INFORMATION NEEDS OF PUBLIC LIBRARY USERS IN ERMELO, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

by

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STUDENT NUMBER: 64024245

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF INFORMATION SCIENCE

in the subject

INFORMATION SCIENCE

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF SM MOJAPELO

2021

SUMMARY

Public libraries are a vital asset in any society and have become institutions of knowledge in communities. Residents, schools without libraries, small businesses and non-profit organisations make use of public libraries to access information on daily basis. Funding is a major challenge in public libraries hindering the promotion of access to information. The acquisition of resources is slightly hampered, and this has a major impact on the relevancy, accuracy and frequency on the information provided by public libraries. Well-resourced and fully functional public libraries are more important and useful in societies, hence the provision of access to quality information to the users. In any society, access to information is very important for scholars, the working class and for knowledge sharing purposes. Public libraries will always be crucial in making access and sharing of information much easier.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the information needs of public library users in Ermelo, Mpumalanga province, South Africa. With fully functional public libraries in societies, access to information is guaranteed. Public libraries are still lagging because of a shortage of resources, and do not have enough funds to acquire the best resources to boost access to information. The study was limited to the main public library in the Msukaligwa local Municipality in Ermelo, Mpumalanga.

This study was underpinned by the Abraham Maslow information needs theory to address public library user needs in Ermelo. Both the qualitative and quantitative research approaches were adopted to study the information needs of public library users in Ermelo. The research design used in this study was mainly survey. Quantitative data were collected with the use of self-administered questionnaires by 206 public library users and an interview schedule was used to collect qualitative data from four library staff members.

More than half (121, 58.7%) of the respondents indicated that public libraries play a vital role in ensuring that both learners and teachers have access to educational resources to meet their information needs. The study recommends that the government should revise the funding policy for public libraries and provide all the support that public libraries need to provide quality information services. The study also recommends that public libraries need to work closely as a collective to ensure that information resources are shared among them to make sure that all information needs of the users are met.

Key terms: Public libraries, user needs, user satisfaction, information needs, Mpumalanga Province, community libraries, South Africa.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to my mother, Zodwa Nhlebo, and my sister, Thulile Mngomezulu, for their support and unconditional love throughout my study. I also think of my supervisor, Prof. SM Mojapelo, for the support and always being there to assist.

DECLARATION

Student number: 64024245

I declare that the document *Information needs of public library users in Ermelo, Mpumalanga province, South Africa* is my original study and all the information sources that I have used have been acknowledged through indicating full references.

Name: Sakhile Victor Mngomezulu

Signature: _____

Date: 2021/11/18

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ALA   American Library Association

Covid-19   Illness caused by the novel Coronavirus that emerged in 2019

DAC   Department of Arts and Culture

DSAC   Department of Sport, Arts and Culture

HIV & AIDS   Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

ICTs   Information and Communications Technologies

IFLA   International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

IT   Information Technology

LIS   Library and Information Services

LISTC   Library and Information Services Transformation Charter

MMR   Mixed methods research approach

NCLIS   National Council for Library and Information Services

NLSA   National Library of South Africa

NQF   National Qualifications Framework

SPSS   Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

StatsSA   Statistics South Africa

TB   Tuberculosis

UNESCO   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNISA   University of South Africa

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

A library is considered a collection of knowledge. According to Mojapelo and Dube (2017:3), worldwide, public libraries are organisations for socio-economic. South Africa is a developing country with more than 25 years of democracy since 1994; however, the inequality and lack of public library infrastructure that was caused by the apartheid era are yet to be eradicated.

Access to information is still a challenge as many disadvantaged rural communities are still without public libraries. The Mpumalanga Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) is playing a massive role in building libraries within the so-called disadvantaged areas, but the number of people relying on those public libraries is increasing rapidly and this makes it difficult for them to meet all the users' needs. Library users require a wide range of knowledge in different disciplines such as politics, nature, science, and career developments. The recognition and accomplishment of their needs and meeting their fulfilment are the goals for any library and information services (LIS), Subsequently, the role of community libraries in rendering such objectives is difficult to repudiate.

Public libraries in every public society provide information to satisfy the information needs of users (Bopape, Dikotla, Mahlatji, Ntsala & Makgahlela, 2017:47). Therefore, public libraries are critical facilities for society to have access to information sources they are entitled to meet their daily desired information needs (Mojapelo & Dube, 2017). Public libraries support and provide access to information about preserved heritage and are funded by the government to promote literacy and education (LIS Transformation Charter, 2014:1-2)**.** Public libraries are democratic institutions that serve society, irrespective of profit. Therefore, they are regarded as helping organisations that work for the community and for the improvement of public needs.

Equipment and facilities are essential in the provision of public library services. Equipment and facilities are a determinant of the satisfaction of library users (LibQUAL+.org, 2017). The lack of infrastructure has a massive impact on service delivery, and access to

information requires quality resources and dynamic information management skills. These include space, amenities, facilities and equipment such as photocopiers, scanners and computers. Ngulube (2012:1) states that, library staff is vital in managing and sharing information. This means that library staff should play a vital role to ensure the availability of information and to provide access to all the available knowledge." Community libraries are vital in promoting information literacy to the communities they serve. According to Bhatti and Khan (2015: 83), users' perceptions of the quality of library services are an appropriate instrument to examine the role of libraries in providing effective information services to its users. This plays a vital role as it provides feedback to library administrators to evaluate library services and bring the necessary improvements required.

Bora (2017:1) elucidates that "information interests develop from different society challenges, including available information, diversities of usages to which information will be put, the contextual, enthusiasm, discipline, the social, political and economic system." The use of the internet and technology made the information-seeking process faster and easier (Singh & Kuri, 2017). Fourie and Meyer (2016: 422) affirm that "it is important to be innovative when dealing with public exclusion and making sure that social justice and access to information with no boundaries are prioritised."

"The variety of library services has grown from circulation of books, reference and information service to the use of information and communications technologies and innovative systems to promote access to information" (Serbanuta, 2019:69). "Libraries will remain useful to the society if they satisfy their users and ensure the information sources and services are available" (Ijiekhuamhen, Aghojare & Ferdinand (2015:47). "Libraries have prioritised their role in ensuring easy access to diverse variety of knowledge, serving as depositories for government, community, and other useful information" (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), 2017:46).

The study done by Bopape et al. (2017) posits that although organisations have knowledge about the importance of public libraries in the socio-economic development of the citizens, there are many challenges hindering access to information in public libraries and information sectors in South African disadvantaged rural areas. Public libraries exist to provide relevant information and meet the information needs of the users in society (Alam, 2018: 6).

User education is an essential task of any library to make its resources visible and available to outreach, which supports the flexible versatile education (Dadzie & Kavi, 2015). IFLA (2017) opines that libraries can only fulfil their duties to the public satisfactorily when they are adequately resourced. Public libraries are non-profit making organisations and rely on the government for funding, which affects service delivery because they fail to deliver quality services if they do not have enough funding.

There are not enough libraries in Ermelo considering that there are more than 41 000 people residing in the area (Statistics South Africa (StatsSA), 2017). Distance is still a problem for users living far from the libraries and the infrastructure and resources are either insufficient or not available at all. The number of users visiting libraries every day is decreasing slightly, which shows that users' needs are not satisfied and, therefore, users find libraries not useful.

1.2 CONTEXTUAL SETTING

The conceptual setting of this study is dissected into the following subheadings:

1.2.1 Demographics of Ermelo, Mpumalanga

According to StatsSA (2017), Mpumalanga is a province situated to the East of Johannesburg and is one of the smaller South African provinces, with over 4 million people. Ermelo is a small town in the Msukaligwa Local Municipality with a population size of 41,124 people. The focus was on Ermelo public library.

1.2.2 Public libraries in Ermelo, Mpumalanga

The Mpumalanga province has a total of 111 public libraries built all over the province. The Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) (2016:13) argues that in the Mpumalanga province, library services are rapidly improving since they introduced modern information and communications technologies (ICTs).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Community members in any society are anticipated to mostly use the public information sector as one of their key centres of knowledge. Meeting the information needs of the users has always been a challenge; hence, the libraries are there to ensure that society is satisfied with the information and access to the information sources in both electronic and print formats. However, the use of public libraries is decreasing slightly due to the inability of public libraries to satisfy their users' needs by ensuring access to a wide range of information.

A comprehensive understanding of the economic and socio-cultural conditions in the setting of information needs and utilisation by the Ermelo community would go a long way in fulfilling this information need. The study does not only identify the information needs of Ermelo community in the Msukaligwa Local Municipality of the Mpumalanga province, but also aims to come up with an innovative knowledge sharing model that would improve the significance and use of Ermelo public library. Given the current population of 41,124 people and 111 public libraries in Mpumalanga, the current public library and user ratio is 1:39604.

Information is a bridge between poverty and sustainable growth in societies. Public libraries play a significant role in ensuring that information is available and provided to the public. The Ermelo public library lacks user needs statistics, which should always come first when collection development is conducted. The collections in the Ermelo public library are not informed by what the society needs but are based on what is available in the market and through donations (Msukaligwa Draft Integrated Development Plan, 2018-2019:15).

If community libraries do not contribute to information literate developments, library users are likely to think that libraries are just unhelpful organisations with no significance to the society. The purpose of the study was to investigate the information needs of users of public libraries in Ermelo, Mpumalanga province, South Africa.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to investigate information needs of public library users within Ermelo, Mpumalanga province, South Africa.

1.4.1 Research objectives

The following research objectives guide the study:

1.4.1.1   To identify the potential users of the Ermelo public libraries

1.4.1.2   To ascertain the users' information needs.

1.4.1.3   To determine the relationship between library user needs and usage in the Ermelo public libraries.

1.4.1.4   To determine the level of satisfaction of library users.

1.4.1.5   To establish the challenges users, encounter in meeting or satisfying their information needs.

1.4.2 Research questions

From the research objectives, the following research questions are formulated to steer the study:

1.4.2.1   Who are the potential users of Ermelo public library

1.4.2.2   What are the information needs of users of Ermelo public library

1.4.2.3   What is the relationship between library user needs and usage in the Ermelo public library

1.4.2.4   What is the level of satisfaction of library users of Ermelo public library

1.4.2.5   What challenges are the users of Ermelo public library faced with in meeting their needs for information?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Patrons' information needs are also changing gradually, which require the best and latest information sources and resources as the country is moving towards the 4th industrial revolution. The study outlines the aspects that need to be catered for by Ermelo public library to meet users' needs and elucidates public libraries' capability to sustain flexible knowledge sharing. According to Balapanidou (2015:4), "public libraries have always been

collecting, preserving and providing resources and services relating to the history and development of the local community including library users."

The study defines different ways public libraries can adopt to ensure access to resources and services relating to history and development of the Ermelo community. The study is also aimed at establishing public library standards that have been implemented by public libraries to ensure that libraries are able to provide suitable resources to meet the information needs of the public. The findings of the study may provide the national DAC and the provincial DAC with valuable data about library user needs in Ermelo. The findings of the study made a vital contribution to public library user needs satisfaction. Despite all case studies and research conducted in various public libraries in Ermelo, Mpumalanga still has a gap in terms of the public libraries' ability to satisfy the communities' needs.

Information needs remain vague, especially when considering that most of the people living in Ermelo are illiterate. This investigation should provide a springboard for future public library research as a point of reference for user needs satisfaction by the Ermelo public library. The research approaches used in this study benefited other researchers for library and information science profession.

Furthermore, public libraries will use the study to enhance their service provision and sustain development in their respective societies. The study aims to gain insight into the library information science profession and give an innovative perspective on how libraries can best provide information. This study was relevant and best provided information that respond to needs of the users. The findings are significant because they can assist the DAC to review their funding structures and policies to enhance user needs satisfaction. The study findings would help library management to develop their public library collections in ways that would respond to the specific information needs of Ermelo public library users.

1.6 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was undertaken from the personal perspective of the researcher as follows:

1.6.1 Well-resourced public libraries enhance access to information, which leads to user needs satisfaction.

1.6.2 A lack of funding has a major impact on public libraries' ability to provide access to information. Public libraries are still behind in terms of a well-built infrastructure, which makes it difficult for them to provide relevant, up-to-date and accurate information (Joy & Idowu, 2014).

1.6.3 If the DSAC can improve their funding procedure and policies, public libraries can play a vital role in terms of developing the country and providing flexible access to information.

1.6.4 Libraries can improve the users' experience by understanding what it means to truly deliver outstanding value (Mohindra & Kumar, 2015).

1.6.5 Public libraries ought to be dynamic in terms of information services, to understand that there is always a need to improve models and adopt new ones (Nayak & Pate, 2016). Public libraries tend to evaluate their output and it is possible to improve the level of user satisfaction with the passage of time with the help of new formulated models of evaluation (Mehrjerdi, 2017).

1.6.6 The main reason for the existence of public libraries is to serve the unique needs of their public societies (Bakti, Ede & Sumaedi, 2013). Public libraries play a vital role in the development and maintenance of a democratic society by supporting flexible individual access to a wide range of knowledge (Irwin & St-Pierre, 2014).

1.7 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The following terms were defined to contextualise them:

1.7.1 Public library

Public library is defined by IFLA/ UNESCO (2015) as a democratic institution, established under clear authority of law to provide facilities to pursue education as a lifelong learning process. According to IFLA (2017:2), a public library is "an organisation established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government, or through some other form of community organisation. It provides access to knowledge, information and works of the imagination through a range of resources and services and is equally available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status and educational attainment."

1.7.2 Information need

"Information need is described as an individual or group desire to locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious need or unconscious need" (Yusuf, 2012:3). An information need refers to the desire to access certain knowledge depending on the type of information the user is looking for. It can also be described as an information gap, the need to know something, which leads to the desire to specific information. Public library users have unique information needs and which they rely on public libraries to satisfy those needs. To fulfil information needs, public libraries need to ensure that they have all the information sources to support access to information.

1.7.3 Library resources

According to Mehrjerdi (2017), library resources are sources of information. Initially, these were mostly books, journals, newspapers and other editorials and encyclopaedias. Library resources can be either in electronic or traditional format, and access to hardware (computers, laptops and mobile devices) is required to access electronic sources. Library resources enhance access to information; for example, a user needs a computer to access

the internet, and the internet allows access to electronic information databases, which in turn provide access to electronic journals with information that may be useful to the user.

1.7.4 Library and information services

LIS refer to the services through which librarians directly assist users with access to information and to the ability of librarians to support and promote skills with which by users could independently be able to trace and retrieve information (IFLA, 2017). The relationship between librarians and users enhances flexible sharing information required to satisfy a conscious or unconscious need. Information literacy and computer literacy are both vital skills that enhance access to information.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is structured into five chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction and background to the study

This chapter outlined the introduction and background of the research problem, the problem statement and the research objectives investigated, as well as the aims and research questions of the study, the importance of the study, and the definition of terms.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework and literature review of the study

This chapter focused on the review of relevant literature about information needs of the users and explains Abraham Harold Maslow's information needs model to support the study and explain it in relation to the study.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter provided the details of the research methodology used for the study and the research approaches, which include the quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research approaches. The research design, target population, sampling, and sampling techniques (probability sampling technique, nonprobability sampling, random sampling, and purposive sampling) are discussed in this chapter. The research instrument, data

collection, data analysis, purposes of collecting primary data, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and observations are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Presentation, interpretation, and discussion of findings

The data collected from the respondents in Ermelo during the investigation, observations and focus group discussions are presented and interpreted in this chapter. Literature was used to discuss the findings of the study.

Chapter 5: Summary of the main findings, conclusions, recommendations and Suggestions for future studies

Chapter 5 presented the summary of the main findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future studies based on the investigation conducted with the locals in Ermelo to understand public library information needs.

1.9 SUMMARY

In Chapter 1, the introduction of the study examined the problem areas of information needs of public library users in Ermelo. The introduction and background information, conceptual setting of Ermelo, the problem statement, purpose of the study, and the research objectives and research questions were presented. The significance, assumptions of the study, definition of terms and the structure of the dissertation were also articulated in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW ON INFORMATION NEEDS OF PUBLIC LIBRARY USERS.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviewed the various literature relevant to the study with the purpose of placing it within its proper context as well as describe the framework that underpins it.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is underpinned by the Abraham Maslow information needs theory. According to Cheung and Waldeck (2016:10), the theoretical framework improves the relevance of the study by supporting it, and the literature review is a study of knowledge conducted within a specific discipline.

2.2.1 Abraham Harold Maslow's information needs model

Abraham Harold Maslow's information needs model supports the study of user needs in Ermelo public libraries by explaining the different information needs of public library users. Public library users have diverse information needs and they all need to be catered for to ensure that all library user needs are satisfied.

2.2.1.1 Abraham Maslow hierarchy of needs
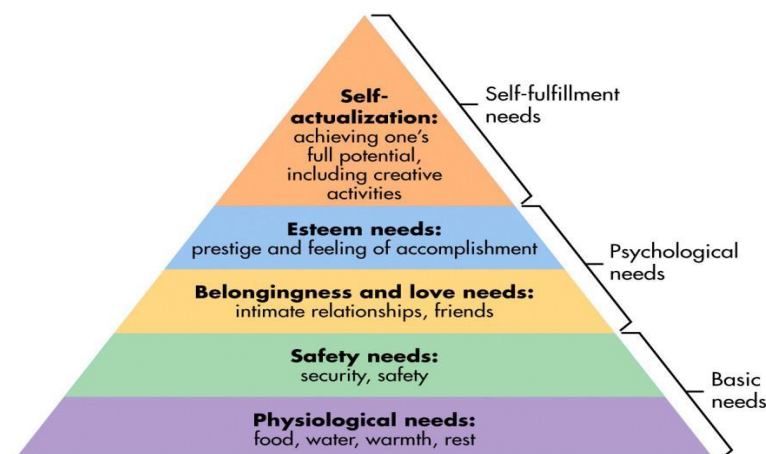
(a)   Physiological needs

These are biological needs such as the need for oxygen, food, water, and a relatively constant body temperature. According to Moodley (2013:20), "it is important to focus on basic needs hence these needs are biological and crucial." They are the most important needs and these kinds of needs always come first in the user's search for information satisfaction. These are basic needs library users need to satisfy before taking care of other needs.

This is where the need to know something begins; curiosity begins here whereby users feel the need to fill an information gap. Public libraries need to ensure that their infrastructure, such as buildings and air conditioners, is suitable to accommodate users in all aspects.

(b)   Safety needs

Public libraries are non-profit-making organisations, and they rely on government funding to build the library infrastructure, and for maintenance and management. The infrastructure must be accommodative, conducive, and safe for users to feel comfortable when using the library. The need to be safe is vital to users and library users often feel comfortable when they know they are safe, and their security needs are catered for. Libraries play a massive role in providing access to information about safety precautions and security.

(c)   Needs for love, affection, and belongingness

When the needs for safety and for physiological well-being are satisfied, the needs for love, affection and belongingness can emerge. Information has become the most powerful tool in the 21st century. Everything people do revolves around information, which makes it a significant aspect of life. Maslow states that people seek to overcome feelings of loneliness and alienation. This involves both giving and receiving love, affection, and the sense of belonging. This begins with how librarians should treat and present themselves

towards library users. Training in customer care could help librarians improve and understand how to make library users feel loved and give them a sense of belonging through the treatment they give them.

(d) Needs for esteem

Onah (2015: 47) asserts that "when people achieve their social needs, the attention shifts to such matters as reputation, recognition, self-esteem and prestige or self-worth, self-respect, status." Needs for esteem give public library users strong confidence to participate in activities that will certainly improve their living conditions in their communities. Humans have a need for a stable, firmly based, high level of self-respect and respect from others. When these needs are satisfied, the person feels self-confident and valuable as a person in the world. Case and Given (2016) state that people have many needs, and they need relevant information and knowledge to satisfy their needs.

(e) Needs for self-actualisation

When all the prior needs are fulfilled, the need for self-actualisation emerges. Maslow describes self-actualisation as a person's essential need to be and do that which the person was born to do. Onah (2015: 49) perceives self-actualisation as self-fulfilment, the need to develop your full potential to be able to become the best you are capable of being in society.

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs is still important and relevant for every public library to maintain success and excellent access to information. If public libraries attempt to shy away from the practical application of the hierarchy of needs model, it will affect the performance of the library staff to achieve organisational excellence and create good atmosphere and a better work environment, and to achieve the target at the right time. For this, drive and application of the theory are paramount.

2.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review gives a hypothetical outline for research and supports the researcher to determine the nature of the study. A literature review defines, summarises, appraises and simplifies the literature that was documented before on the same topic. Literature review gives the researcher information that has been documented on a topic and helps to determine the mistakes that the previous researchers may have made in their studies. In this study, the literature review is briefly discussed according to the following research objectives of the study.

2.3.1 Potential users of the public library and their information needs

Worldwide, public libraries are used by a wide variety of users to meet their information needs.

2.3.1.1 Learners

Learners visit public libraries for curriculum-related activities. They need information and knowledge to do their assignments, homework and research projects. Therefore, learners rely on public libraries for information sources. In Mpumalanga, the shortage of school libraries is the reason why public libraries have committed to provide access to information to the nearby school learners. The lack of an authorised school library policy remains a barrier to reviving active school library growth initiatives by all the significant stakeholders in South Africa. Owing to a dramatic shortage of well-resourced and functional school libraries, public libraries play an important role in ensuring that learners have access to various sources of information (Mojapelo, 2016).

According to Mojapelo and Dube (2017), in South Africa, the pass rate of numerous public schools is not satisfactory and public libraries need to play an important role and support school learners' needs through the provision of educational resources. Public libraries could assist underprivileged rural schools to work effectively and improve their results by ensuring easy access to accurate and relevant information. Schools are open from 7:00 to 14:30 and after school, learners make use of public libraries to complete their tasks such as assignments, homework and research projects. Therefore, it is significant to

ensure that learners have all the resources they need to complete these tasks and public libraries play a vital role in ensuring that learners' information needs are catered for.

Hart and Nassimbeni (2013) state that public libraries play a crucial role in early childhood development and contribute to readiness for school of the young children it serves. Public libraries host events such as spelling bee competitions and storytelling events, which help very much when it comes to promoting a reading culture. Public libraries also provide free access to Wi-Fi and library users make use of Wi-Fi to access electronic resources and share them among themselves easily. Paton-Ash and Wilmot (2015:2) reiterate, "library collections need to be diverse in terms of subject matter in order to cater for the needs of all learners and to attract existing and new users."

2.3.1.2 Users with disabilities

People with disabilities are part of the community; therefore, it is vital not to exclude them when addressing information needs of the public. Public libraries are non-profit-making government institutions, and they rely on funding; therefore, they cannot accommodate special information needs of the people with special needs, as they require unique information sources.

Those who cannot hear could make use of computer prompts to access information in a way that will suit their needs. Public libraries aim to serve the community and the way public library buildings should be accommodative to users with disabilities to access the information regardless their disability conditions; for example, enough space between shelves to allow people in wheelchairs to move around. Information sources such as braille books for blind users are still rare in public libraries, which makes it difficult for users who are blind to access information. Users with physical disabilities need to be catered for as well to allow them to move freely and have access to all the library resources. However, "most public libraries cannot afford to purchase information sources which are user friendly to those who cannot see and are physically challenged" (Library and Information Services (LIS) Transformation Charter, 2015:34).

According to Fourie and Meyer (2016: 423), most public libraries do not have suitable infrastructure to accommodate users with disabilities. Many public libraries are still without ramps, which makes it hard for users living with disabilities to go around, have access to the library and locate information sources of their choice. Chijioke, Okwor and Emmanuel

(2011) state that library buildings must be designed and built in such a way that it accommodates any change in library structure and services.

2.3.1.3 Students and researchers

Public libraries also provide access to information and knowledge to students and researchers in general.

(a)   *Students*

Students use public libraries to access information to complete their assignments. Online students rely on public libraries to access information sources as they only go to their academic institutions to write examinations. Online learning students do most of their learning remotely, which requires access to the internet; therefore, they use public libraries to access Wi-Fi and stay connected. Public libraries play a vital role in assisting students during recess to access the internet and online information sources. There are many users who rely on public libraries, and this leads to space becoming a challenge, as space is always limited and insufficient to accommodate many users at the same time (Agbo, 2015:5).

(b)   *Researchers*

Researchers always rely on libraries for information sources. They make use of public libraries to access both electronic and physical information sources to help them complete their research projects. Through public libraries, researchers can have access to the latest knowledge and information related to their research interests (Bogopane, 2013). Researchers also use public libraries to conduct their research either to access information or to engage with their research respondents as they visit libraries daily.

Therefore, public libraries are responsible for making knowledge available to users at any given time. Public library staff make use of alerts to interact with researchers and update them on new sources that are available in the library and relevant to their information needs. Public libraries play a vital role in ensuring that users have access to free internet at any given time provided the library is open and running.

2.3.1.4 Small business owners

Small business owners who do not have offices and facilities such as computers and internet access make use of public libraries to create and send invoices, receive and send emails and attend meetings with clients via Skype or Zoom. In their study, Mamafha, Ngulube and Ndwandwe (2016: 62) argue that "public libraries should provide computers, internet-based facilities and other equipment such as photocopiers, printers and laminators to improve services to user communities." Case and Given (2016) opine that public libraries should be able to acquire information on different subjects and provide services in meeting the identified needs for people to freely develop themselves and the country economically.

2.3.1.5 Early readers

Early readers or first-time users refer to children of a very young age; public libraries play a vital role in promoting a reading culture at an early stage. Children's books are different; it could be short stories in the form of pictures with short sentences explaining the pictures. Parents borrow children's books and use them at their homes to teach their children how to read. According to Papalia (2014:69), teaching children to read at an early age helps with the proper development of grammar and syntax, the ability to speak with longer sentences, link the story to experiences in real life, and discuss and express their opinions.

2.3.2 Information needs of public library users

Information needs of the users are diverse and wide ranging. Bopape, Dikotla, Mahlatji, Ntsala and Makgahlela (2017:1) state that, "information that is essential to library users in Limpopo libraries revolved around health matters, education interest, career development, and general issues."

2.3.2.1 Health information needs

With the outbreak of diseases all over the globe, public libraries can be used by the officials of the Department of Health to disseminate health information to the users. For example, public libraries can provide adequate reading material about the outbreak, posters and

alerts on preventive measures, and can help with the dissemination of precautions to fight pandemics such as Covid-19 and swine flu. Public libraries play a role especially in the current pandemic by distributing protective equipment and making information about preventive measures available to the public. Nassimbeni and Shabangu (2015:84) affirm that, "community information centres play a vital role in providing health information services, specifically in rural areas where HIV/AIDS percentage is rapidly increasing."

According to Mojapelo and Dube (2017:6), public libraries are more helpful if they cooperate with regional subdivisions of health, such as community clinics, on the well-being of subjects. In terms of conducting outreach programmes about HIV/AIDS, public libraries play a vital role in disseminating information about health issues such as information on preventive measures for tuberculosis (TB), pamphlets and condoms. Radick (2015:42) asserts that, "health literacy programmes, which users attend at public libraries, enable them to find good information on medical issues that affect them."

Public libraries play a vital role by allowing the Department of Health to use libraries to spread information about conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, breast cancer, prostate cancer, strokes, mental illness, amputations, kidney diseases, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and diet and exercises (Radick, 2015).

2.3.2.2 Education or curriculum information needs

Curriculum information needs are obligatory for teachers and learners to execute their responsibilities. Fourie and Meyer (2016: 17) state that libraries and librarians can play a prominent and successful role in developing informed and educated nations. With a shortage of well-resourced and functional school libraries, teachers and learners flock to the public libraries to seek information for curriculum-related activities (LIS Transformation Charter, 2015). StatsSA (2015:4) indicates that, "learners and teachers require a suitable and conducive environment for effective learning and teaching."

Public libraries promote education because most schools do not have computers and adequate information sources. Public libraries exist to fill that gap and to ensure that learners have access to the information sources for curriculum-related activities. Most public schools do not have enough educational resources and, therefore, they rely on public libraries to provide relevant information sources. If learners have access to all the

educational resources they need, their outcomes will improve and improve gradually. Public libraries play a vital role in ensuring that both learners and teachers have access to all the educational resources the public schools do not have.

2.3.2.3 Information needs about social and entertainment (arts)

Public libraries represent institutions historically located at the crossroads of educational, cultural, and ideological interests. Public libraries therefore need to understand users' interest and ensure that information sources acquired by the library are in line with their user needs and interests.

Igwe (2012: 49) categorises the information needs into political information needs, job opportunity needs, corporate information needs, agricultural, geographical, and environmental information needs, and scientific and technological information needs. Mehra (2016:247) argues that public libraries provide information about politics, job opportunities, information resources about the corporate world and information about starting a small business. He further asserts that users use libraries to read more about agricultural attributes, geographical analysis and environmental issues and solutions.

2.3.3 Public library user needs and usage of sources

Lwara (2015: 26) states that, "users depend on library professionals for their information needs satisfaction hence some of the users are not well trained in various methods to access relevant, accurate, reliable and up to date information." Adeleke (2017:67) states that, "public libraries are unable to fulfil user needs due to inadequate ICTs infrastructure and the absence of technical skills, negative attitudes towards automation." Public libraries also fail to fulfil user needs due to the absence of appropriate library software for automation that provide library administration, circulations, and the entire information management process.

2.3.4 Library services and the level of satisfaction of users

"Libraries that provide users with relevant information will always achieve higher levels of user satisfaction, the accessibility of resources can have a substantial effect on user needs fulfilment" (Singh & Kuri, 2017:497). Library users always expect public libraries to play a

part in making sure that access to information is prioritised. Lana et al (2017: 119) assert that, "users need appropriate skills to access relevant information to satisfy their information needs and become independent lifelong learners when they are information literate."

The 21st century brought about dramatic changes; due to technology it has become difficult for libraries to cater for all the information needs of their clients, especially for public libraries as they have diverse information needs with limited budget (Bashir, Bashir, Soroya, Soroya & Khanum, 2015:305). Library user satisfaction implies how users feel after using the information resources and services and their willingness to return to the library when they need information again (Joy & Idowu, 2014). To meet users' information needs, public libraries need to understand the public society's beliefs and cultures, the environment they are serving, as well as the diverse information needs of the community. Public libraries ought to fulfil users' information needs; therefore, it is important for public libraries to prioritise user needs satisfaction.

2.3.5 Challenges faced by public libraries in meeting information needs of the users

Public libraries experience a number of challenges that prevent them from meeting the diverse and ever-evolving information needs of their users.

2.3.5.1 Staffing

Staffing is still a challenge in public libraries; hence they still employ unqualified librarians, which shows that finding the appropriate skills in the sector is still a challenge. The LIS Transformation Charter (2014: 55) states that, "there are instances where incompetently or unsuitably qualified candidates are hired to positions without extensive knowledge and proper training." Inequality in salaries for comparable positions in municipal and provincial library services needs to be addressed to stabilise employment and avoid the disturbance initiated by job leaping (LIS Transformation Charter, 2014:55). The majority of skilled library professionals would prefer to work in developed cities than in rural areas, hence the interest in reading and literacy is not as big as in urban areas.

2.3.5.2 Funding

"The lack of funding guideline for public libraries is still a challenge within the library sector" (LIS Transformation Charter, 2014:63). Public libraries are not receiving enough funds from the government, and this has a major impact on libraries as they end up failing to purchase, maintain and add new services that could be useful to the users. The challenges that are really limiting public libraries in their delivery of quality library services to users are insufficient budget. Provision of services is a challenge in libraries, hence the funds they receive from the government are not enough.

Owing to inadequate funding, libraries are unable to obtain the best library resources to entice the users. Public libraries are non-profit-making organisations, and they rely on government funding and donations. Fourie and Meyer (2016: 423) state that, "lack of funding remains an obstacle for libraries to procure suitable resources." The facilities to enhance access to information to users are expensive and libraries are facing challenges, and the funds they receive from government are insufficient to cover everything they need. For example, public libraries lack funds to participate in outreach activities such as visits to schools and remote areas.

Public libraries exist to serve the public, they sometimes host activities such as spelling bee competitions, reading events and debates, which require funds to purchase prices and hire event materials. Public libraries have limited space with a shortage of shelves to accommodate information sources such as books (fiction and non-fiction), periodicals and audio-visuals, and the limited funds they receive yearly are not enough to improve and build more convenient structures. Users need computers to access the internet, which enables access to electronic sources of information. Due to insufficient funding, public libraries are unable to add new needed information technology (IT) equipment.

2.3.5.3 Training

Martzoukou and Elliott (2016:100) state that staff development should be included in the mission statements and agendas for every public library, and training institutions need to ensure that graduates arrive on the job with the required skillset. Public libraries can provide training in the form of workshops that will equip librarians with innovative ideas and guidelines on new library systems. Public libraries need trained professionals who

"adapt readily to the rapidly changing information environment and drive the adoption of innovative new content, programmes, services and technologies" (Ali and Chowdhury, 2015:3). Public librarians need to be trained more in customer service to be able to deliver in public libraries.

Public librarians need to familiarise themselves with innovations in the library profession to ensure that the needs of public users are satisfied in all aspects. According to the DAC (2010:72), the majority of library assistants have an NQF level 4 (Grade 12) qualification; however, as many as 13.1% do not have grade 12. To provide equal services, LIS authorities need to ensure that training in the needs of people with disabilities is provided to staff on the ground, in consultation with activist groups and specialist services. Martzoukou and Elliott (2016:101) state that there is a lack of understanding of what professional development and workplace learning are required of public librarians in order to engage communities in digital learning, and research literature in this area is scarce.

In terms of qualified library staff in the LIS industry, a recent investigation conducted for the DAC (2010:72) reports that the majority of library assistants have NQF level 4 (Grade 12).

2.3.5.4 Security

According to the National Council for Library and Information Services (NCLIS) (2018), buildings and facilities need to be protected by suitable security arrangements. Where the buildings and services are provided by different authorities, budget and responsibility for security must be clearly allocated. Public libraries need to protect their resources from damage, mutilation and theft. Akor (2013:808) avers that it is important that an "electronic alarm system is installed at the entrance and exit of a library facility to detect the unauthorised removal of library materials (theft)." "Library reading materials constantly need security because of damage of library material by the environment, atmospheric hazards, natural threats, user and staff behaviour" (Silic & Back, 2014:801).

2.3.5.5 Information communications technologies

Mnkeni-Saurombe and Zimu (2013) state that access to information communications technologies (ICTs) and being connected are crucial for the users. This study found that five percent of the entire population of South Africa (1.9 million people) reported first accessing the internet on a computer in a public library (Farquharson & Van der Merwe, 2016). Public libraries are facing challenges regarding technological infrastructure, which refers to issues such as a lack of national ICT policy, low internet connectivity, an inadequate number of computers and an inadequate supply of electricity (Ramana Venkata, 2013:360). Power supply is essential to operate ICTs. If there is no electricity, the software and information systems used in libraries do not work, there is no internet connection and computers do not work, unless there is a backup generator.

2.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the theoretical framework underpinning the study was outlined and the literature review as guided by the research objectives was discussed. In the chapter three, the research approaches, research design, target population, sampling, research instruments, data collection and data analysis are discussed.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the research methodology adopted to answer the research questions of the study. In this study, research methodology entails research paradigms, approaches, design, target population, sampling and sampling techniques, research instruments, data collection, validity and reliability, and data analysis. This chapter also stipulates ethical considerations that the research adhered to during the process of investigating.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Pandey and Pandey (2015:9) state that research methodology is a way to systematically solve a research problem. According to Babbie (2014), research methodology embraces a literature study and observed research. Labaree (2014:2) states that research methodology focuses on the principles that guide research practices, and thus serves as a framework within which the researcher works.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

According to Bryman (2012: 629), Thomas Kuhn is the father of research paradigm. Creswell (2014:35) defines paradigms as elementary collections of principles that motivate action. "It describes a cluster of beliefs and dictates which for scientists in a particular discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done and how results should be interpreted" (Bryman, 2012:630). These principles influence the researcher in terms of the research approaches they tend to adopt to complete a study. According to Creswell (2014:36), paradigms are defined as worldviews. A paradigm guides a researcher to select a suitable methodology for a study. According to Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014:20), there are three types of paradigms, namely interpretivism, positivism and pragmatism.

3.3.1 Interpretivism

Hussain, Elyas and Nasseef (2013:2376) state that this type of paradigm is also known as humanistic, constructivist, naturalistic or anti-positivist. The interpretivist research paradigm perceives reality and sense-making as socially constructed, and it holds that people make their own sense of social realities. According to Creswell (2014:36), the main purpose of this paradigm is to rely as much as possible on the participant's view of the situation under study through exploring the individual's perceptions.

To make sense of society, a researcher needs to understand how people interpret the world and what is motivating them. The senses people attach to their surroundings are the descriptions of what they do (Walter & Anderson, 2013). A similar thing occurs to understand the information needs of public library users in the Ermelo area.

3.3.2 Positivism

According to Ali and Chowdhury (2015:224), the analysis of positivism is strictly based on three aspects, namely clarity, standardisation and generalisability. However, inaccuracies in scientific data may alter the end-results of the hypothesis, as participants may not provide authentic responses to questions. According to Aliyu, Bello and Martin (2014:81), the epistemology of positivism is objectivism and dualism. This means that positivists believe that human experiences of the world are objective, reflecting an independent reality, thus providing the foundation for human knowledge.

3.3.3 Pragmatism

According to Hothersall (2019:33), "pragmatism offers an experience-based, action-oriented framework whereby the purpose of research is to help us address the issues of dealing with how we experience and come to know the world in a practical sense." Pragmatism employs both qualitative and quantitative methods simultaneously and selects specific methods in a complementary way to find answers and solutions to problems. Morgan (2014:76) states that pragmatists generally agree that all knowledge in this world is socially constructed, but some versions of those social constructions match individuals' experiences more than others. "For pragmatists, an inquiry in both social life

and social work research is effective only if it achieves its purposes" (Hothersall, 2019:64). Morgan (2014:84) asserts that pragmatists believe that we are free to believe anything we want to believe, although some beliefs are more likely than others to meet our goals and needs.

3.4 CHOICE OF THE PARADIGM

This study adopted the interpretivism paradigm, which asserts that the determination of analysis is to comprehend the phenomenon, instead of generalising the findings to a population of Ermelo, Mpumalanga, South Africa. The reason behind choosing interpretivism is its emphasis on social interactions and the use of symbols, such as language, in the creation of that meaning. Interpretivism suggests that the world is a world of meaning in which activities take place based on shared views. The meanings actors attach to their circumstances are the explanations of what they do (Walter & Anderson, 2013). To make sense of society, it is vital to understand people's motives and how they perceive the world. This same perception applies to understanding the information needs of library users in the study area.

3.5 RESEARCH APPROACHES

Research approaches consist of the steps of detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

3.5.1 Quantitative research approach

Choy (2014:102) argues that "quantitative approach is not strong in understanding the context in which people talk and the researcher cannot voice out his or her personal understanding about the subject matter at hand." The quantitative research approach presents and outlines data using numbers to make it easy to understand. According to Bryman (2016), the quantitative research approach responds to research questions requiring numerical data and the quantitative research approach is an approach for testing objective ideas by observing the link among variables. Rahman (2016:106) asserts that, "quantitative approach comprises using scientific or mathematical data to recognize a problem." The quantitative approach helps to summarise data and enhance the easy

analysis of data. These variables, in turn, can be dignified, typically on instruments, so that totalled figures can be analysed using statistical techniques (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.5.2 Qualitative research approach

Babbie (2014) describes the qualitative research approach as an approach that is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. Unlike the quantitative approach, the qualitative research approach expresses data using words rather than numbers. For example, interviews are used to collect data, after which the researcher sorts and writes down all the recorded data to make it simple and convenient to understand. Creswell (2014:235) states that, "qualitative approach is also an emergent and shifting one, allowing the researcher to change some phases of the research process in response to data obtained in the field, as highlighted." Qualitative data collection methods are different, depending on whether unstructured or semi-structured techniques are used. The qualitative approach is applicable in a scenario where the researcher interacts directly with the participants in their context.

3.5.3 Mixed methods research approach

According to Creswell (2014:24), the mixed methods research (MMR) approach is a collection or integration of both quantitative and qualitative data in research. The mixed methods research approach describes the scenario where a researcher uses both the qualitative and quantitative research approaches in a study. The motive behind adopting this is that when both quantitative and qualitative approaches are used interchangeably and simultaneously, a better understanding is obtained of a research problem than either research approach alone.

3.5.4 Choice of research approach(es)

This study adopted both the qualitative and quantitative research approaches to study information needs of public library users in Ermelo. Data collection instruments or tools were triangulated to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. The triangulated qualitative and quantitative data collection approach uses strategies of inquiry that involve collecting data either simultaneously or sequentially to best understand research problems

(Creswell, 2014). Using both quantitative and qualitative approaches enabled a researcher to collect large amounts of data. This approach simplified the entire data collection process and initial data obtained from some of quantitative questions also had to be elaborated, which was possible with this approach. This approach also enabled the study to use data collection tools with success that were initially selected as suitable and conducive for the study.

3.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design provides vision on how to conduct research using a methodology (Creswell, 2015). The research design expresses the reason why data are essential, the methods used to collect and analyse the data, and how to ensure that the data answer the research questions. Creswell (2014:38) opines that a "research design is a type of inquiry within the three research approaches which provides sort of a guideline for procedures in a study." The research design for this study was mainly survey, which describes the information needs of a large population, and the researcher engaged in the process of sampling of a target population, collecting data through administered questionnaires and interviews, designing data collection instruments, and obtaining a high response rate.

3.7 TARGET POPULATION

A target population is the entire group about which information is desired and conclusions are made (Kabir, 2017). Wiid and Diggines (2013:186) define target population as the "total group of people or entities from whom information is required." The study targeted potential users of the two selected public libraries in Ermelo, Mpumalanga, South Africa as well as public librarians and a regional manager who are responsible for the two selected public libraries.

3.7.1 Sampling

Sampling is defined as the process of selecting a sample from a target population to represent it (Easton & McColl, 2014). According to Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014:135), sampling is a "subset of population that is representative of the population."

Sampling enabled the current researcher to study a large group of users through a scale or randomly selected size.

3.7.2 Sampling *t*echniques

Sampling technique is the identification of the procedure through which the individuals of the sample have been chosen (Kabir, 2017). There are two sampling techniques: probability and non-probability sampling.

3.7.2.1 Probability sampling technique

The probability sampling technique refers to a setting where each item in a population has an equal chance of being selected in the sample (Kabir, 2017). According to Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014:138), "probability sampling can be used when the findings of a study need to be generalisable to the larger population."

(a)   Random sampling technique

McLeod (2019) describes the random sampling technique as a type of probability sampling where every individual in the target population has an equal chance of being selected into a sample. According to StatsSA (2014), Ermelo has a population of 83,865, which is divided into three groups as follows: 27.2% young people (0-14), 68,8% working age (15-64) and 3.9% elderly (65+); making a total of 83,865 people. Payne and Payne (2004:203) assert that in a population of 1,000,000, a sample of 384 people could achieve the objectives of the study accurately and answer all research questions.

3.7.2.2 Non-probability sampling technique

Mugera (2013:1) indicates that non-probability sampling is a sampling technique where the samples are gathered in a manner that does not give every person in the population an equal chance of being selected. The non-probability sampling technique emphasises that the researcher makes a choice on who should play part in the study and samples are selected based on what the researcher thinks is conducive to the study. According to Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014:137), the subjects in a non-probability sample are

often selected through the purposive personal judgement of the researcher or based on their availability.

(a) ***Purposive sampling technique***

The purposive sampling technique, also called judgement sampling, is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses. It is defined as careful choice of an informant due to the abilities of the informant. Three librarians were selected purposively to participate in the study; one librarian from library A and two from library B. This sampling technique was adopted because the researcher needed librarians and managers to respond to certain questions as they oversee everything that is happening within their respective libraries.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Neuman (2012:67) states that, "data collection instruments are tools that a researcher utilises to obtain data from participants." They are important for data collection in all types of research. A research instrument is used to collect data to answer research questions (Pandey & Pandey, 2015).

3.8.1 Self-administered questionnaires

Questionnaire played a vital role during the process of collecting data from users. A questionnaire is not time consuming and can be used to collect information each time; hence, the respondents had to respond to both close- and open-ended questions arranged in an appropriate format. A self-administered questionnaire (Appendix D) that comprises closed-ended and open-ended questions was utilised as data collection instrument. "Questionnaires are a convenient and inexpensive way of gathering information from people and can be used to cover a large geographical area." (Abawi 2013:3). Questionnaires were distributed to a sample number of library users in each of two selected public libraries in Ermelo, where respondents were expected to complete them.

3.8.2 Interview schedule

According to Babbie (2014:34), an interview "refers to a discussion between the researcher and participant with a purpose of gathering information from the respondents to respond to the research questions." This study also used interview schedules (Appendices E & F) as a research instrument to collect information from three librarians from two selected public libraries and a regional manager.

3.8.3 Administration of data collection instruments

The researcher visited the public libraries to distribute self-administered questionnaires. Each respondent was given 30 minutes to complete it, which was enough to complete all the questions. The researcher had to make an appointment with librarians and the regional manager to conduct interviews. The interviews took place in the two public libraries and the researcher used the regional manager's office at the municipality for an interview. Three librarians and one regional manager were given 30 minutes each to participate and respond to the questions as per the interview schedule. The researcher used a tape recorder to record all participants' answers during the interviews and participants were informed that they were being recorded.

3.9 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Data collection is described as the process of gathering and measuring data on selected variables in an accurate, systematic way to enhance the answer to the stipulated research questions. It also helps to evaluate the outcomes (Kabir, 2016). Obtaining permission from Msukaligwa Local Municipality to conduct the study was a crucial and vital step in the process (Appendix A), and the municipality granted the researcher the permission, as per the permission letter (Appendix B), to conduct the study. Msukaligwa Local Municipality is responsible for all developments occurring in Ermelo public libraries, and because public libraries receive funds from the department, this permission crucial.

3.10 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The reason for using a questionnaire in research was to retrieve information in the most reliable and valid manner. Reliability and validity are most commonly used in quantitative research. Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014:254) state that, "reliability and validity in quantitative research are ensured through, for example large sample sizes, random sampling and reliable research tools."

3.10.1 Validity

"Validity explains how well the collected data covers the actual area of investigation" (Teherdoost 2016:29). Validity simply means that a test or instrument is accurately measuring what it is intended to measure. Research instruments were all pre-tested based on the descriptive sample selected for the study through a pilot test. Findings obtained through the pilot-test process were used to revise the standing interview schedule and questionnaire to guarantee great internal validity.

3.10.2 Reliability

Singh and Kuri (2017) state that reliability is a measure of the stability or consistency of test scores. Testing for reliability was important as it refers to the consistency across the parts of a measuring instrument. Frasler et al. (2018:233-266), the reliability of questionnaires may be inferred by a second administration of the instrument with a small subsample, matching the replies with those of the first (Creswell, 2014). According to Brink, Van der Walt and Van Rensburg (2012:157), it is vital to make sure that the questionnaire is tested on a small sample and reviewed, if needed, to avoid ambiguity. The researcher ensured that all data instruments were subjected to pre-testing. Questionnaires were distributed to five different users for a pilot study, they all came back answered and the feedback was satisfying with no confusing/ambiguous questions proclaimed.

Research literature indicates that pre-testing of the data collection instruments such as questionnaires and interview schedules is an effective way of eliminating errors in the study (Babbie, 2014). The interview questions were also tested to see if they would be

well understood and perceived accordingly and based on the feedback the researcher obtained from participants, the questions were well understood.

3.11 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis refers to the interpretation and giving of meaning to data to make it easily understandable (Flick, 2014). The researcher collected two types of data, namely quantitative and qualitative data. Data analysis helped to analyse the collected data from the collecting of data stage using the questionnaire and interview schedule. The use of pie charts, graphs and tables enhanced the analysis of quantitative data. The data were evaluated and organised in a manner that made it informative and were sorted and placed in a well-organised and understandable order. In this case, the data collected provided clarity on what to implement to rectify obstacles and challenges related to user needs in the Ermelo public library.

Quantitative data, which was collected through administered questionnaires, was analysed using the software known as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Baugh, Hallcom and Harris (2014:69) state that software programmes assist researchers to search for, organise and sort information. The use of SPSS helped with the analysis of data; hence, the data had to be presented in bar graphs, pie charts and line graphs.

Qualitative data collected using an interview schedule were then analysed using themes. Thematic analysis enhanced the analysis of qualitative data, and it was applied to examine the data and identify common themes that came up repeatedly to make sense of the collected data.

3.12 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study was limited to public libraries in Ermelo, Mpumalanga in South Africa in which only users, librarians and the regional manager were targeted.

3.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Babbie (2014: 28) argues that being ethical in research means obeying research standards. Research ethics is about exploiting what is correct, like avoiding any harm that

the study might cause to the respondents. The subsequent ethical standards were embraced and practised to ensure that the research is conducted fairly and in a satisfactory manner. The researcher was liable and protected the rights of the participants in the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher also adhered to the University of South Africa Research Ethics Policy (2016), which requires that the following standards be upheld when conducting research.

3.13.1 Voluntary participation

Consent comprises the process through which an individual may choose whether to partake in research. The research participants were aware that contribution in the research is voluntary and not forcible. Research respondents and participants had been informed that participation was not mandatory to take part in the research before the questionnaires were distributed and the interviews conducted by means of consent forms. Both respondents and participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from participating at any stage and the researcher did not give the impression that they were obligated to participate. According to Dube (2018), library users had a right to choose not to participate in the study, which included the completion of questionnaires.

3.13.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity were considered, which means that individuals had the right to remain anonymous and to object to the research questions if they felt it violated their rights (Dube, 2018). The anonymity and privacy of participants or respondents were prioritised and private information, such as names, was not included in the questionnaire (Unisa Research Ethics Policy 2016:17). Participants and respondents were treated with respect and because their privacy and confidentiality were prioritised, and they were not exposed to procedures or risks not directly attached to the research project or its methodology.

3.13.3 Fairness

The power imbalance between researcher and researched had to be considered. As defined by Babbie (2014), reliability refers to a scenario whereby a technique is used several times for the same objective and provides the same results each time it is used. Mainly with interviews, the same questions were asked were in a same way to maintain fairness and consistency in the respondents. All respondents had an equal length of time to respond and express their views.

3.13.4 Collaborative research involving human participants

Approval (Appendix C) from ethics review committees is crucial if research involves human participants. Permission to collect data was obtained from the Msukaligwa Local Municipality (Appendix B).

3.13.5 Plagiarism

All information sources cited in the study were fully acknowledged and list of reference entries provided accordingly. The thesis was subjected to Turnitin software to pinpoint plagiarism and the researcher can indicate that the similarity report was 27 which is acceptable as it is below 30%.

3.14 SUMMARY

Chapter three elucidated the research methodology of the study, which entails the paradigm and the research approaches adopted by the study. The target population, along with sampling and sampling techniques, was covered. Details pertaining to how the data collected from the two libraries through questionnaires and interview are provided. Ethical considerations the researcher adhered to were also covered and explained. The following chapter provides the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the presentation, interpretation and discussion of data collected from the self-administered questionnaires and interview schedule. The data collected are presented, interpreted, and discussed in line with the research objectives of the study. The qualitative data obtained through the interview schedule were presented, interpreted, and discussed thematically, while the quantitative data were presented and interpreted using graphs, tables and figures. Responses were generalised with the aim of establishing conclusions and making recommendations on the role that public library may play in achieving the information needs of users in Ermelo, Mpumalanga.

4.2 RESPONSE RATE

In this study, data were collected from public library users, librarians, and regional library managers. Table 1.1 indicates the response rate of the respondents and participants.

Table 4: Response rate

Targets	Target number	Number of responses	Response rate in %
Public library users	377	206	54.6 %
Librarians	3	3	100%
Regional manager	1	1	100%
Totals	**381**	**210**	**55.12%**

4.3 FINDINGS FROM PUBLIC LIBRARY USERS

In this section, the presentation, interpretation, and discussion of the data obtained from public library users are provided. As already alluded to, the quantitative data were presented in the form of tables and graphs.

4.3.1 In this question (Appendix D), the respondents were requested to indicate their gender. The findings are depicted in Figure 4.1:
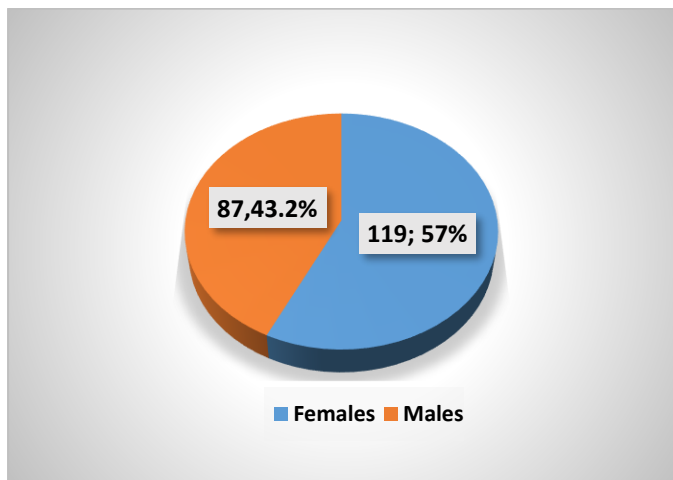
FIGURE 4.1: GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS (N=206)

The findings indicated that more than half (119, 57.8%) of the respondents in the study were females, while less than half (87, 43.2%) were males. From the findings, it was clear that most of public library users in Ermelo were females. According to StatsSA (2017), Ermelo has a population size of 83,865 with 63% being females and 37% males. The findings indicated that there are more females using the public library in Ermelo.

4.3.2   In question 2 (Appendix D), the respondents were requested to indicate their age. The findings are depicted in Figure 4.2.
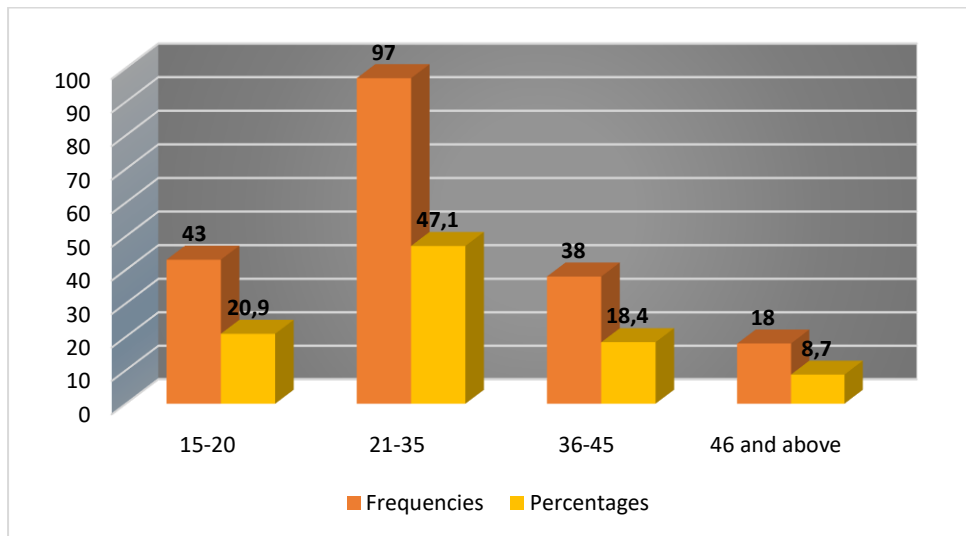
FIGURE 4.2: AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS (N=206)

The findings indicated that nearly half (97, 47.1%) of the respondents were between the ages of 21 to 35 years, which is the youth. Some respondents (43, 20.9%) were between the ages of 15 to 20 years, some (38, 18.4%) between the ages of 36 to 45 years and only a few (18, 8.7%) were 46 years and older. According to StatsSA (2017), about (74, 51%) of people are between the ages of 0 to 39 and (25,49%) were between the ages of 40 and above. This implies that the population in South Africa was dominated by the youth, which is the reason why most of the public library users in Ermelo were youth. From the findings, it was clear that most of the users of public libraries were between the ages of 18 to 35, which means that most public library users were youth. According to Mohammed (2019:102), the library users were mostly younger people in the society.

4.3.3 In question 3 (Appendix D), the respondents were asked if they had a public library close to where they live. They were given Yes and NO options to choose from. The findings are indicated in Figure 4.3:
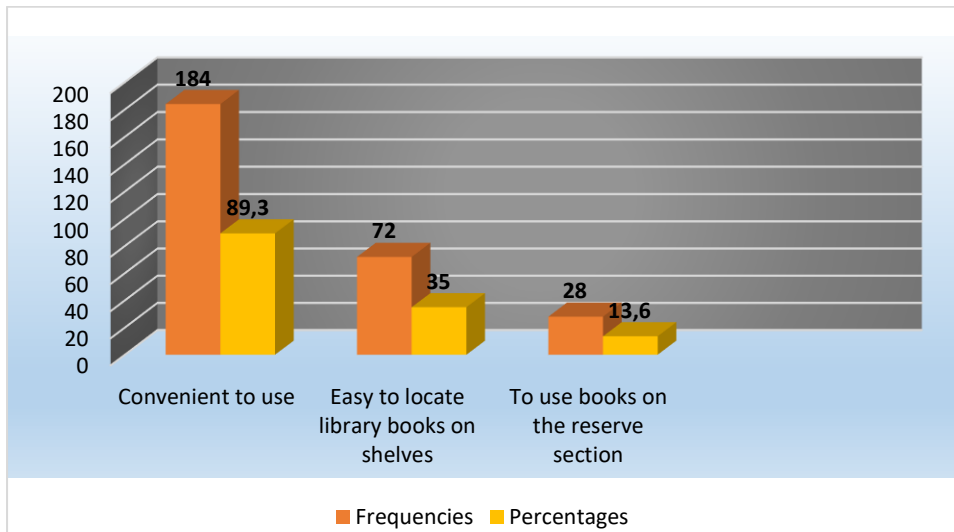
FIGURE 4.3: PROXIMITY TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES (N=206)

The majority (187, 90.8%) of the respondents indicated that they did have a library in their vicinity. al. Most public libraries are situated in advantaged urban communities, while most of the disadvantaged rural communities are still without public libraries. From the findings, it was clear that the majority (90.8%) of public library users resided in Ermelo and did not need to pay any costs to travel to the library. Maguire (2014) states that learners residing far from public libraries have to use public transport to reach the facility, which is a geographical challenge. Based on the findings, the majority (90.8 %) of public library users lived close to the library and they did not have to pay any money to visit the library. The library was situated in town, in the centre of everything to enhance accessibility and usability.

Only a few (19, 9.2%) respondents resided outside Ermelo where they did not have public libraries, which means they always had to travel to Ermelo when they needed to use a public library. People in Ermelo are privileged to have three public libraries nearby, which is contrary to the statement of Miles and Gibson (2016:154) who assert that most public libraries have geographical barriers and users have to travel long distances to access the library.

4.3.4. In question 4 (Appendix D), the respondents were asked if they were aware of the services provided by public libraries. The findings are shown in Figure 4.4:
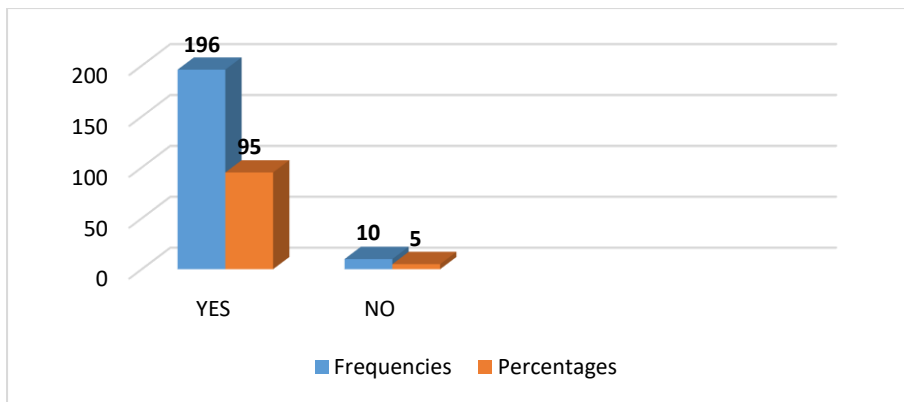
FIGURE 4.4: AWARENESS OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES (N=206)

The findings indicated that out of 206 respondents, the majority (196, 95%) of the public library users in Ermelo were aware of the information services provided by the public library. In his study, Namugera (2014:1) indicates that poor communication between library staff and patrons is the main cause for lack of awareness of library services. Only a few (10, 5%) respondents indicated that they were not aware of the information services offered by public libraries in Ermelo. On the other hand, Maguire (2014) states that majority of library users have insufficient understanding of the library as a source of resources and services and, therefore, are unaware of the other services offered by the library which may be relevant to meet their information needs. However, based on the findings, most public library users in Ermelo were well informed about the information services provided by the public library.

4.3.4 In question 5 (Appendix D), the respondents were asked to indicate whether they perceive a library as an important asset in the community. They were given Yes and No options to choose from. The findings are depicted in Figure 4.5:
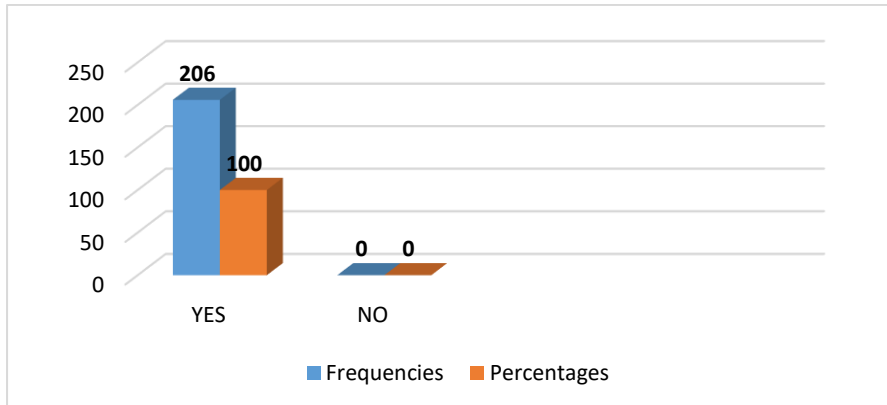
FIGURE 4.5: IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE SOCIETY (N=206)

All (100%) respondents opted for 'Yes', implying that they acknowledged and appreciated having public libraries in Ermelo. Sing-Arora (2018) states that public libraries are necessary and vital requirements for free access to information and knowledge societies. From the findings, it was clear that all public library users in Ermelo regarded the public library as an important and useful asset in their communities for them to access information to meet their daily information needs.

4.3.5   In question 5.1 (Appendix D), the respondents were asked to indicate their reasons for visiting the public library. The findings are presented in Figure 4.6:
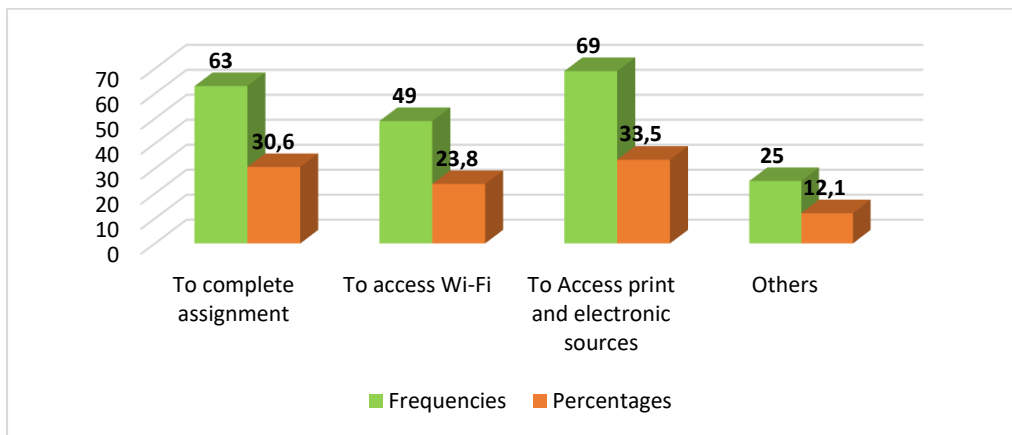
FIGURE 4.6: REASONS TO VISIT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY (N=206)

Fewer than a quarter (63, 30.6%) of the respondents visited the public library to complete assignments. The students and learners from the institutions of higher learning and schools, respectively, also made use of public libraries. Mahwasane (2016) asserts that public libraries are great places for learners to visit to study and complete assignments in a group or as individuals. Only a few (49, 23.8%) respondents visited the library to access the internet. Kota (2019) states that many people in South Africa are unable to afford access to the internet and, consequently, many turn to the library for internet access. The Msanzi online project is being implemented in public libraries nationwide aimed at providing free internet access and connectivity to all public libraries and promoting information literary to the society (National Library of South Africa (NLSA) 2015). More than a quarter (69, 33.5%) of the respondents visited the public library to access both print and electronic information sources and only 25 (12.1%) opted for other reasons. They all indicated that they visited the library for printing, making copies and group discussions. From the findings, it was clear that many public library users visited the library to access both print and electronic information sources to complete their assignments. In their study, Apotiade and Ogunmodede (2013) reveal that students used the public libraries to support their academic activities, for examination purposes and to make use of the services like access to free online or electronic resources and access to loan facilities (book borrowing).

4.3.6 In question 6 (Appendix D), the respondents were asked to choose the information sources they always consult first when they have to complete their assignments. The findings are depicted in Figure 4.7.
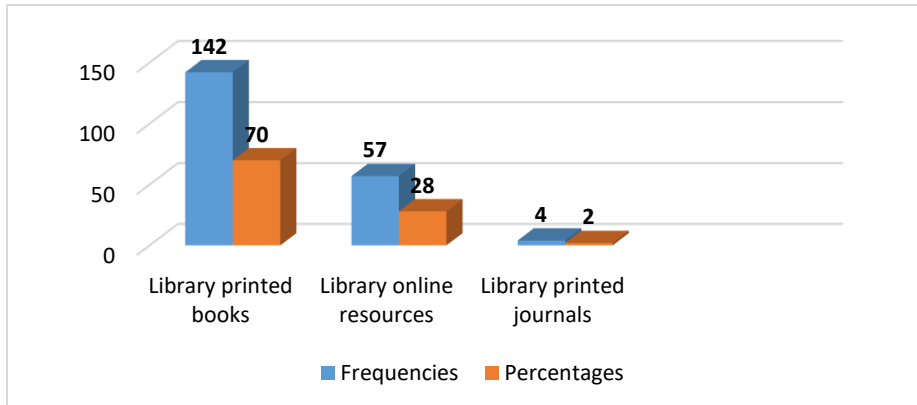
FIGURE 4.7: INFORMATION SOURCES RESPONDENTS CONSULT FIRST WHEN COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS (N=206)

The findings indicated that the majority (142, 70%) of the respondents preferred printed books as their sources of information to any other source. Mahwasane (2016) states that information retrieval skills are important for anyone using the library to access information resources in different formats. The minority (57, 28%) preferred to use online resources to any other resource in the library and only a few (4, 2%) respondents consulted printed journals before anything. Askin (2015) asserts that technological illiteracy is also a barrier to users retrieving and accessing electronic sources. From the findings, it was clear that the majority of users relied on printed books for their information needs.

4.3.7 In question 7 (Appendix D), the respondents were requested to indicate how often they used print and electronic information sources. The findings are depicted in Figures 4.8.1 and 4.8.2.

Print resources		
	Frequency	**Percentage (%)**
Rarely	29	14.1%
Occasionally	39	18.9%
Regularly	138	67%

FIGURE 4.8.1: USE OF PRINT SOURCES WHEN SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION (N=206)

The findings indicated that most (138, 67%) of the respondents used printed information resources regularly when searching for information. Only a few (29, 14.1%) rarely used printed resources when looking for information and 39 (18.9%) respondents only made use of printed resources occasionally when searching for information.

Figure 4.8.2

Electronic resources		
	Frequency	**Percentage (%)**
Rarely	11	5.3%
Occasionally	43	20.9%
Regularly	152	73.8%

FIGURE 4.8.2: USE OF ELECTRONIC SOURCES WHEN SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION (N=206)

The findings indicated that the majority (152, 73.8%) of the respondents made use of electronic resources regularly when searching for information and only 43 (20.9%) used

electronic resources occasionally when searching for information. Only a few (11, 5.3%) of the respondents rarely used electronic resources when searching for information.

Public libraries are substantial organisations in the development of individuals and society (Olarongbe, Adepoju, Akanbi-Ademolake & Pedro, 2013). From the findings, it was clear that the majority of public library users in Ermelo used both print and electronic information resources regularly, fewer respondents still preferred the traditional way of accessing information, while most of the youth preferred electronic to print resources. Bhat and Mudhol (2014) assert that students depend on electronic databases for their required information and to keep themselves up to date in their subject area.

4.3.8 In question 8 (Appendix D), the respondents were requested to outline reasons why they used electronic sources and they were given the opportunity to choose as many appropriate options as possible. The findings are presented in Figure 4.9. and 4.9.1.
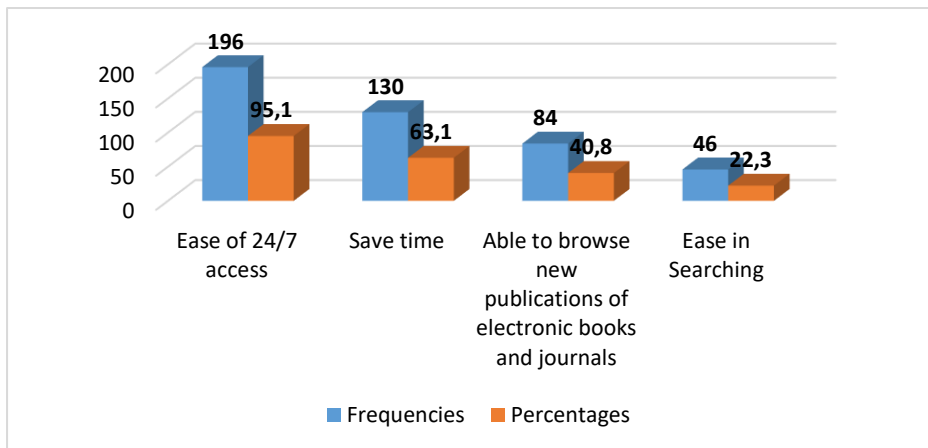
FIGURE 4.9.1: REASONS FOR USING ELECTRONIC SOURCES (N=206)

The findings indicated that more than half (130, 63.1%) of the respondents found electronic resources conducive, hence saving time. Only a few (46, 22.3%) preferred electronic resources because of their simplicity in searching. The majority (196, 95.1%) of the respondents preferred electronic resources because they are always accessible. The main objective of a library is to provide information to the right users at the right time (Pandya & Darbar 2017:14). Fewer than half (84, 40.8%) of the respondents preferred electronic resources because it allows them to browse new publications of e-books and electronic journals.

Figure 4.9.2
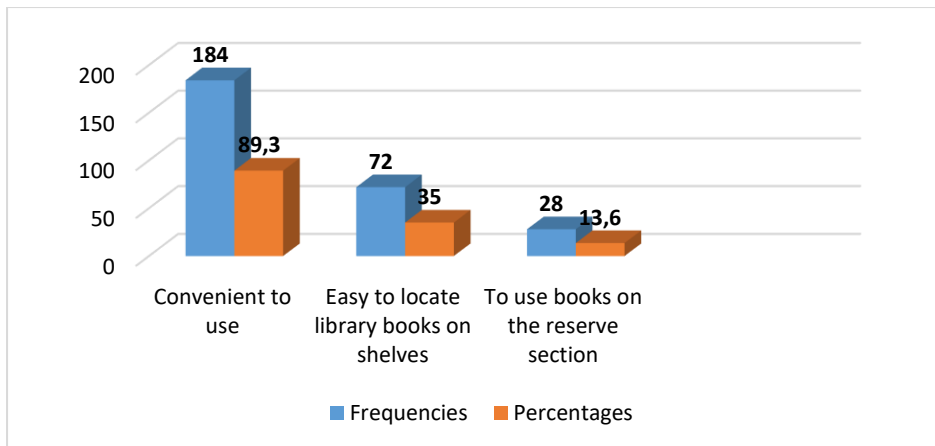
FIGURE 4.9.2: REASONS FOR USING PRINT RESOURCES (N=206)

The findings indicated that fewer than half (72, 35%) of the respondents preferred print resources of information because they are easy to locate. Only a few (28, 13.6%) of the respondents preferred print resources because they are easy to reserve and access. The majority (184, 89.3%) preferred print resources because they are convenient to use. From the findings, it was clear that both formats of information sources are still relevant to the public library users. Public library users still used both print and electronic resources, depending on the type of information they are searching for. In his study, Mohamed (2019:117) finds that 79.8% of the library users strongly agreed that books, journals, newspapers, and magazines were the most frequently used information sources in seeking and satisfying their information needs from public libraries.

4.3.9 In question 9 (Appendix D), the respondents were requested to choose statements that were applicable in terms of satisfaction of their information needs. The findings are depicted in Table 4.2.

TABLE 4.2: SATISFACTION OF THE USER NEEDS (N=206)

User needs satisfaction	Agree		Strongly agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	
	No.	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*
Electronic sources are easily accessible	28	13.6%	169	82%	7	3.4%	2	1%	**206**	**100**
Access to effective and unlimited internet services	99	48%	105	51%	2	1%	0	0	**206**	**100**
Library staff always provide training	112	55.2%	87	42.9%	3	1.4%	1	0.5%	**203**	**100**
The library has enough computers	33	16%	16	7.8%	68	33%	89	43.2%	**206**	**100**
Electronic sources enhance flexibility in searching	58	29.1%	103	51.8%	24	12.1%	14	7%	**199**	**100**
Access to information at a cheaper cost	81	39.7%	109	53.4%	9	4.4%	5	2.5%	**204**	**100**
Access to information at a wide range of subject areas or fields	76	36.9%	94	45.6%	29	14.1%	7	3.4%	**206**	**100**
I always find what I need in the library	47	22.8%	33	16.1%	115	55.8%	11	5.3%	**206**	**100**
Print books are easily accessible	86	41.7%	109	52.9%	8	3.9%	3	1.5%	**206**	**100**

Print books are reliable	45	21.8%	159	77.2%	2	1%	0	0	**206**	**100**

The findings indicated that the majority (169, 82%) of the respondents strongly agreed that electronic sources were easily accessible, 28 (13.6%) agreed, 7 (3.4%) disagreed and only a few (2, 1%) strongly disagreed. Zhang and Kudva (2014) argue that both print books and e-books have unique attributes and serve irreplaceable functions to meet people's reading needs. The public library in Ermelo played a vital role in ensuring that patrons had access to information even during lockdown.

The findings indicated that more than half (105, 51%) of the respondents strongly agreed that electronic resources provide access to effective and unlimited internet services, fewer than half (99, 48%) agreed and only 2 (1%) disagreed. According to Lori (2016), patrons also must be able to use computer technology (digital literacy), to evaluate information in various forms (information literacy), and to negotiate the online world (internet literacy).

The findings indicated that more than half (112, 52.2%) of the respondents agreed that library staff always provide training, fewer than half (87, 42.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 3 (1.4%) disagreed and only a few (1, 0.5%) strongly disagreed. Mudzielwana (2016:218) recommends that the library should provide information literacy training to improve the information retrieval and information searching skills of users.

The findings indicated that fewer than half (89, 43.2%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that the library had enough computers, 33 (16%) agreed, 16 (7.8%) strongly agreed and a quarter (68, 33%) disagreed. According to Sejane (2017), the latest technology (ICT) has a tremendous impact on a library's operations, services, users, and staff.

The findings indicated that more than half (103, 51.8%) of the respondents strongly agreed that electronic resources enhance flexibility in searching, more than half (58, 29.1%) agreed, 24 (12.1%) disagreed and only a few (14, 7%) strongly disagreed. According to Rafi, JianMing and Ahmad (2019), electronic resources allow intelligent, full-text retrieval, and transmission saves valuable time.

The findings indicated that more than half (109, 53.4%) of respondents strongly agreed that electronic resources allow access to information at a cheaper cost, fewer than half

(81, 39.7%) agreed, 9 (4.4%) disagreed and only a minority (5, 2.5%) strongly disagreed. Mugwisi, Jiyane and Fombad (2016) investigate public libraries in KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) and found that public libraries provide diverse information services to learners, parents, general workers, students, young adults, and children in their role of facilitating access to information.

The findings indicated that nearly half (94, 45.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed that electronic resources allow access to a wide range of information; fewer than half (76, 36.9%) of the respondents agreed, some (29, 14.1%) disagreed and only a few (7, 3.4%) strongly disagreed.

Furthermore, the findings also indicated that more than half (115, 55.8%) of the respondents disagreed that they always find what they need in the library, nearly half (47, 22.8%) agreed, 33 (16.1%) strongly agreed and only a few (11, 5.3%) strongly disagreed. Understanding the information needs of the patrons is crucial to providing excellent resources (Nesba, 2014).

The findings indicated that more than half (109, 52.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed that print books were easily accessible, nearly half (86, 41.7%) agreed, while (8, 3.9%) disagreed and only (3, 1.5%) strongly disagreed. Verma and Parang (2015) state that public libraries need to make an effort to improve their collections in every aspect to enhance student patronage.

The findings indicated that the majority (159, 77.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed that print books are reliable, (45, 21.8%) agreed and a minority (2, 1%) respondents disagreed. Print resources are the traditional resources that are found in the library and have to be reviewed to determine their accuracy and relevance (Adegoke, 2015:3).

4.3.10 In question 10 (Appendix D), the respondents were asked to identify the challenges they encounter in meeting their information needs. The findings are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Challenges public library users encounter in meeting their information needs (N=206)

Challenges public library users encounter in meeting their information needs										
	Agree		Strongly agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
A large mass of irrelevant information (Information overload)	74	35.9%	112	54.4%	14	6.8%	6	2.9%	**206**	**100**
Download delay	52	25.2%	154	74.8%	0	0	0	0	**206**	**100**
Slow internet connection	10	4.9%	196	95.1%	0	0	0	0	**206**	**100**
Misplaced books from the shelves	16	7.8%	9	4.4%	60	29.1%	121	58.7%	**206**	**100**
Lack of enough current books	66	32%	126	61.1%	11	5%	4	1.9%	**206**	**100**
Not familiar with the resources	28	13.7%	19	9.3%	81	39.5%	77	37.5%	**205**	**100**
Unable to use Boolean operators	57	28.4%	94	46.7%	16	8%	34	16.9%	**201**	**100**
Librarians being unavailable to assist when experiencing challenges	19	9%	22	10%	69	33.5%	98	47.5%	**206**	**100**
Access is limited to computers within its network infrastructure	87	42.2%	119	57.8%	0	0	0	0	**206**	**100**
Lack of awareness on how to use databases	44	22.1%	98	49.2%	30	15.1%	27	13.6%	**199**	**100**

Lack of knowledge about searching information sources	88	42.7%	61	29.6%	23	11.2%	34	16.5%	**206**	**100**

The findings indicated that more than half (112, 54.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the library had a large mass of irrelevant information, 74 (35.9%) agreed, 14 (6.8%) disagreed and 33 (16.1%) strongly agreed and 6 (2.9%) strongly disagreed. The bigger the collection, the smaller the space to accommodate more resources and, in these instances, weeding has to take place (Harns, 2017). The findings indicated that the majority (154, 74.8%) of the respondents strongly agreed that a delay in downloading was a challenge, while the minority (52, 25.2%) agreed. In his study (Mohammed, 2019:128), indicated that the majority of public library users strongly agreed that most of the library materials were not current and up to date. Internet connection is most vital as it allows users to search and retrieve knowledge electronically.

The findings indicated that the majority (196, 95.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the library internet connection is poor and slow, and only a minority (10, 4.9%) agreed. Public libraries should be adequately funded by their respective state governments to be able to provide effective information services (Mamman, 2015). The findings indicated that more than half (121, 58.7%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that the library books were misplaced and not well arranged, 16 (7.8%) agreed, 9 (4.4%) strongly agreed and 60 (29.1%) disagreed. The findings indicated that more than half (121, 61.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed that a lack of enough and current books was a challenge and more than a quarter (66, 32.1%) agreed. Only a few (11, 5%) disagreed and (4, 1.9%) strongly disagreed.

The findings indicated that more than a quarter but fewer than half (81, 39.5%) of the respondents disagreed by saying that they were not familiar with the resources provided by public library. Only a few (28, 13.7%) of the respondents agreed, 19 (9.3%) strongly agreed and more than quarter (77, 37.5%) strongly disagreed. Askin (2015) states that creating awareness of the public library's services can influence non-users to become library users.

The findings also indicated that nearly half (94, 46.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they were unable to use Boolean operators to search for information, more than a quarter (57, 28.4%) agreed, 16 (8%) disagreed and only 34 (16.9%) strongly disagreed.

The findings indicated that nearly half (98, 47.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that library staff were unavailable to assist when they experienced challenges, more than a quarter (69, 33.5%) of the respondents disagreed, 19 (9%) agreed, and 22 (10%) strongly agreed. The findings indicated that more than half (119, 57.8%) of the respondents strongly agreed that access was limited to computers within its network infrastructure, and nearly half (87, 42.2%) of the respondents agreed. Agbo (2015) asserts that most teacher-librarians were not professionally trained in library management and, consequently, did not have knowledge or library skills. They could also not process or organise the library materials or impart the basic library skills to the students. Some secondary schools in Nigeria did not even have teacher-librarians at all.

The findings indicated that nearly half (98, 49.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they lacked awareness on how to use databases, more than a quarter (44, 22.1%) agreed, 30 (15.1%) disagreed while more than a quarter (27, 13.6%) strongly disagreed. The findings indicated that nearly half (88, 42.7%) of the respondents agreed that a lack of knowledge about searching information sources was a challenge in public libraries, more than a quarter (61, 29.6%) strongly agreed, 23 (11.2%) disagreed, while only a few (34, 16.5%) strongly disagreed.

Ejedafiru (2015:23) opines that access to information in rural communities is affected largely by several barriers such as a lack of basic infrastructure, low levels of literacy, a lack of adequate and relevant information resources and services, and the absence of literacy programmes.

4.3.11 In question 11 (Appendix D), the respondents were asked to rate their skills when using information sources. The findings are depicted in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Respondents' ratings their skills on using the following information sources (n=206)

Respondents rating their skills in using the following information sources										
	Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor		Total	
	No.	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*
Books (print)	163	79.2%	39	18.9%	4	1.9%	0	0	**206**	**100**
Electronic books	61	30.3%	79	39.3%	47	23.3%	14	7.1%	**201**	**100**
Journals (print)	22	19%	38	32.8%	51	44%	5	4.2%	**116**	**100**
Electronic journals	31	18.5%	57	33.9%	62	36.9%	18	10.7%	**168**	**100**
Google/Yahoo	88	42.7%	83	40.3%	33	16%	2	0.5%	**206**	**100**

The findings indicated that the majority (163, 79.2%) of respondents had excellent skills when it comes to using print books. Only a few (39, 18.9%) of the respondents had good skills, and (4, 1.9%) of respondents' skills to use print books were fair. Mahwasane (2016) states that a lack of proper knowledge of how to use information retrieval, insufficient user education, and a lack of computer knowledge and ICT skills were challenges that learners faced in accessing information in the library. From the findings, it was clear that many users were still using print materials because they were not merely familiar with the methods of accessing electronic materials.

The findings indicated that fewer than half (61, 30.3%) of the respondents had excellent skills in terms of using e-books, fewer than half (79, 39.3%) were good in using e-books, some (47, 23.3%) were fair and only a few (14, 7.1%) had poor skills when it comes to accessing e-books. According to Sejane (2017), strategic retrieval skills are also significant in information retrieval.

The findings indicated that nearly half (51, 44%) of the respondents had fair skills, a quarter (38, 32.8%) had good skills, 22 (19%) had excellent skills in accessing and using print journals, and only a few (5, 4.2%) said their skills were poor.

Electronic information sources are becoming more common and digitisation in information organisations is a new trend (Yi, 2018). The 19% elucidates that library users are slowly moving away from print sources.

The findings indicated that fewer than half (88, 42.7%) of the respondents were excellent in using Google or Yahoo, nearly half (83, 40.3%) of the respondents were good, only a few (33, 16%) were fair and only 2 (0.5%) were poor when it comes to using and accessing information sources on Google. In his study, it was found that the majority of dwellers in society with excellent information literacy skills find it easier to access digital information using different platforms and those with poor skills find it difficult to access relevant information in online databases. From the findings, it was clear that the majority of library users in Ermelo relied mostly on Google or Yahoo to search for information, as they were not well trained to use various online databases and open access materials that are available online.

4.3.12 In question 12 (Appendix D), the respondents were requested to indicate the right time they preferred for information literacy training. The findings are presented in Figure 4.10.
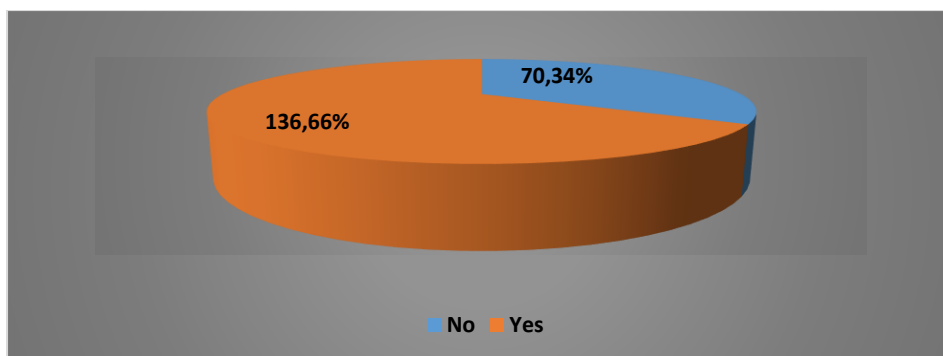

FIGURE 4.10: FORMAL INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO USE LIBRARY RESOURCES (N=206)

The findings indicated that most (136, 66%) respondents had received formal instructions on how to use public library resources and only a few (70, 34%) had not received any formal instructions. From the findings, it was clear that public libraries provide formal

instructions or training to most of the users. Many users have excellent skills when it comes to accessing public library resources. Stoop, Kreutzer and Kircz (2013) indicate that print paper is still the superior medium for learning and digesting complicated and elaborate texts, while electronic screens are appreciated for quick information gathering, communication and navigation. Public libraries need professional staff to provide quality support and excellent information access skills to patrons.

4.3.13 In question 13 (Appendix D), the respondents were asked if the public library has enough space to accommodate sufficient information sources. The findings are depicted in Figure 4.11.
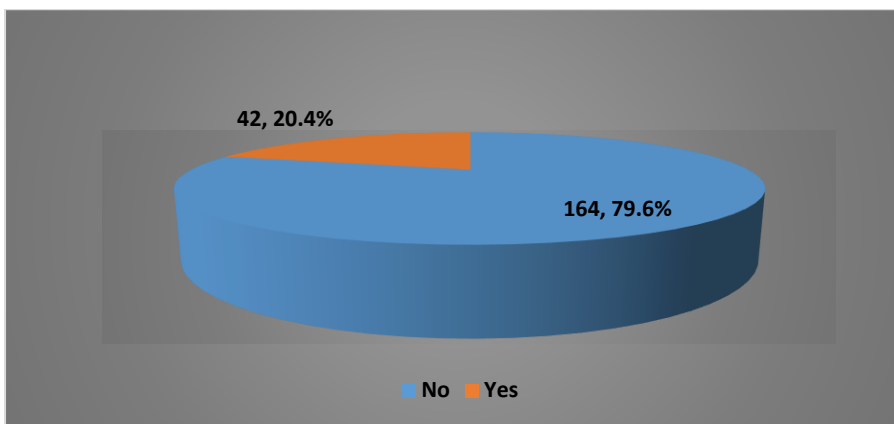

FIGURE 4.11: PUBLIC LIBRARY SUFFICIENT SPACE TO ACCOMMODATE INFORMATION SOURCES (N=206)

The findings indicated that the majority (164, 79.6%) of respondents indicated that the public library did not have enough space and shelves to accommodate information sources. Spaces must attract users and must be easy to use. At any academic institution, the library is the key to leaning, social interaction and research (Shobha, 2015:973). Only the minority (42, 20.4%) of the respondents stated that the public library had enough space and shelves to accommodate information sources. Newly refurbished libraries should have a mix of informal group study areas, booths and technology-equipped rooms, as well as designated quiet spaces and areas with restricted access for research students (Shaw 2013).

4.3.14 In question 14 (Appendix D), respondents were asked to indicate if public libraries played a vital role in ensuring ease of access to information resources by the schools. The findings are depicted in Figure 4.12.
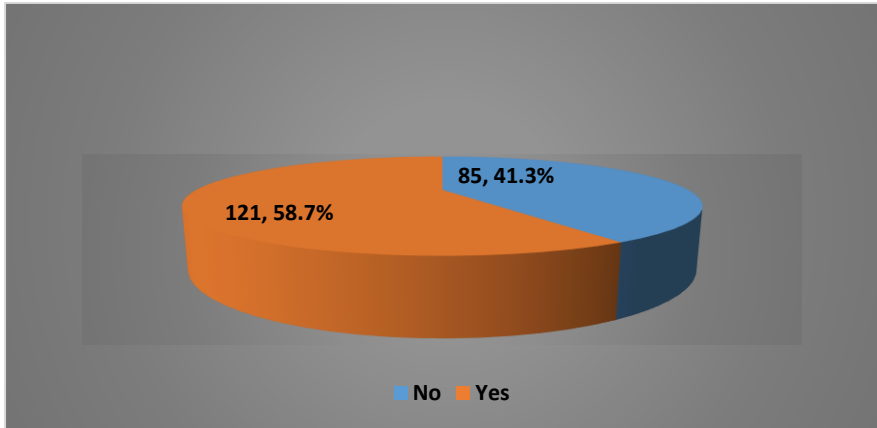

FIGURE 4.12: PUBLIC LIBRARY ROLE IN ENSURING THAT BOTH LEARNERS AND TEACHERS HAVE ACCESS TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (N=206)

The findings indicated that more than half (121, 58.7%) of the respondents indicated that public libraries play a vital role in ensuring that both learners and teachers have access to educational resources. Nearly half (85, 41.3%) of the respondents did not agree with the perception that public libraries play a vital role in ensuring that both learners and teachers have access to educational resources. According to Radijeng (2013:2), public libraries are a vital part of any community because they share information relevant to the development of communities since information is considered the lifeblood of society. From the findings, it was clear that more library users in Ermelo understand that a public library is vital in the society to provide support to access to information.

4.3.15 In question 15 (Appendix D), the respondents were asked to indicate how they were taught to use library resources. The findings are depicted in Figure 4.13.
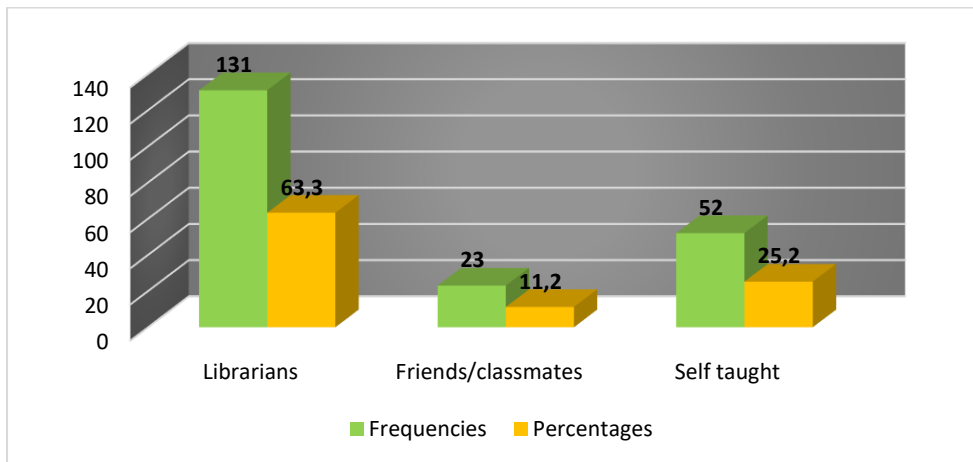

FIGURE 4.13: TRAINING ON HOW TO ACCESS AND USE LIBRARY SOURCES (N=206)

The findings indicated that the majority (131, 63.6%) of the respondents were trained by librarians on how to access and use library resources. Only 52 (25.2%) of the respondents taught themselves how to access and use library resources and 23 (11.2%) learnt how to access and use library resources through friends and classmates. In his study, Dube (2018) states that there were various categories of personnel involved in library training ranging from non-professionals (non-librarians), administrative staff, professional librarians and professional staff. From the findings, it was clear that professional librarians are providing proper training to users to enhance their skills in terms of accessing information in different formats.

4.3.16 In question 16 (Appendix D), the respondents were requested to indicate the information sources in which they would like to receive training. The findings are depicted in Figure 4.14.
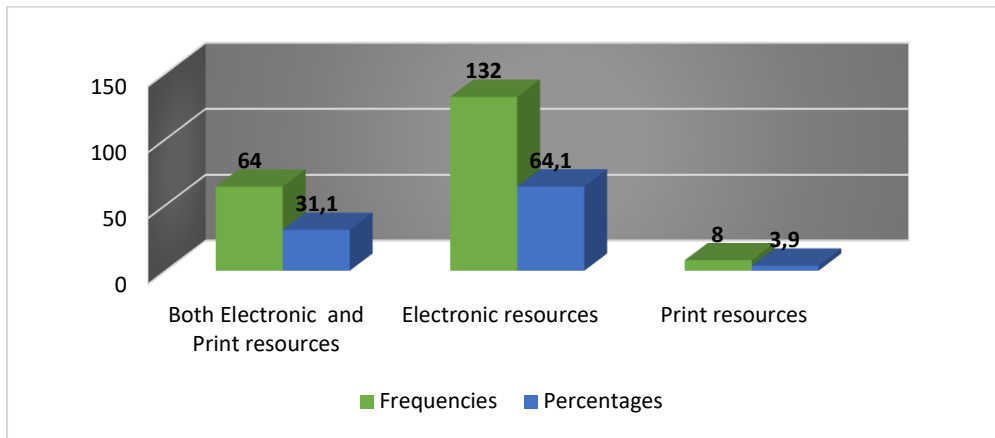

FIGURE 4.14: TYPES OF INFORMATION SOURCES WHICH RESPONDENTS NEED TRAINING ON (N=206)

The findings indicated that fewer than a quarter (64, 31.1%) of respondents preferred to receive training on both electronic and print sources of information. Mahwasane (2016) states that information retrieval skills are important for anyone using the library to access information sources in different formats. Only a few (8, 3.9%) respondents indicated that they preferred training on print sources and the majority (132, 64.1%) would like to receive training on electronic sources. Providing access to the internet could assist students and teachers to access more relevant, accurate and up to date information resources (Bernard & Dulle 2013). From the findings, it was clear that library users are more interested in electronic sources; however, there are still some users who believe in print resources.

4.4. PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA COLLECTED FROM THE LIBRARIANS THOUGH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

4.4.1 Easy access to library services

In question 1 (Appendix E), the librarians were asked if library users had easy access to the library services. They replied as follows:

Participant A:

"Yes, the library is accessible to all our users, regular or new. Although we may require membership for one to able to borrow books, but access to computers and Wi-Fi is for everyone in Ermelo. Yes, we may require membership for certain activities such as checking out of books to ensure accountability and smooth circulation of our materials."

Participant B:

"Yes, obviously we have policies and guidelines in place to make sure that the entire knowledge sharing/management process is in line with the policies of the municipality."

Participant C:

"All kind of users have access to the library and staff is always there to provide support to all users visiting the library."

4.4.2 Types of services the library provides to patrons to fulfil their information needs

In question 2 (Appendix E), the librarians were asked about the types of services the library provided to patrons. They replied as follows:

Participant A:

"The library allows users to loan out books. Users can keep books up to a maximum of two weeks, which give them enough time to absorb as much knowledge as possible."

"The library gives internet access, which plays a vital role in terms of promoting access to information. Users can search and retrieve any information of their choice. The library has

limited space, digital platforms therefore play a massive role to help create, store and disseminate information."

Participant B:

"Some of the users are small business owners without any physical offices, but because of the library they can create and print invoices, send and receive emails, keep their businesses running without owning actual offices."

Participant C:

"Primary school learners use the library to complete their homework, research projects and assignments, which is our way of promoting the reading culture."

In their study, choy, Fuegi and Lipeikaile (2012) find that the majority of library users visit the library for educational purposes, mainly to study and to do homework.

4.4.3 Meeting the information needs of library users

In question 3 (Appendix E), the librarians were asked if any steps were taken to meet the information needs of library users in Ermelo. Participants replied as follows:

Participant A:

"The library is by and for our patrons. The library is well informed about the needs of our users in all circles."

Participant B:

"Our collection development is informed by what our users need, and it gives the library a sort of a guideline as to what to acquire in the library."

Participant C:

"During this Covid-19 time, it is quite challenging to support and promote access to information, hence we have precautions to adhere to. However, the library has remained relevant and helpful to the society by making sure that our users are able to access knowledge that is available online and in digital platforms."

Obinyan (2013:4) argues that e-books allow library users to access the library collection from remote locations.

4.4.4 Quality of services and sources provided by the public library

In question 4 (Appendix E), public librarians were asked if they were satisfied with the quality of the services and sources they provide in the library and the responses were as follows.

Participant A:

"Yes, the library's number one priority is making sure that users have access to information. The library always makes sure that users get quality of service to cater on the diverse needs of users."

Participant B:

"Yes, I am satisfied. The library plays an important role in supporting and promoting access to information, regardless of the challenges and obstacles affecting the information management process.

Participant C:

"Yes absolutely, the number of users coming to use the library on daily basis shows that the library is useful, and our users acknowledge it as the heart of the society."

4.4.5 Challenges faced by the public libraries which prevent users from meeting their information needs

In question 4 (Appendix E), librarians were asked to summarise the challenges faced by their library. They replied as follows:

Participant A:

"Limited budget is a huge challenge that is deterring the library from meeting user information needs in all aspects. Shortage of staff is another problem, the ratio of staff to patrons is not making sense and, as a result, certain queries are not attended to and resolved as soon as possible."

Eyo (2014:34) acknowledges that the needs of libraries differ depending on their size, the funding available, the expertise of the staff and the functions performed by the staff members.

Participant B:

"Insufficient number of computers; users have limited time to use computers to give other users access, hence they are not enough."

According to Idiegbeyan-ose, Ilo and Isiakpona (2015:26), ICTs improve the efficiency of internal operations and access to resources in public library.

"Users sometimes are forced to sign out of the computers before they complete their desired activities to allow other users to use computers. Lack of information materials such as updated books, the library needs most updated books to keep up with students and school learner's curriculum."

Participant C:

"Users require access to the latest information available, which needs massive budget. With the budget the library receives, it is impossible to cater on all information needs. We are surrounded by primary and secondary schools which do not own libraries, it is therefore important to close the gap and make it easy for our users to access accurate, relevant and up to date information."

4.4.6 Improving user's satisfaction of information needs

Librarians were asked to outline what they thought could be done to improve users' satisfaction with the extent to which libraries meet their information needs. They replied as follows:

Participant A:

"A lot must change, starting from the collection development. The world is moving towards digital, and our focus must be mainly on digital platforms that we can subscribe to allow our users access to the most up to date information."

Participant B:

"Subscription to information databases is expensive. However, if the department could pay for subscriptions and allow all users under different regions to have access."

According to Mchombu (2012), community libraries are crucial in providing information and meeting the information needs of the people in their communities and, therefore, contributing to the social economic development of their communities and countries.

Participant C:

"Conducting formal information literacy trainings every now and then could really help users with skills to search and share information. The society needs to be taught about the importance of public libraries to avoid burning down of the infrastructures every time unhappy residents are on strike."

4.5 FINDINGS FROM THE REGIONAL MANAGER

The regional manager responded as follows to the questions asked by the researcher:

4.5.1 Rating your local libraries in meeting user's information needs

The regional manager was asked to rate the local library in terms of meeting users' information needs. The participant replied as follows:

"Yes, like every library, we also have our own challenges; however, we always make sure that our users' needs are satisfied and catered for. On a scale of 10, I would give us an 8."

Iwhiwhu and Okorodud (2012) argue that public libraries must be proactive, vibrant and abreast of the latest developments in information dissemination to maintain relevance and to keep up with multifarious needs and expectations of all library users.

4.5.2 Funding of public libraries

The regional manager was asked if the library received enough funds to cater for on the information needs of users. The participant replied as follows:

"Absolutely not, but we make use of whatever budget is allocated to us and prioritise our user needs at all times."

Public libraries should be adequately funded by their respective state governments to provide effective information services (Mamman 2015). "

As you can see, we do not have the best equipment or information systems, but we make sure that our users have access to information services and their information needs remain our number one priority."

4.5.3 Library policy to manage public or community libraries

The regional manager was asked if the municipality had a library policy to manage public or community libraries. The participant replied as follows:

"Yes, we are under the Msukaligwa Local Municipality. which means everything that we do must be in line with the Msukaligwa policies. We get our funding from the municipality and that makes us part of Msukaligwa just a different division within it, there are policies and guidelines to regulate all activities and duties occurring within the Municipality."

4.5.4 Professional librarians to run libraries

The regional manager was asked if the library have enough professional librarians to play a vital role in the digital age. The participant replied as follows:

"No, we still have unqualified librarians because we can't afford to pay professional librarians. I personally don't believe we are ready for the digital age, especially at the municipality level, hence the budget is limited, which limits versatility in the way libraries are operating and promote access to information."

In their study, Chinwe, Ogbonna and Osuchukwu (2014) confirm that professional librarians resist job offers by community centres because they live in rural areas.

4.5.5 Courses or workshops for professional development

The regional manager was asked if they provided librarians with short courses or workshops for professional skills and development. The participant replied as follows:

"Yes, but it only happens occasionally. As much as we believe in professional development, we do not have the funding to facilitate workshops or career development activities."

Salman, Mostert and Mugwisi (2017) note that a poor attitude of staff and a lack of professionally qualified library staff were among the major hindrances that have been affecting the accessibility and use of library services in the country.

"We really need workshops as professionals; for example, our librarians can attend customer service workshops which could boost our patron service whereby our staff would be applying the new innovative knowledge they absorb from these workshops."

According to Pietersen (2015:3), if library staff do not become experts in the new technologies, the library becomes dependent on what feels is right for the users and not on what it knows the users need.

4.5.6 Use of the ICTs in public libraries same

The regional manager was asked if the library was satisfied with the use of the ICTs in the library. The participant replied as follows:

"Yes, most of our users are computer literate; they rely mostly on ICTs to access information. We have Wi-Fi which all our users have access to, computers and printers play a vital role in the library. Flexible access to information would not be possible without ICTs; they make knowledge access, storage and circulation to be simple and effective in the library."

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4.5.7 Challenges faced by the public libraries in this municipality

The regional manager was asked to outline any challenges faced by public libraries and the impact they have on user information needs satisfaction. The participant replied as follows:

"Lack of funding is the main challenge in our public library; it determines everything that we do in the library, from acquisitions, collection development and distribution of information."

"Public libraries are non-profit-making organisation and yet they are the most important infrastructures in any society. We have to make sure that the Wi-Fi is up and running at all times, the number of computers limits and disturb the entire information access process."

"Burning down of public libraries every time the society is not happy about poor service delivery. The fear of unknown, it is very much disturbing to see that every time the community is unhappy with service delivery, they think of destroying public libraries. This explains a lot about security and the way we protect out information centres because the community can always demolish our infrastructures."

"We are already struggling with funding and when the community decides to destroy what we have, it takes a lot of time and money to rebuild and restructure everything".

For any library to function effectively and efficiently, it should have sufficient funds to manage its day-to-day operations and finance its cooperative activities and projects (Fresnido & Yap, 2014)**.**

"There are some instances where computers were stolen, they take the few computers that we have, and they do not understand the process it takes to acquire new computers which becomes a problem to our users."

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the research findings on the information needs of public library users in Ermelo, Mpumalanga. This was done by comparing the findings of this study with available related literature and research projects done in public libraries. The findings, in general, indicate a lack of awareness of services provided by public libraries, inadequate budget to sustain public libraries, inadequate information resources, and poor internet connection. The study found that public libraries play a pivotal role in promoting literacy and access to information at a lower cost. The study further found that public libraries provide support to school learners who are from schools that do not have libraries. The findings also revealed that some public libraries provide information literacy training programmes to empower them with the skills they need to access information from various platforms. Insufficient budget is one major challenge affecting access to information. Chapter 5 provides the conclusions, recommendations and suggested areas for further studies.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter four, the findings of the study were presented, interpreted and discussed using the relevant literature. Data were collected from the library users, librarians and senior managers. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data from the library users while interview schedules were used to collect data from the participants (library staff). This chapter presents a summary of the main findings of the study, and the conclusions and recommendations of the study. The findings are based on the objectives and research questions of the study as set out in chapter one. The study investigated the information needs of public library users in Ermelo, Mpumalanga province, South Africa. The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To identify the potential users of the Ermelo public libraries.
- To ascertain the users' information needs.
- To determine the relationship between library user needs and usage in the Ermelo public libraries.
- To determine the level of satisfaction of Ermelo public library users.
- To establish the challenges users, encounter in meeting or satisfying their information needs.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, a summary of the main findings of the study based on the five objectives of the study is given.

5.2.1 Potential users of the Ermelo public library

- The majority (90.8%) of the public library users indicated that they had a public library in their vicinity.

- More than half (57.8%) of the public library users in the study were female, while fewer than half (43.2%) were male.
- Almost half (47.1%) of the public library users were between the ages of 21 to 35 years, which is the youth.
- The majority (95%) of the public library users in Ermelo were aware of the information services provided by the public library.

5.2.2 Users information needs

- The majority (95%) of the public library users in Ermelo were aware and well informed of the information services provided by the public library.
- All public library users (100%) acknowledged and appreciated having public libraries in Ermelo.
- Fewer than a quarter (30.6%) of the public library users visited the public library to complete assignments.

5.2.3 The relationship between library user needs and usage in Ermelo public library

- Most (67%) of the public library users used print information resources regularly when searching for information.
- All (100%) public library users acknowledged and appreciated having public libraries in Ermelo.
- Fewer than half (30.3%) of the public library users had excellent skills to use e-books.

5.2.4 The level of satisfaction of users with library services offered

- The majority (82%) of the public library users strongly agreed that electronic sources were easily accessible.
- More than half (51%) of the public library users strongly agreed that electronic resources provided access to effective and unlimited internet services.
- More than half (52.2%) of the public library users agreed that library staff always provided training.

- Fewer than half (43.2%) of the public library users strongly disagreed that the library had enough computers.
- More than half (51.8%) of the public library users strongly agreed that electronic resources enhance flexibility in searching.

5.2.5 Challenges users encounter in meeting or satisfying their information needs

- More than half (54.4%) of the public library users strongly agreed that the library had a large mass of irrelevant information.
- The majority (74.8%) of the public library users strongly agreed that the delay in downloading was a challenge.
- The majority (95.1%) of the public library users strongly agreed that the library internet connection was poor and slow.
- More than half (58.7%) of the public library users strongly disagreed that the library books were misplaced and not well arranged.
- More than half (57.8%) of the public library users strongly agreed that access to computers in its network infrastructure was limited.
- Nearly half (42.7%) of the public library users agreed that a lack of knowledge about searching information sources was a challenge in public libraries.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

The study investigated the information needs of public library users in Ermelo, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. The previous section of this chapter presented a summary of the findings derived by this study. Therefore, this section clearly articulates the conclusions drawn from the research objectives of the study.

5.3.1 The potential users of the Ermelo public library

The first objective of the study was to identify the potential users of the Ermelo public library. The study concluded that most of the public library users are youth, learners and intellectuals who need access to information to pursue their studies.

5.3.2 The users' information needs

The study concluded that public libraries should strive to acquire adequate resources not only when the library is established, but also on a continuing basis.

5.3.3 The relationship between library user needs and usage in Ermelo public library

The third objective of the study was to identify the relationship between library user needs and usage in Ermelo. The study concluded that library users are utilising the public library as expected; however, there is a need for improvement, especially when it comes to access to the internet, which could help users to retrieve information available as open access.

5.3.4 The level of satisfaction of users from the public library

The fourth objective of the study was to identify the level of satisfaction of library users. The study concluded that library users are not really satisfied with the poor internet connection and insufficient computers in libraries. As much as library users are satisfied with the service they receive from staff, there is a need for libraries to prioritise current information sources in their collection.

5.3.5 The challenges users, encounter in meeting or satisfying their information needs

The findings indicated that public libraries are still useful and vital in societies. The information needs of public library users were linked to the challenges and issues faced by the public libraries, particularly in Ermelo.

- Insufficient infrastructure/buildings were a barrier to flexibly access/dissemination to information in public libraries.
- A lack of funding is a challenge when it comes to collection development and acquisition of the required material for the effective provision of information services in the public library space.

- Network/internet set up is a massive challenge for public library users to easily access the internet in most public libraries, especially in rural communities.
- Vandalism during strikes and service delivery protests always leave public libraries in a difficult position whereby libraries ought to spend the money they do not have to replenish stocks.
- Public libraries do not have enough funds to hire security to protect their infrastructures and, as the result, libraries become targets and victims to theft.
- A lack of professionally qualified library staff is an impediment for public libraries, especially in rural areas.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations relating to the study and recommendations for further studies are discussed below:

5.4.1 The potential users of the Ermelo public library

- Public libraries should engage more in outreach programmes, such as visiting nearby schools, old-age homes, and community gatherings to promote their services.
- Public libraries should play a pivotal role in promoting literacy in the youth by ensuring that most of their collection is about empowering the youth in all aspects.

5.4.2 Users' information needs

- Access to ICTs and the internet should be prioritised, even in public libraries situated in rural areas. The government should approach telecommunications/network organisations and reach an agreement to ensure installation of the best internet connections in all public libraries, regardless of whether they are in urban/rural area.
- Public libraries should conduct their acquisitions/collection development process based on the needs of the society they are serving. There is a need for public

libraries to understand the kind of public they are serving to provide accurate, relevant information resources to users.

5.4.3 The relationship between library user needs and usage in Ermelo public library

Public libraries exist to serve the community; therefore, it is vital that public libraries understand the values, virtues and morals of the society in order to understand what they need. The public library collection should address the obstacles impacting the society and understand the needs of the society to catalyse community development in terms of literacy.

5.4.4 The level of satisfaction of users from the library

Public libraries should be evaluated annually to ascertain whether they are meeting the needs of their users. Public libraries should formulate evaluation forms and distribute them among their users; the feedback will then determine areas that need improvements and boost their quality of information services.

5.4.5 The challenges users encounter in meeting or satisfying their information needs

All public libraries should have tight security and protection. A certified security company has to be appointed to protect public libraries from vandalism during protests/strikes. Public libraries belong to the government; therefore, the government has to ensure that security is in place to protect the public library infrastructures from theft and any attack that may occur in the event of protesting by the society.

- The government should revise the funding policy of public libraries and provide all the necessary support public libraries need to provide quality information services.
- Public libraries need to work closely as a collective to ensure that information resources are shared among them to make sure that all information needs are covered. For example, if library A does not have a particular book, they can request it from library B as an interlibrary loan.

- There is a significant need to allow qualified personnel to appoint professional librarians. In public libraries, politicians tend to influence who should be hired as a librarian, resulting in them appointing people without library and information science skills. The government should intervene and review the employment policy when it comes to public libraries.

- Introducing mobile libraries could really play a significant role in ensuring that all areas are covered in terms of information needs. The introduction of mobile libraries by the government could also be enhanced with outreach programmes where the library is brought closer to the society.

5.5 AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The study brought to attention several aspects that can be explored in future research. Below are examples of future studies:

5.5.1 Rural areas have been neglected. Comparing the number of public libraries in urban areas to rural proves this face. This study suggests the investigation of the establishment of more public libraries in rural areas.

5.5.2 As the majority of the public libraries are managed by candidates who did not go to school for librarianship but hold a position because of political affiliations, further research should be done to determine the number of professional librarians in each public library to enhance quality of information services.

5.5.3 The majority of the schools in rural areas do not have school libraries at all, bridging the gap between school and public libraries to support schools without libraries in rural areas can be investigated.

5.5.4 Covid-19 forced public libraries to shut down completely. Further investigation can be conducted on public libraries providing information support remotely without users going to the library physically.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The study investigated the information needs of public library users in Ermelo, Mpumalanga province, South Africa. The findings established that Ermelo public library play a vital role in supporting school learners without school libraries. There is a need to research the availability of school libraries in schools in Ermelo schools, Mpumalanga, South Africa. The study established that fewer than half (30.6%) of the public library users visited the public library to complete assignments. The study established that all (100%) public library users opted for 'Yes', implying that they acknowledged and appreciated having public libraries in Ermelo. As much as public library users acknowledge the significance of having public libraries, it is vital that public libraries strive to improve, especially in terms of the buildings, as these are old and some of them do not accommodate people living with disabilities. It extremely disappointing that public libraries are still operating in the same buildings that had been built during apartheid, which are old buildings that cannot accommodate some of the innovations that public libraries need. Buildings cannot be expanded to create sufficient space for diverse library collections or develop computer labs separately because they are too old. The study concludes that public libraries still have a long way to go in terms of restructuring and reforming of modern libraries to accommodate more innovations and modern methods to access information. The major challenge is funding, every innovation in the library requires funding and funding policies need to be debated and reviewed to make sure that public libraries are prioritised and get enough support from the South African Government.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER TO THE MSUKALIGWA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY MANAGEMENT

Msukaligwa Local Municipality

PO Box 48

Ermelo

2350

13 October 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for a permission to collect data for Master of Information Science Degree.

I am writing this letter to ask for permission to use Ermelo Civic Centre library as my case study for my research. I am a student doing my Master of Information Science with the University of South Africa. I am currently doing my research and my research is about information needs of public library users in Ermelo, Mpumalanga province, South Africa

I have background knowledge about the municipality; hence I did my final year practical at the Msukaligwa Civic centre library. My intention is to help find solutions which will enhance improvements and bring new innovations within the library field. I believe that this study is going to play a vital role in addressing issues that users encounter on daily bases and enhance easily and effective access to information. The data collection process is going to be in line with research ethics and participants are expected to voluntarily participate in the study. Questionnaires to be distributed randomly among users and staff with 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

I intend to collect data as soon as the department approves my request. I am hoping to hear a positive response from your side.

Yours faithfully,

Sakhile Victor Mngomezulu

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF APPROVAL

MSUKALIGWA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

PO Box 48
Ermelo
Mpumalanga Province
South Africa
2350

Customer Care Center: 08611 MSUKA [57852]
Main Fax: +27 17 801-3851

Civic Centre Building
c/o Kerk & Taute Street
Ermelo
Mpumalanga Province
South Africa
2350

Internet: www.msukaligwa.gov.za
E-Mail: msuka@msukaligwa.gov.za

CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

16 October 2020

MR. SAKHILE VICTOR MNGOMEZULU
1261 SILINDILE LOCATION EXT 2
LOTHAIR
2370

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT TO COLLECT DATA IN THE LIBRARY SECTION ON INFORMATION SCIENCE MASTERS STUDIES.

1. The Administration of Msukaligwa Local Municipality would like to acknowledge the receipt of the letter dated **13 October 2020** in which permission is granted on condition that the information gathered will not be used to harm the corporate image of the Municipality.

2. Kindly note that the Municipality is granting you the five days to collect data in the library section on Information science masters studies.

3. Msukaligwa Local Municipality supports any Academic research for sustainable community development and hoping you will put the much-needed information into good use, and that you will share the research with the Municipality once you have completed your research.

Yours in good governance

MR. P.S. MABUZA
DIRECTOR CORPORATE SERVICES

16 | 10 | 2020
DATE

APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNISA | university of south africa

COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

15 February 2021

NHREC Registration # :
Rec-240816-052
CREC Reference # :
64024245_CREC_CHS_2021

Dear Mr Sakhile Mngomezulu

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 15 February
2021 to 15 February 2024

Principal Researcher(s): Mr Sakhile Mngomezulu (64024245 @mylife.unisa.ac.za)

Supervisor: Prof Samuel M. Mojapelo (mojapsm@unisa.ac.za)

Title: *Information needs of public library users in Ermelo, Mpumalanga Province,*
South Africa.

Purpose: Degree

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for three years.

The *negligible risk application* was *reviewed through expedition process* by College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, on **15 February 2021** in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.

3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the

confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.

7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date **(15 February 2024)**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **64024245 _CREC_CHS_2021** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Signature :

Dr. K.J. Malesa
CHS Ethics Chairperson
Email: maleskj@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 4780

Signature : PP

Prof K. Masemola
Executive Dean : CHS
E-mail: masemk@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 2298

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE

The research study focuses on the information needs of public library users in Ermelo, Mpumalanga province, South Africa. The purpose of this study is to find out your views on information needs, level of satisfactory, usage and challenges faced by public library users.

Instructions

N.B. Please tick (√) what is appropriate to you.

1. Which information sources do you consult first when completing assignments? *Tick more than one.*	
• Library online resources (e.g., e books, Google)	
• Library printed books	
• Library printed journals	
• Online database	

2. How often do you use electronic resources when searching for information?		**2.1. How often do you use print resources when searching for information?**	
• Regularly		• Regularly	
• Occasionally		• Occasionally	
• Rarely		• Rarely	
3. What are your reasons for using electronic resources? *Tick more than one.*		**3.1 What are your reasons for using print resources?** *Tick more than one.*	
• Save time		• Easy to locate library books on the shelves	
• Ease in searching		• To use books on reserve section	
• Ease of 24/7 access		• Convenient to use	
• Able to browse new publications of e-books and e-journals		• We have prescribed books for all the modules	

N.B. Please tick as many that apply.

4. Which of the following statements are applicable to you in terms of user needs satisfaction?

	Agree	Strongly agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
• Electronic resources are easily accessible as I have my own ICT device (phone/computer)				
• Access to effective and unlimited internet				
• Library staff always provide training oh how to improve access to information				
• The library has enough computers				
• Electronic resources enhance flexibility in searching				
• I rely on library resources for access to information at a cheaper cost				
• Electronic resources allow access to information at a wide range area				
• I always find what I need in the library				
• Print books are easily accessible as they are reserved for students at the library				
• Print books are reliable				
• print books depends on no medium for retrieval and access				

5. Challenges public library users encounter in satisfying their information needs

	Agree	Strongly agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
• Large mass of irrelevant information (Information overload)				
• Download delay				
• Slow internet connection				
• Misplaced books from the shelves				
• Lack of enough and current books				
• Not familiar with the resources				
• Unable to use Boolean operators				
• High cost of access and failing to download more sources				
• Librarians being unavailable to assist when experiencing problems				
• Access is limited to computers within its network infrastructure				

• Lack of awareness on how to use databases				
• Lack of knowledge about searching books which are relevant				
• Failure to locate books				

6. Rate your information literacy skills on using the following information sources: *Tick one box in each line.*

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
• Books (print)				
• E-books				
• Journals (print)				
• E-journals				
• Google/Yahoo				

7. When do you think it is the best time to offer information literacy training?

• At the beginning of the year just before writing assignments	
• When lecturers notice that there are students who are using Google/Yahoo	
• Anytime when an individual ask for training	

8. Did you get formal instructions on how to use library resources?

• Yes	
• No	

Please elaborate

9. Does the public library has enough space and shelves to accommodate information sources?

• Yes	
• No	

Please elaborate

10. Do you think the public library play a vital role in ensuring that both learners and teachers have access to all the educational resources which the public schools do not have?	
• Yes	
• No	
Please elaborate	
11. Who taught you how to access and use library resources?	
• Self-taught	
• Friends/classmates	
• librarians	
12. Which of the following information sources do you want training on?	
• Library print resources	
• Electronic resources	
• Both	

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. IT IS HIGHLY APPRECIATED

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (LIBRARIANS)

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Sakhile Victor Mngomezulu and I am currently enrolled with the University of South Africa for the Master of Information Science Degree. I am doing research on information needs of public library users. The purpose of the research is to find out whether the information needs of people of Ermelo are being met. Your participation in this interview would be appreciated. Please answer the following questions.

1. Do Ermelo residents have easy access to library services? Please Explain

2. What type of services does the library provide to patrons to fulfil their information needs?

3. What steps have you taken to meet the information needs of library users in your library?

4. Are you satisfied with the quality of the services and sources provided by your library? Explain

5. Are library users informed about library services? Elaborate.

6. In what way are library support and services used to promote literacy and development in Ermelo?

7. Based on your experience, are there any challenges from the library side which you think prevent satisfaction of user information needs Ermelo? Elaborate

8. What do you think can be done to improve user's satisfaction of information needs in Ermelo?

I would like to thank you for taking your time to participate and contribute to this interview session. Please note that your answers will always be treated confidentially.

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (LIBRARY MANAGER)

Dear Sir

My name is Sakhile Victor Mngomezulu and I am currently enrolled with the University of South Africa for the Master of Information Science Degree. The title of my study is "Information needs of public library users in Ermelo, Mpumalanga province, South Africa." The purpose of the research is to find out whether the public libraries meet the information needs of people of Ermelo. Your participation in this interview would be appreciated.

1. How would you rate your local libraries in meeting user's information needs?
2. Public libraries are non-profit making organisations; do you think they s receive enough funds to cater for on the information needs of users?
3. Does the municipality have a library policy to manage public or community libraries? Elaborate.
4. Do you think public libraries have enough professional librarians to play vital role in the digital age? Explain.
5. Do librarians attend courses or workshops for professional development? Elaborate.
6. Are you satisfied with the use of the ICTs in your libraries? Elaborate.
7. Tell me any challenges you have concerning the two public libraries in this municipality.

I would like to thank you for taking your time to participate in this interview session. Please note that your answers will always be treated confidentially.