

The study was concerned with the investigation of factors affecting utilization of secondary school libraries in Vihiga district, Western province of Kenya. This was done by conducting a survey of the present library services in ten randomly selected secondary schools from the district.

The study involved two hundred fifty subjects who comprised of ten librarians or teacher/librarian, forty subject teachers and two hundred students. Each group were given a questionnaire aimed at eliciting different responses about different aspects of the school libraries. Other information was gathered by observation through personal visits to the schools.

Among the findings of the study was the revelation that school libraries were not a priority in the schools and they continued to be neglected as an integral part of the education system. There were disparities in quality of services provided due to financial constraints and calibre of staff. Most of the libraries were document centred with little regard for the needs of users. As a result the libraries did not adequately meet the information needs of the students and teachers.

The good news was that there was a trend towards employment of qualified librarians. However, their impact in the schools was minimal as they acted more like storekeepers than librarians. They had very little rapport with the users and were unable to initiate meaningful library services due to many limitations. The haphazard manner in which school libraries were managed had not given students a clear concept of how to use libraries. This had been made worse by the fact that teachers still relied on lecture method of teaching and so did not encourage students to use libraries. All these factors had a negative effect on utilization of libraries.

Students and teachers were encouraged to use libraries where there were relevant materials and adequate seating space. Teachers who gave assignments that demanded the use of the libraries also encouraged students' use of the school library.

Recommendations were made based on these findings. They included the integration of user education programmes in the school curriculum in order to equip students with knowledge and skills in the use of libraries. It was also recommended that school libraries should be managed by dual qualified teachers (in both education and librarianship), so that they initiate effective programmes and services in school libraries.

Effective school libraries will lay strong foundations in the use of information which is an important national resources, enhance individual developments of students' interests and abilities and enable them to make a positive contribution to national development.