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USE OF LEGAL DATABASES AS CORRELATE OF USER SATISFACTION AMONG LAW UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between the use of legal databases and user satisfaction among law undergraduate students in selected universities in North-Central Nigeria. A descriptive survey design of a correlational type was adopted for the study. The population comprised law undergraduates from selected universities in North-Central Nigeria, including the University of Abuja, University of Ilorin, and University of Jos, with 177 valid responses. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to respondents. Findings revealed that a variety of legal databases such as Law Pavilion, LexisNexis, and HeinOnline were available, while the level of use of legal databases was generally high. User satisfaction was also generally high. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis indicated a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between use of legal databases and user satisfaction ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The study also identified inadequate internet connectivity, lack of constant power supply, inadequate training, technical problems, limited devices, and subscription costs as major challenges affecting effective use. Based on these findings, the study recommends that university management and law libraries should strengthen internet and power infrastructure, provide adequate computers and devices, organise regular user training and awareness programmes, and sustain or expand subscriptions to relevant legal databases to support effective use and user satisfaction.
Keywords: Legal databases; use; user satisfaction; correlational relationship; law undergraduate students; North-Central Nigeria.

Introduction

The increasing digitalisation of legal information has transformed legal education and research, making legal databases indispensable resources among law undergraduate students. As legal systems continue to expand through legislation, judicial precedents, and

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regulatory developments, law undergraduate students require access to current and authoritative legal information to support learning, research, and academic excellence. Legal databases have therefore become essential tools for retrieving statutes, case law, law reports, journals, and other legal materials efficiently, enabling students to conduct comprehensive legal research and develop sound analytical skills. (Alabi, 2025).

The integration of legal databases into academic law libraries has shifted the focus from the mere provision of electronic resources to their effective utilisation. The educational benefits of these databases can only be realised when students actively use them to meet their academic and research needs. Gurumurthy and Padmamma (2023) observed that the use of library resources, including electronic databases, has increased considerably with the advancement of information and communication technologies. Similarly, the rapid evolution of digital technologies continues to reshape teaching, learning, and research, compelling academic law libraries to promote the effective use of legal databases as indispensable tools for legal education (Marougkas et al., 2023).

The use of legal databases has become an important indicator of effective legal research among undergraduate law students. Regular utilisation enables students to locate relevant legal authorities, analyse judicial decisions, prepare assignments, and remain abreast of contemporary legal developments. Consequently, effective use of these specialised information resources contributes not only to improved academic performance but also to the development of competencies required for legal practice.

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User satisfaction is a key measure of the effectiveness of library information services. It reflects users' overall assessment of whether available information resources adequately satisfy their expectations and information needs. According to Singh and Sharma (2022), user satisfaction mediates the relationship between the quality of electronic library services and sustained usage behaviour. Similarly, Malik (2023) described user satisfaction as the extent to which users perceive that their information needs are fulfilled through the quality, relevance, accessibility, and support associated with library resources and services. These perspectives suggest that students who effectively utilise relevant legal databases are more likely to report positive experiences with academic law library services.

Against this background, this study examined the relationship between the use of legal databases and user satisfaction among law undergraduate students in selected universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

The digitization of legal materials, enhanced by telecommunication networks and advanced search algorithms, has fundamentally transformed legal research through electronic databases. (Smith, 2021; Ogbomo & Adogbeji, 2022). Legal databases are used extensively by Law students for conducting legal research and learning. They provide access to a wide range of primary and secondary legal materials.

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It is therefore against this background that this study was designed to examine the relationship between the use of legal databases and user satisfaction among law undergraduate students in selected universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the types of Legal databases available for use among law undergraduate students in North Central Nigeria?
2. What is the level of use of legal databases among law undergraduate students in North Central Nigeria?
3. What is the level of user satisfaction with the use of legal databases among law undergraduate students in North Central Nigeria?
4. What are the challenges faced with the use of legal databases among law undergraduate students in North Central Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between use of legal databases and user satisfaction among law undergraduate students in North Central Nigeria.

Literature Review

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A legal database is a systematically arranged digital platform that grants access to legal information, including legislation, case law, legal journals, regulations, court opinions, law reviews, legal commentaries, treaties, and other pertinent sources for legal research and practice. Legal databases are vital resources for legal practitioners, researchers, scholars, and students, providing extensive, searchable collections of both primary and secondary legal documents (Oloniruha, Adeyeye, & Oladokun, 2024). Empirical studies have consistently shown that legal databases in universities law libraries in Nigeria encompass both foreign and indigenous electronic resources, reflecting a growing shift from print to digital legal research tools in legal education. Adeleke and Ojo (2019) reported Sabinet, EBSCOhost, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, National Academic Press, Virtual Libraries Online, Free Library Online, Google Search, and e-newspapers in MTN Universities Connect libraries, while Okeji and Agbanu (2020) and Jacob and Ujah (2020) observed limited awareness and limited availability of specialised legal databases such as HeinOnline and LawPavilion in several campuses.

Ubwa and Ndor (2020), in their study of federal universities in North Central Nigeria, found that students who used databases like LexisNexis, Law Pavilion, and HeinOnline more often were more satisfied than those who didn't use these resources as often. Students who used it often were able to improve their research skills, find the relevant information faster, and turn in their work on time for assignments and moot court preparations. Students who didn't use it much or at all, on the other hand, were upset

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because they thought they were missing out on the benefits of rigorous legal study. This pattern represents the "use–satisfaction loop" described by information behavior theorists, wherein heightened utilisation, cultivates greater contentment, hence driving prolonged use (Yakubu, 2018).

Among law students, satisfaction is closely tied to the adequacy, reliability, and timeliness of statutes, case law, and secondary legal literature needed for academic assignments and professional preparation (Jacob, 2020; Obuezie & Echedom, 2023). When resources are outdated, difficult to retrieve, or incomplete, students experience dissatisfaction, often resorting to alternative, less authoritative sources of legal information. Studies indicate that while there is a general awareness and availability of electronic legal resources, the actual utilisation and satisfaction among users, particularly law students, are often moderate to low. Ale & Audu (2025) reported high levels of dissatisfaction tied to poor or absent automation and ICT services, highlighting the importance of infrastructure for user satisfaction. Jacob (2020) discovered that law students experienced more satisfaction when the databases they used provided them with relevant and current information. Students liked the library more when the search results fit their academic needs, which helped them feel better about the library. Ubwa and Ndor (2020) reported that law students in Federal universities in North Central Nigeria who had greater access to up-to-date and comprehensive databases expressed higher satisfaction and used these resources more frequently in their academic work. Owushi and Emasealu (2016) reported

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low satisfaction tied to underfunding and inadequate online services. Adeleke and Nwalo (2017) investigated the availability, use, and constraints to the use of electronic information resources (EIRs) among postgraduate students at the University of Ibadan, they concluded that although some electronic resources were available, infrastructural and skills-related barriers hindered their effective use. These findings suggest that user satisfaction with legal databases among law undergraduate students is likely to be associated not merely with availability, but also with the level of use of legal information resources. Mommoh and Gomina (2023) conducted a study on the utilisation of electronic resources by undergraduate students of the Faculties of Science and Arts at the University of Abuja. Findings revealed that students reported moderate levels of use of electronic resources for academic purposes. However, the researchers emphasized that unstable internet connectivity significantly hindered consistent access and effective use of these resources. Other barriers included inadequate ICT infrastructure and insufficient subscriptions to diverse e-databases. Umar and Sokari (2020) investigated the challenges in utilising legal information resources by postgraduate law students in federal universities in Northern Nigeria. The study found that while e-resources such as e-journals and databases were available, utilisation was low due to inadequate ICT infrastructure, few computer terminals, unstable power supply, poor internet connectivity, and lack of user orientation. It concluded that infrastructural and technological barriers were the main obstacles to effective use.

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Challenges to effectively using legal databases remain a robust theme in recent empirical literature. Temboge and Ga'anda (2022) investigated the use and user satisfaction with library information resources and services at the Federal University of Kashere Library, Gombe State, Nigeria. The study concluded that although the library had made significant efforts in providing access to both print and electronic resources, challenges remained in terms of user orientation and the integration of digital platforms. The authors emphasized that effective use of e-resources required not only availability but also awareness, training, and adequate infrastructure. Umar and Sokari (2020) examined the difficulties affecting the use of legal information resources in faculties of law within federal universities in Northern Nigeria. The findings indicate a strong reliance on printed legal materials among postgraduate students, while electronic resources and online legal databases recorded comparatively low levels of use. The study further identified several barriers to effective utilisation, including inadequate copies of core textbooks, limited reading spaces, damaged materials, poor technological infrastructure, insufficient computer systems, and unstable electricity supply. Across studies, common obstacles include infrastructural deficits (unreliable power, poor bandwidth), financial constraints (costly subscriptions and data), limited ICT facilities (insufficient computer terminals and lab space), low levels of information literacy and inadequate user training, restricted or complicated authentication systems, and organisational issues such as staffing and policy gaps. These gaps highlight the need for broader, more comprehensive research across multiple institutions.

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Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design of a correlational type to examine the relationship between the use of legal databases and user satisfaction among law undergraduate students in selected universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile: Distribution of Respondents by Institutional Affiliation (n = 177)

Institutional Affiliation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
University of Abuja	52	29.4
University of Jos	41	23.2
University of Ilorin	84	47.5
Total	177	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The total sample for this study was 232 undergraduate Law students from the University of Abuja, University of Jos, and University of Ilorin, Nigeria. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed proportionately across the three universities according to their population sizes to ensure fair representation. Out of the 232 questionnaires distributed, 177 were successfully retrieved. This analysis is therefore based on the 177 completed questionnaires. The table above shows that 47.5% of the respondents were from the University of Ilorin, 29.4% from the University of Abuja, while 23.2% were from the University of Jos. This indicates that respondents were adequately drawn from the three selected universities in North Central Nigeria.

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Research question one: What are the types of Legal databases available for use among law undergraduate students in North Central Nigeria? The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Types of Legal Databases Available among Law Undergraduates (N= 177)

S/N	Legal Databases	Available	Not Available	Percentage Available (%)
1	Law Pavilion	140	37	79.1
2	Legalpedia	128	49	72.3
3	Nigerian Weekly Law Reports (NWLR) Online	150	27	84.7
4	HeinOnline	95	82	53.7
5	LexisNexis	70	107	39.5
6	Westlaw	60	117	33.9
7	Nigerian Legal Information Institute (NigLII)	120	57	67.8
8	JSTOR	110	67	62.1
9	EBSCOhost	105	72	59.3
10	ProQuest	90	87	50.8
11	GOALI	85	92	48.0
12	Research4Life (R4L)	100	77	56.5

The results in Table 1 reveal a distinct pattern in the availability of legal databases across the law libraries of the universities studied. The most widely available databases are Nigerian Weekly Law Reports (NWLR) Online (84.7%), Law Pavilion (79.1%), and Legalpedia (72.3%), reflecting a strong institutional preference for Nigerian legal information resources that directly support legal education, research, and practice within the country's jurisdiction. In contrast, international commercial legal databases such as LexisNexis (39.5%) and Westlaw (33.9%) recorded the lowest levels of availability.

These findings revealed that locally relevant and affordable legal databases are available for use, while major international legal databases are limited due to high

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subscription costs and institutional funding constraints. Asogwa (2020) found that practical use of digital resources for research, assignments, and academic writing strongly predicts user satisfaction and perceived academic performance.

Research question two: What is the level of use of legal databases among law undergraduate students in North Central Nigeria? The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean responses on the level of Use of Legal Databases by Respondents (N= 177)

S/N	Level of Use of Legal Databases	Often (4)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)	Mean Score	Interpretation
1	I regularly access legal databases provided by my law library for academic and research purposes	68 (38.4%)	61 (34.5%)	30 (16.9%)	18 (10.2%)	3.01	High
2	I use legal databases to find case laws, statutes, and legal commentaries	72 (40.7%)	60 (33.9%)	27 (15.3%)	18 (10.2%)	3.05	High
3	I use legal databases to download law reports and journals	66 (37.3%)	59 (33.3%)	32 (18.1%)	20 (11.3%)	2.97	High
4	I use legal databases when completing class assignments or legal research projects	70 (39.5%)	62 (35.0%)	25 (14.1%)	20 (11.3%)	3.03	High
5	I use more than one legal database such as LexisNexis, Westlaw,	60 (33.9%)	58 (32.8%)	37 (20.9%)	22 (12.4%)	2.88	Moderate–High

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	HeinOnline, or LawPavilion						
6	I use legal databases during examinations or while preparing for moot court presentations	55 (31.1%)	57 (32.2%)	40 (22.6%)	25 (14.1%)	2.80	Moderate–High
7	I attend or participate in training sessions on how to use legal databases effectively	45 (25.4%)	50 (28.2%)	52 (29.4%)	30 (16.9%)	2.62	Moderate
8	I use legal databases to keep up with recent legal decisions and developments	63 (35.6%)	61 (34.5%)	33 (18.6%)	20 (11.3%)	2.94	High
9	I consult legal databases during class discussions and when preparing legal arguments	58 (32.8%)	60 (33.9%)	37 (20.9%)	22 (12.4%)	2.87	Moderate–High
10	I use legal databases to verify and confirm citations in my academic writing.	69 (39.0%)	62 (35.0%)	28 (15.8%)	18 (10.2%)	3.03	High

The distribution of responses indicates a high level of engagement with the use of legal databases, as most items recorded mean scores close to or above 3.00, reflecting frequent usage.

The highest frequencies of Often responses were observed for activities such as finding case laws, statutes, and legal commentaries (72 respondents, 40.7%) and using legal databases for class assignments and legal research projects (70 respondents, 39.5%).

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This suggests that legal databases are central tools for core academic and research functions among respondents. The use of multiple databases and consultation during class discussions showed a balanced distribution between Often and Sometimes, reflecting moderate–high engagement levels rather than exclusive reliance on a single database.

Overall, the findings indicate that respondents frequently use legal databases for essential academic tasks, including legal research, assignments, citation verification, and staying updated on legal developments.

Table 3: Mean responses on the level of user satisfaction with the use of legal databases among law undergraduate students in North Central Nigeria. (N=177)

S/N	Level of User Satisfaction with Legal Databases	Very Satisfied (4)	Satisfied (3)	Dissatisfied (2)	Very Dissatisfied (1)	Mean Score	Interpretation
1	I feel satisfied after using legal databases because they meet my research expectations	67 (37.9%)	63 (35.6%)	29 (16.4%)	18 (10.2%)	3.01	High
2	I find using legal databases more fulfilling than using printed law reports or textbooks	60 (33.9%)	58 (32.8%)	37 (20.9%)	22 (12.4%)	2.88	Moderate–High
3	I am satisfied with the convenience of accessing legal databases both on and	62 (35.0%)	59 (33.3%)	36 (20.3%)	20 (11.3%)	2.92	High

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	off campus						
4	I am satisfied with the user interface and design of the legal databases	58 (32.8%)	60 (33.9%)	39 (22.0%)	20 (11.3%)	2.88	Moderate–High
5	I will gladly return to use legal databases whenever I need further legal information	70 (39.5%)	62 (35.0%)	27 (15.3%)	18 (10.2%)	3.04	High
6	I am satisfied with how quickly I can find what I am looking for using databases in my law library	65 (36.7%)	61 (34.5%)	32 (18.1%)	19 (10.7%)	2.97	High
7	I feel confident and comfortable using databases for my academic work	66 (37.3%)	60 (33.9%)	31 (17.5%)	20 (11.3%)	2.97	High
8	I am satisfied with the speed and performance of legal databases during use	59 (33.3%)	58 (32.8%)	38 (21.5%)	22 (12.4%)	2.87	Moderate–High
9	I am satisfied with how easy it is to locate specific cases, statutes, or journal articles within the databases	63 (35.6%)	61 (34.5%)	34 (19.2%)	19 (10.7%)	2.95	High

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10	I am satisfied with how easy it is to access databases in my law library	68 (38.4%)	62 (35.0%)	29 (16.4%)	18 (10.2%)	3.01	High

The distribution of responses indicates a high level of user satisfaction, as most items recorded mean scores close to or above 3.00, reflecting favorable user experiences.

The highest levels of satisfaction were observed for statements relating to continued use and overall access. For instance, "I will gladly return to use legal databases whenever I need further legal information" recorded the highest Very Satisfied response with 70 respondents (39.5%), indicating strong acceptance and reliance on legal databases for future academic and research needs. Similarly, satisfaction with ease of access and meeting research expectations recorded high agreement levels, suggesting that legal databases largely fulfill users' information requirements.

Across most items, the "Satisfied" category accounted for a substantial proportion of responses, with percentages ranging from 32.8% to 35.6%, indicating consistent positive perceptions even when respondents were not strongly satisfied. This suggests that while legal databases are generally preferred, some users still experience usability or performance challenges. This finding also indicates that user satisfaction with the use of legal databases is high, nonetheless, moderate satisfaction levels in areas such as interface design and system performance point to the need for continuous improvement to enhance user experience and sustain long-term satisfaction.

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Research question four: What are the challenges faced with the use of legal databases among law undergraduate students in North Central Nigeria? The result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Mean responses on the Challenges Faced with the use of legal databases among Law Undergraduate students in North Central Nigeria.

S/N	Challenges Faced by Users	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean Score	Interpretation
1	Inadequate internet connectivity hinders my use of legal databases	72 (40.7%)	60 (33.9%)	27 (15.3%)	18 (10.2%)	3.05	High
2	Outdated or incomplete content in legal databases reduces their usefulness	63 (35.6%)	59 (33.3%)	35 (19.8%)	20 (11.3%)	2.93	High
3	High demand for access at the same time makes it difficult for me to use legal databases	58 (32.8%)	61 (34.5%)	36 (20.3%)	22 (12.4%)	2.88	Moderate–High
4	Technical issues (e.g., slow loading, login problems) affect my ability to use legal databases	66 (37.3%)	62 (35.0%)	29 (16.4%)	20 (11.3%)	2.98	High
5	Lack of training on how to use legal databases is a major challenge	70 (39.5%)	58 (32.8%)	29 (16.4%)	20 (11.3%)	3.01	High
6	The limited number of computers/devices in the library restricts access to legal databases	64 (36.2%)	60 (33.9%)	31 (17.5%)	22 (12.4%)	2.94	High
7	Lack of awareness	60	63	34	20	2.92	High

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	of available databases reduces my effective use of legal databases	(33.9%)	(35.6%)	(19.2%)	(11.3%)		
8	The user interfaces of legal databases are difficult to navigate	55 (31.1%)	58 (32.8%)	40 (22.6%)	24 (13.6%)	2.81	Moderate–High
9	I find it challenging to cite or download materials from legal databases	52 (29.4%)	56 (31.6%)	44 (24.9%)	25 (14.1%)	2.76	Moderate–High
10	Subscription costs to certain databases pose challenges	68 (38.4%)	57 (32.2%)	31 (17.5%)	21 (11.9%)	2.97	High
11	I face challenges in accessing legal databases due to lack of constant power supply	71 (40.1%)	59 (33.3%)	28 (15.8%)	19 (10.7%)	3.03	High
12	The legal databases available do not cover all the areas of law I need for my studies	62 (35.0%)	60 (33.9%)	35 (19.8%)	20 (11.3%)	2.92	High

Table 4, presents both frequencies and percentages, enabling a clear understanding of respondents' perceptions of the challenges faced in accessing and effectively using legal databases in their institutional law libraries. The results reveal that most of the identified challenges were rated high, with mean scores close to or above 3.00, indicating widespread agreement among respondents.

The most prominent challenges reported include inadequate internet connectivity and lack of constant power supply, which recorded the highest proportions of Strongly Agree responses at 40.7% and 40.1% respectively. These findings indicate that

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infrastructural deficiencies significantly hinder effective use to legal databases. Similarly, lack of training on how to use legal databases emerged as a major concern, with 70 respondents (39.5%) strongly agreeing, suggesting insufficient user education and capacity-building initiatives within the law libraries.

These findings suggest that beyond infrastructural problems, usability and system design also affect effective utilisation of legal databases. These findings are consistent with those of Adeyemo (2019) and Bello (2020), who highlighted infrastructural, financial, and capacity-related barriers as major constraints in Nigerian academic libraries. The findings therefore indicate a strong positive relationship between use of legal databases and user satisfaction. Overall, the results indicate that while legal databases are available and widely used, infrastructural limitations, training gaps, technical problems, and content limitations collectively pose significant challenges to effective use. Addressing these challenges would greatly enhance users' experiences and improve the overall effectiveness of legal database services in university law libraries.

Test of Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between use of legal databases and user satisfaction among law undergraduate students in North Central Nigeria.

Variables	N	r-value	p-value	Decision
Use of legal databases & User satisfaction	177	0.72	0.000	Reject H_{01}

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The table shows the results for Hypothesis 1 (H_{01}), which stated that there is no significant relationship between the use of legal databases and user satisfaction in academic law libraries. The correlation coefficient (r = 0.72) indicates a strong positive relationship, and the p-value of 0.000 is below the 0.05 significance level, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. This result suggests that users who frequently use legal databases for tasks such as retrieving case laws, reviewing statutes, accessing journals, preparing assignments, or verifying citations tend to report higher satisfaction levels. Essentially, the greater use of legal databases for academic and research purposes is associated with higher reported user satisfaction with the library's digital resources.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the use and overall effectiveness of legal databases among law undergraduate students in universities in North Central Nigeria.

1. University management and library administrators should invest in robust infrastructure to ensure that law undergraduate students have multiple legal databases for use. This also includes providing reliable internet connectivity, uninterrupted power supply, and sufficient computers and devices in the library. This will increase overall user satisfaction.

2. Libraries should implement regular training and capacity-building programs for law students. Although legal databases are available, students may not fully exploit their

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features due to a lack of knowledge or experience in advanced search techniques, citation verification, or using multiple databases simultaneously.

3. Policymakers and university authorities should develop frameworks to monitor, maintain, and evaluate library resources regularly. This includes periodic assessment of legal database performance, user satisfaction surveys, and upgrades to infrastructure as needed. By establishing clear policies and consistent monitoring, universities can ensure that legal databases remain reliable, functional, and responsive to students' academic requirements.

4. Finally, addressing the challenges identified in this study, such as inadequate internet connectivity, limited power supply, subscription costs, and lack of awareness, should be prioritized. Universities may consider partnerships with legal database providers, government agencies, and private sponsors to subsidize costs. Furthermore, creating awareness campaigns and user guides can help students better understand and utilise the available legal databases effectively.

Conclusion

The findings further indicate that the frequency and effectiveness of use of legal databases are significantly associated with students' satisfaction. This suggests that while students benefit from the available legal databases, there are opportunities to enhance user skills and engagement through targeted orientation, awareness, and training programmes. Several challenges affecting the use of legal databases were also identified. Addressing

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these challenges is essential to enable students to fully exploit the academic and research potential of legal databases. Therefore, the study establishes that use of legal databases is an important correlate of user satisfaction among law undergraduate students in the selected universities.

The findings further indicate that the frequency and effectiveness of use of legal databases are significantly associated with students' satisfaction. This suggests that while students report benefits from using legal databases, there are opportunities to enhance user skills and engagement through targeted orientation and training programs. Several challenges affecting use of legal were also identified. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that students can fully exploit the academic and research potential of legal databases. Therefore, the study establishes that use of legal databases are important correlates of user satisfaction in law libraries.

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