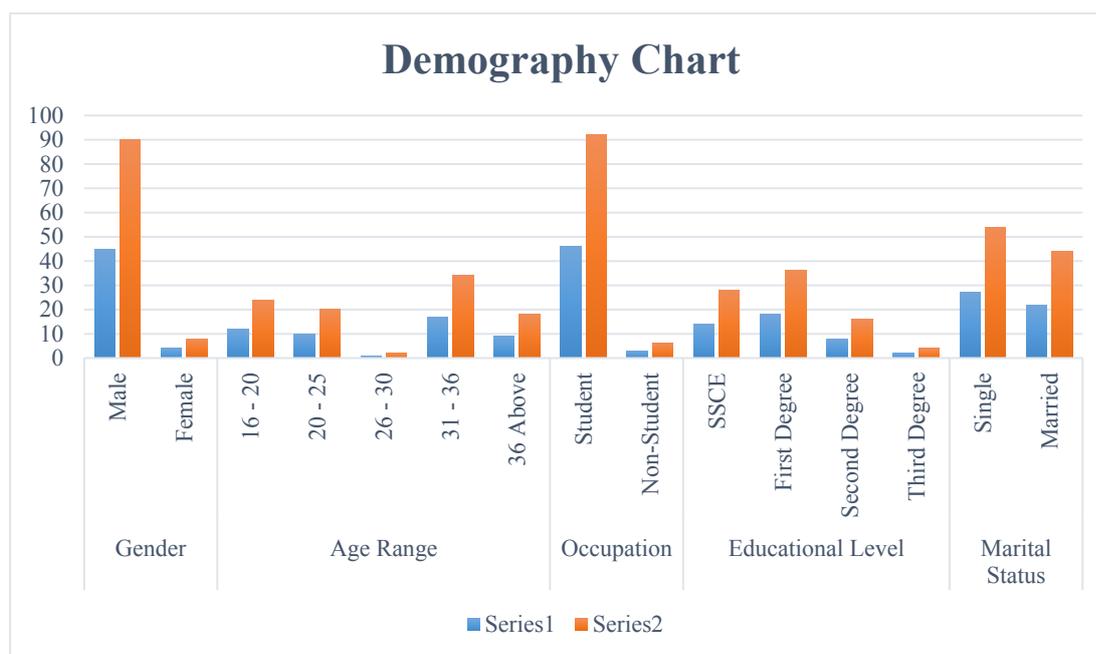


Figure 1: Demography information of respondents

### Level of Satisfaction

The Table 2 respondents' level of satisfaction with the present and ideal condition of Zaria Public Library. The variables were categorized under the seven-broad classification of the determinants of user satisfaction as itemized from literature. Results from this ranking supports the importance of physical environment as the most important category of user determinants of public library specifically, ICT, ILS and group discussion spaces. Morphological configuration of the form of building and other facilities ranked second followed by the quality of service provided. Variables like toilet facilities, maintenance, and interior appearance ranked lowest on the table.

Table 3: Ranking of level of satisfaction with variables in the public library

VARIABLES (FACTORS)	MEAN	SUM	RII	RANK	CATEGORY
ICT with Internet Access	4.54	218	0.91	1	Physical Environment
Group Discussion	4.48	216	0.90	2	Physical Environment
Informal Learning Space	4.48	215	0.90	2	Physical Environment
Lighting and Thermal Comfort	4.27	205	0.85	4	Morphological Configuration
Shops	4.17	200	0.83	5	Physical Environment
Exhibition Galleries	3.94	189	0.79	6	Physical Environment
Modern Book Shelves	3.90	188	0.77	7	Morphological Configuration
State of the Art Facility	3.88	186	0.78	8	Physical Environment
Space for Social Interaction	3.75	180	0.75	9	Physical Environment
Safety And Security	3.60	162	0.72	10	Service Quality
Gender Equity	3.38	162	0.68	11	Traditional Barriers
Noise Level	3.33	153	0.67	12	Social Factor
Privacy	3.23	155	0.65	12	Physical Environment
Location	3.24	149	0.65	14	Accessibility and Location
Overcrowding	3.06	147	0.61	15	Social Factor
Functionality	2.82	138	0.56	15	Spatial Organization
Landscape	2.78	125	0.56	17	Physical Environment
Exterior Appearance	2.71	130	0.54	18	Morphological Configuration
Book Shelves	2.53	119	0.51	19	Physical Environment
Service Quality	2.17	102	0.43	20	Service Quality
Interior Appearance	2.11	99	0.42	21	Morphological Configuration
Maintenance	2.00	96	0.40	22	Maintenance Mechanism
Toilet Facility	1.67	77	0.33	23	Physical Environment

**DISCUSSION**

The result shows that seven variables are highly influential and they include the following according to their preference; ICT with Internet Access, Informal Learning Spaces, Group Discussion Space, Adequate lighting and thermal comfort, Shops, Exhibition gallery, State of the art facility and Modern Book Shelves because this are features that answer the 21st century quest of public libraries, which is in accordance with the study of Adediran, 2015; Ezeala and Yusuf, 2016). These variables are followed by those that are influential and they include: Space for social interaction, security and safety, gender equity, and Noise level while the following ranked not influential Toilet Facility, Quality of overall service provided, Maintenance, and Interior Appearance due to their inadequacy and state of disrepair ranked last. According to the table guide for degree of influence stated in methodology, the last three features which have RII of less than 0.44 are not influential.

The Cronbach Alpha test for the reliability of the Likert items on the questionnaire reveals a value of 0.73. This shows a good validity of the instrument.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on this study, it was confirmed that most library users are more interested in patronizing the library during preparation for continuous assessment test, examination, or assignment and not for the purpose of reading to increase knowledge.

Findings also shows that the variables considered most important to users' satisfaction in public libraries includes: ICT, group discussion space, and informal learning space, while those variables present and considered inadequate are toilet facility, quality of overall services, and Maintenance, Service Quality.

The Cronbach Alpha test for the reliability of the Likert items on the questionnaire reveals a value of 0.73. This shows the validity of the instrument. These indicates the reliability of adapting this as a template for studies of the same or similar nature.

In conclusion, though there is no bound as regards the grouping of the architectural features which enhances user satisfaction, seven broad categories were outlined from literature which was validated by the case study these includes: Physical Environment (mean of 4.42), Social Factors (3.15), Service Quality (mean of 3.01), Maintenance Mechanism (mean of 2.00), Morphological Configuration (mean of 4.12), Spatial Organization (mean of 2.82), and Traditional Factor (mean of 3.38). These provides a framework for consideration. When retrofitting public libraries, all these features of Public Library must be implemented if user satisfaction is the primary concern.

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