Knowledge and behaviour of students who are library users towards colleagues living with HIV/AIDS

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ABSTRACT

Academic libraries acquire resources and engage in services that project academic pursuits of users regardless their HIV status. This study examined the knowledge of student library user's about the modes of transmission of HIV. It also examined whether the knowledge of HIV transmission will significantly influence their behaviour towards their colleagues living with HIV and AIDS. A total of 300 students (137 males and 163 females) from four tertiary institutions in Lagos, Nigeria responded to a survey questionnaire. Three (3) research questions were raised and findings of the study revealed that most of the respondents were knowledgeable about the transmission of HIV. However, there was a gap between the knowledge and their behaviour towards their colleagues living with HIV and AIDS. The study suggested a periodic HIV and AIDS training programmes to continuously up-date users' knowledge with the intention of influencing their behaviour positively towards people living with HIV and AIDS. The paper also recommended that libraries should incorporate new technologies within the Library 2.0 platform to improve information sourcing and retrieval for all undergraduates in order not to stigmatize the PLWHA. Also, academic libraries should increase the awareness campaign on HIV/AIDS and care/support for People Living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA).

Keywords: academic-library, users, roles, PLWHA, HIV/AIDS, information–seeking behaviour, Library 2.0, Nigeria.

BACKGROUND

Persons diagnosed and confirmed to be HIV-positive are People Living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA). They are free to associate, live or work anywhere as they may deem convenient. Unlike other people with physical challenges, who enjoy special track, seats and so forth, PLWHA do not require such identity indicator; to avoid stigmatization which may lead to frustration, anxiety, lack of concentration, and/or reduced-library patronage . Immediately people are aware to be living with HIV, they become bewildered and shocked but they soon become active information seekers about their new life , and the library like any other workplace should appreciate the advice of Farrelly (2006) that youth should have their own place to do things in their own way without too much rules from the adults. The instincts of 'finding out' anything first from the library should be the guiding spirit for

librarians to see library service beyond acquisition of information resources but more of access. Eek (2012) has confirmed that the youth are in a hurry to get information perhaps because they are people in the 'web generation' (Godwin, 2008) or as 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001 cited in Walker, Huddlestone and Pullen (2011). As such, the library should understand the psychology of having to live with HIV, being a youth, and yet in need of information to address academic pursuits(Varni,Miller, Mccuin and Solomon, 2012) .

 Good libraries, probably a decade or two ago, would feature well stacked 'precious' books, polished wooden catalogue cabinet, and librarians moving around to help users access information materials. That was an era when library was seen as a 'place' rather than an interface. In the opinion of O'Reilly (2012), people are now part of Web resources (including library users). They generate information, initiate discussions and share images via the Web.2.0 applications. Almost everything is possible on the Web. Today's library should provide opportunities for users to access information and interact with them (resources) in a participatory mode without necessarily being in the confines of the physical library building. This new paradigm shift prompted Nasir(2007) to advise librarians to "rethink, relearn, retool and repurpose their roles" in service delivery. Studies such as Tripathi and Kumar(2010) and Godwin(2008) have described the potentialities of Web 2.0 tools and how academic libraries can employ them to improve library services. In describing how libraries can take the advantage of the information age to achieve improved user-centred services, Winn(2008) suggested that "wikis, blogs, flickr, tagging, mashups, folksonomies, RSS, hosted services, social media, and Instant Messaging(IM), are tools that can take library services to the convenience of users".

Library 2.0 was coined after the capabilities of Web 2.0. and has been predicted to be the determinant of 'good library service' in the information age (Tripathi and Kumar,2010). Libraries can send updates and advertise/market their services to users through the tools of Library 2.0.With Library 2.0, issues of library congestion, Resource-User-Ratio (RUR), availability, and accessibility of resources can be improved greatly. At the dawn of Library 2.0, users are content creators thus making the information community more participatory, more so, when users find surfing the internet to retrieve information easier than visiting the library (Smith and Hepworth, 2010). The library has to realise the great influence of the internet on the 'digital natives' and retool as advised by Nasir (2007) to evolve and serve modern users who are faced with so many alternatives . Information is now available in many media and can be accessed via myriad of means without necessarily using the reading rooms in the library (Pinto, Fernández-Marcial, and Gómez-Camarero, 2010).

Information Seeking Behaviour of PLWHA

Information seeking behaviour is a subset of information behaviour (IB) and it can be identified in individual or collective efforts to provide an appropriate response to a need in knowledge, (Case, 2002). Man is always in need of information to live in the world around him. For farmers, they seek information on how to ease farming and improve yield, for students, they need to know where there are other students, and so forth. Perhaps the environment and the way of life of people determine their information need. Aina (2004) consented that "most individuals seek information from friends, neighbours, colleagues, group meetings such as religious groups, cooperative societies or associations". They consult organised institutions such as libraries and information centres when they could not get satisfactory information. However, Ilo and Ifijeh (2010) confirmed that this has

changed with the advent of the internet, as students now prefer seeking information from the internet to consulting the libraries even though they lack the requisite skill to garner information from the Web. It thus means that a library that provides her resources and services via the internet will be a darling of her users.

The PLWHA are in a world of realities and they look in almost all directions to seek information to fill a gap occasioned by their awareness that they have to live with an infection that has no cure (Zolfo, Lynen, Dierckx and Colebunders, 2006). They feel the environment should have the information (Case,2007) that would provide answers to their questions even though they may not know how to seek such information. At the point of diagnosis, they feel withdrawn and do not see hope in people around them. Some of them take solace in drinking and may take to drug use to 'ease' depression (Comulada et al, 2010). As such, academic pursuit (for those that are students) may become secondary especially if such pursuit will mean taking them out of their hiding. The information they need is anything that can assure them of a future, a promise to cover their 'secret', and empathize with them by providing them with care and support. Narayan (2010) simply captured the state of mind of PLWHA as "the constant stream of 'self-talk' that happens while (we) are conscious"; (our) understanding of (our) external environment and internal state of mind, often formed in relation to other actors, events and environments". The governments at various levels had mounted enlightenment campaign programmes to encourage the PLWHA to speak up about their HIV-seropositive status, a move that brought them (PLWHA) out and returned to schools, markets places, library, social gathering, and so forth. When persons of such state of mind visit the library, one expects that their information need should be met, except if they may be able to access such resources via the capabilities of Library 2.0.

PLWHA wish every document is about how to live with HIV and AIDS. They wish to see photographs of people who have been diagnosed and who have been living with the virus. They wish to discuss and interact, but only, with people that would understand their plight and may empathize with them. PLWHA wish to read about connections or links to Non-Government Organisations (NGO) where they hope to learn how to live their 'newly acquired' life. For the undergraduates, they wish to continue to study. So, they need to add the rigors of academics to the challenges of HIV-seropositive status. The library should therefore be their hope and place that assure them of care and effective access to resources that would meet their information need. If they have their way, they wish to access the library resources from a remote destination; suppose the library has such facilities.

Roles of Academic Libraries

Academic libraries are established for students and faculty members of tertiary institutions to support scholarship and research. These roles of libraries were summarized by Trelease (2006) as "information, education, conservation, research, and recreation." With this broad category, Trelease suggests that the first place to get informed is the College or University libraries; as they are often called. In an attempt to further explain the roles of academic libraries, Oluwole, (2008) listed six functions which will help the university achieve set objectives: "teaching , research and publication of university programmes, acquisition and conservation of knowledge, provision of bibliographical and other reference services to teaching and research members, orientation and registration of

students and staff, provision of internet service and linking users to electronic libraries all over the world, provision of electronic resources and services, and establishing relationships with other libraries in order to pave way for inter-library loans". The list of Oluwole (2008) simply reminded us that library resources should be both physical and electronic to enable users access them from remote locations. Still describing the roles of academic libraries, Maitaouthong, Tuamsuk,Tachamanee (2012) concluded that the users could be prepared in such a way that they will benefit greatly from information searches and achieve effective library use if academic libraries intensify their role of "organizing learning and teaching activities that will develop students' information literacy skills". It thus means that users should be informed adequately about issues of societal importance such as HIV/AIDS and PLWHA. They should undergo learning activities, as suggested by Maitaouthong et al, to appreciate PLWHA and empathize with them. Library users should have adequate information resources to update their knowledge about issues and trends in the society; apart from their academic pursuits. This way, academic libraries support their affiliate institutions to drive national growth and development.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection and Analysis

Questionnaires were administered on the respondents at their various institutions with some in and around the library. Since the questionnaires were administered and returned on the spot, the entire questionnaires were returned. Upon return, none was void owing to the educational level of the respondents. The data collected were collated and analysed using simple percentage and frequency tables.

Population and Sampling

Students in tertiary institutions in Lagos, Nigeria constituted the population of the study. These institutions cover the three major types of tertiary institutions namely: University, College of Education and Polytechnic. A total of 300 students voluntarily provided information through the survey questionnaire. Institutions and number of respondents are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Respondents' Institutions of Affiliation.

Institution	Number
University of Lagos	150
Yaba College of Technology	50
Federal College of Education, Technology	50
St. Augustines College of Education	50

Instrument

A self-developed questionnaire was administered on 300 students. The questionnaire has three sections: Section A focused on the demographic information of the respondents (sex, course of study, year of study and faculty/school); section B requested respondents to provide information on the state of their institutions' libraries-accessibility to the library resources, the sitting arrangements, health consideration; and section C sought

information on the respondents' knowledge about mode of HIV transmission, disposition to casual interaction with PLWHA, and how comfortable they will be using the library with PLWHA.

Research Questions

To give the study a focus, the following research questions raised:
1. Are library users knowledgeable about the modes of transmission of HIV?
2. Would library users feel comfortable interacting with their colleagues living with HIV?
3. Would the knowledge of library users about the modes of transmission of HIV discourage them (library users) from discriminating against their colleagues living with HIV?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From Table 2, 150 (50%) of the respondents were students of University of Lagos, Akoka; 50 (16.7%) respondents were from Yaba College of Technology, Yaba; Federal College of Education, Technical, Akoka; and St. Augustines College of Education, Akoka each.

Table 2: Institutional Affiliation of Respondents

Institutional Affiliation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
University of Lagos, Akoka-Lagos	150	50
Yaba college of technology, Yaba-Lagos	50	16.7
Federal College of Education, Technical, Akoka-Lagos	50	16.7
St. Augustines College of Education, Akoka-Lagos	50	16.7
Total	300	100

From Table 3, 137 (45.7%) of the respondents are male while 163 (54.3%) are female. Table 4 shows 45 (15%) of the respondents were between the ages of 15-19 years, 166 (55.3%) were between the ages of 20-24 years, 75 (25%) were between the ages of 25-29 years while 14 (4.7%) were between the ages of 30-34 years.

Table 3: Gender of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	137	45.7
Female	163	54.3
Total	300	100

Table 3: Age Range of Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
15-19 yrs	45	15
20-24 yrs	166	55.3
25-29 yrs	75	25
30-34 yrs	14	4.7
Total	300	100

From Table 4, 62% of the respondents are knowledgeable about the mode of transmission of HIV while 38% of the respondents are not knowledgeable about the mode of transmission of HIV. From Table 5 , 59 (19.7%) respondents feel seriously worried to know that some library users are HIV positive, 86 (28.7%) feel worried to some extent, 91 (30.3%)feel not worried and 64 (21.3%) feel indifferent. From Table 6, 50% of the respondents are comfortable interacting with PLWHA in the library while 50% are not comfortable interacting with PLWHA in the library. Table 7 shows 21.7% of the respondents agree with the statements above while 78.3% of the respondents disagreed with the statements.

Table 4: Knowledge of Mode of Transmission

Modes of Transmission	Yes		No		Total
	Count	%	Count	%	
Sexual contact	242	80.7	58	19.3	300
Unprotected sex	277	92.3	23	7.7	300
Mother –to-child	208	69.3	92	30.7	300
Casual contact	78	26	222	74	300
Sharing of body- piercing instrument	238	79.3	62	20.7	300
Transfusion of unscreened blood	252	84	48	16	300
Shaking hands with someone is HIV positive	169	56.3	131	43.7	300
Casual contact with someone who is HIV positive	148	49.3	152	50.7	300
Sleeping on the same bed with someone	164	54.7	136	45.3	300
Anal sex	105	35	195	65	300
Deep kissing	111	37	189	63	300
Sitting on the same bench with someone who is HIV positive	141	47	159	53	300
Sharing office/classroom with someone who is HIV positive	153	51	147	49	300

Table 5: Respondents' Level of Worry

How worried will you be to know that some of your colleagues who use the are HIV positive	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Seriously worried	59	19.7
Worried to some extent	86	28.7
Not worried	91	30.3
Indifferent	64	21.3
Total	300	100

Table 6: Respondents' Level of Comforts Interacting with PLWHA Library Users

Extent to which respondents are comfortable interacting with PLWHA in the library.	VC	%	C	%	SC	%	NC	%	TOTAL
Sitting next to someone who is HIV positive	88	29.3	65	21.7	71	23.7	76	25.3	300
Exchanging books with someone who is HIV positive	66	22	84	28	93	31	57	19	300
Queuing with someone who is HIV positive at the loan desk in the library	61	20.3	67	22.3	94	31.3	78	26	300
Having to sit on the seat someone who is HIV positive have just used	95	31.7	67	22.3	56	18.7	82	27.3	300

Table 7: PLWHA and Library Use

Extent to which respondents agree with the statements regarding PLWHA and the use of library.	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	TOTAL
People who are HIV positive should not use the library with other students	48	16	24	8	56	18.7	172	57.3	300
There should be a separate corner for people who are HIV positive in the library	32	10.7	26	8.7	38	12.7	204	68	300

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study showed that the respondents were library users (Tables 1, 2, and 3) across age and gender; an indication which portends good for an academic environment where students see reading in the library as a way of life. However, there were 68 respondents (22.7%) who use the library "once in a while" and this could represent some students who, in the opinion of Aina (2004), seek information from friends and colleagues. Although the resources were not broken to types and formats, it is not good enough that only 64 respondents (21.3%) affirmed that they could access "very much" of library resources from home and outside the library. More so when only 53 (17.7%) responded that the library resources are "Highly adequate". One would expect that academic libraries would seize the opportunity of the predictions of Nasir (2007) and Tripathi and Kumar (2010) that the library has to do all possible to make service delivery a user-centred affair.

The knowledge of the respondents about the modes of transmission of HIV was quite high.Tables 4,5,6, 7, and 8 indicated that the respondents understood the issues surrounding HIV. While 64 (21.3%) respondents felt "indifferent", 91 (30.3%) responded "not worried" and 86 (28.7%) were of the opinion that they "would be worried to some extent". These responses were indications that they understood how HIV could spread and as such felt calm and in control of decisions. However, the 59 (19.7%) who responded "seriously worried" could be accommodated within additional enlightenment programmes on HIV. This knowledge was further underscored by the response of 213 (71.0%) who felt it was right for colleagues living with HIV to use the same library with them. This was why Ulasi et al (2009) concluded that adequate information would reduce the menace of HIV and further stop discrimination and stigmatization of PLWHA. Given this knowledge, one may not be able to explain why 82 (27.3%) respondents said they would not be comfortable "having to seat on a chair that was used by a colleague living with HIV". Equally surprising was the finding that 72 respondents(48 Strongly Agreed; 24 Agreed) were of the opinion that PLWHA should not use the same library with other students. There seemed to be a gap between their high knowledge about HIV and how they actually behaved to colleagues living with HIV.

To elicit positive change in the behaviour of an individual, knowledge is an essential foundation. However, Ajala (2012) have observed that knowledge may not always translate to positive behaviour. This position has played out in this study. In spite of the seemingly high knowledge of mode of transmission of HIV, most of the respondents were not too comfortable having casual contacts with their colleagues living with HIV. This could be a

manifestation of fear. At the early period of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, a lot of myths and misconceptions were weaved around the 'dreaded' disease. People were made to believe that casual contact can transmit the virus. The fear that was created may not have been totally wiped off even in the perceived available scientific information regarding mode of transmission of HIV. According to Rachman (1990), fear can be generated by information that is slightly or not at all threatening but which is misinterpreted by the recipient as being threatening. The behaviour of respondents in this study is not an isolated case. In an earlier study amongst nurses, Haastrup (2004) found that nurses, in spite of their high knowledge on HIV/AIDS were not comfortable nursing People living with HIV and AIDS in the wards. The effects of this type of behaviour on PLWHA should be our concern. Stigma and discrimination have been identified to be a factor that further spread HIV (Kenneth, Haastrup and Oscar, 2004). When people living with HIV are stigmatized, the tendency is for them to hide and deprive themselves the opportunity of sourcing help which may improve their status.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper recommended, among others, that the library should incorporate new technologies within the platform of Library 2.0 to achieve improved information sourcing and retrieval for all undergraduates (users) in order not to stigmatize the PLWHA. Also, academic libraries should increase the awareness campaign on HIV/AIDS and care/support for PLWHA. Such awareness would prepare library users to render care and support for PLWHA. Inviting PLWHA to give a talk or share experiences during enlightenment programmes would improve the behaviour of student users towards their colleagues living with HIV.

A further study of people living with HIV/AIDS may be conducted to find out their feelings about stigma and stigmatization in relation to library use. Perhaps, such study should incorporate types of library resources and services.

CONCLUSION

The trend in the library world today has gone beyond library within walls. While we celebrate academic libraries that have employed the capabilities of Library 2.0 to provide services to users, it is also important to note that PLWHA, like other students, deserve access to library resources without being stigmatized. They should not be discouraged by the behaviour of their colleagues who may not feel comfortable with their (PLWHA) presence in the library especially when library resources could not be accessed from a remote destination. Notwithstanding the high knowledge about the modes of transmission of HIV, the users still exhibited behaviour that may discourage PLWHA from patronizing the library for fear of discrimination. It is hoped that academic libraries will intensify make efforts to enlighten users more on the needs to care and support for PLWHA while also planning to launch their library services on the platform of Library 2.0 to enable users access resources from remote destinations; if they choose not to visit the library physically.

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