SCHOOL OF LIBRARY ARCHIVES AND DCUMENTATION STUDIES

(SLADS) - BAGAMOYO

RESEARCH REPORT ON:

# AN ASSESSMENT OF USER'S AWARENESS ON INFORMATION RETRIEVAL TOOLS IN A CADEMIC LIBRARY. CASE STUDY OF AGENCY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIO NAL MANAGEMENT (ADEM) - BAGAMOYO

BY

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A Research Report Submitted at School of Library, archives and documentation studies (SLADS) in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Ordinary Diploma in Library an d Information Management.

**August, 2026**

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## CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certifies that she has read and here by recommends for acceptance by the School of Library, Archives and Documentation Studies a research report entitled An Assessment Of Users Awareness On Information Retrieval Tools In Academic Libraries: A Case Study of the Agency for the Development of Educational Management (ADEM) in p artial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Ordinary Diploma in Library and Information Management.

_____

Mrs. Kilongola

(Supervisor)

**Date: ……..**



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to give thanks to the Almighty God for granting me good health, strength and guidance throughout the period of undertaking this study, from the data collection stage up to the analysis and presentation of this research report.

I am deeply indebted to my family, whose patience, encouragement and support made it possible for me to pursue and complete this Diploma in Library and Information Manage ment. I sincerely thank my parents, brothers and sisters for standing by me throughout th is journey.

My sincere gratitude goes to the Management of the School of Library, Archives and Doc umentation Studies (SLADS) for the opportunity to pursue this Diploma program, and for the resources and support extended to me during my studies.

I wish to express my special and heartfelt appreciation to my supervisor for the invaluabl e, timely and tireless guidance, advice and constructive criticism offered throughout the course of this study. Their patient supervision and positive encouragement made the co mpletion of this research report possible.

I also extend my appreciation to the management and staff of the Agency for the Develo pment of Educational Management (ADEM), Bagamoyo, particularly the library staff, for the cooperation and information they willingly provided during data collection.

Finally, it is not possible to mention by name everyone who assisted me in the course of this study and in the writing of this final report. I sincerely appreciate the contribution of each and every one of them.



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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God for His protection, guidance and good health throughout the period of this study. It is also sincerely dedicated to my beloved family, es pecially my parents, for their support, encouragement and prayers, both morally and spiri tually.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| **ACRL** | Association of College & Research Libraries |
| **ADEM** | Agency for the Development of Educational Management |
| **EBSCO** | Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCOhost Database) |
| **ICT** | Information and Communication Technology |
| **OPAC** | Online Public Access Catalogue |
| **SLADS** | School of Library, Archive and Documentation Studies |
| **SPSS** | Statistical Package for the Social Sciences |



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CERTIFICATION ..... i

DECLARATION AND COPYRIGHT ..... ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ..... iii

DEDICATION ..... iv

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ..... v

ABSTRACT ..... vi

LIST OF TABLES ..... ix

**CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

1.0 Introduction ..... 1

1.1 Background of the Study ..... 1

1.2 Statement of the Problem ..... 3

1.3 Objectives of the Study ..... 3

1.3.1 General Objective ..... 3

1.3.2 Specific Objectives ..... 3

1.4 Research Questions ..... 4

1.5 Significance of the Study ..... 4

1.6 Scope of the Study ..... 5

1.7 Limitations of the Study ..... 5

1.8 Definition of Key Terms ..... 6

**CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.0 Introduction ..... 7

2.1 Types of Information Retrieval Tools Available in Academic Libraries ..... 7



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2.2 User Skills in Retrieving Library Materials....8

2.3 Challenges Facing Users in Using Information Retrieval Tools....8

2.4 Strategies for Improving User Awareness of Information Retrieval Tools....9

2.5 Research Gap....9

**CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

3.0 Introduction....11

3.1 Research Design....11

3.2 Area of the Study....11

3.3 Target Population....12

3.4 Sampling Techniques....12

3.5 Sample Size....12

3.6 Data Collection Methods....12

3.6.1 Questionnaire Method....13

3.6.2 Observation Method....13

3.6.3 Interview Method....13

3.7 Data Analysis Procedures....14

3.8 Ethical Considerations....14

**CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

4.0 Introduction....15

4.1 Response Rate....15

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents....16

4.2.1 Distribution of Respondents by Age....16

4.2.2 Distribution of Respondents by Gender....17

4.2.3 Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education....17



SLADS Research Hub · SLADS/2026/00050 · repository.slads.sc.tz

4.3 Types of Information Retrieval Tools Available at ADEM Academic Library.....18

4.4 Users' Skills in Retrieving Information Using Information Retrieval Tools.....19

4.5 Challenges Facing Users in Retrieving Information Using Information Retrieval Tools 19

4.6 Strategies for Improving Users' Awareness of Information Retrieval Tools.....20

**CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.0 Introduction.....21

5.1 Summary of the Findings.....22

5.1.1 Types of Information Retrieval Tools Available at ADEM Library.....22

5.1.2 Users' Skills in Retrieving Information Using Information Retrieval Tools.....22

5.1.3 Challenges Facing Users in Retrieving Information.....22

5.1.4 Strategies for Improving Users' Awareness of Information Retrieval Tools...23

5.2 Conclusion.....23

5.3 Recommendations.....23

5.4 Area for Further Studies.....24

REFERENCES.....25

APPENDIX I
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LIBRARY USERS.....26

APPENDIX II
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LIBRARY STAFF AND LIBRARIAN.....31

APPENDIX III
RESEARCH BUDGET.....32

APPENDIX IV
RESEARCH TIMETABLE.....33

APPENDIX V
INTRODUCTION LETTER.....34



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## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Distribution of Questionnaires and Interview Response Rate……15

Table 4.2.1 Distribution of Respondents by Age……16

Table 4.2.2 Distribution of Respondents by Gender……17

Table 4.2.3 Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education……17

Table 4.3 Types of Information Retrieval Tools Available at ADEM Library……18

Table 4.4 Users' Skills in Information Retrieval……18

Table 4.5 Challenges Facing Users in Information Retrieval……19

Table 4.6 Strategies for Improving Awareness of Information Retrieval Tools……20



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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

## 1.0 Introduction

This section comprises the following aspects: background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope of t he study and limitations of the study, as well as definitions of key terms.

## 1.1 Background of the Study

In the modern global information society, academic libraries play a critical role in support ing teaching, learning, and research by providing access to a wide range of information r esources and services. With the advancement of Information and Communication Techn ologies (ICTs), academic libraries around the world have shifted from traditional manual systems such as card catalogues to automated and digital systems that facilitate efficie nt access to information resources.

These systems include information retrieval tools such as Online Public Access Catalog ues (OPAC), electronic databases, institutional repositories, digital libraries, and other onli ne search platforms that enable users to locate and retrieve relevant scholarly materials quickly and efficiently (Patel, Batcha & Ahmad, 2021). These tools support users in cond ucting various search strategies such as keyword search, author search, subject search, and advanced filtering options to improve the relevance and accuracy of retrieved inform ation.

Globally, academic libraries continue to integrate digital technologies in order to improve access to information and enhance knowledge dissemination. The increasing demand f or digital information services has encouraged libraries to adopt advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence systems, digital repositories, and online information retriev al platforms to support research and learning activities. These developments have signif icantly transformed the way information is accessed and utilized by students and resear



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chers in higher learning institutions (Bakiri, Mbembati & Tinabo, 2024). However, effectiv e utilization of these tools depends largely on users' awareness and information literacy skills.

In the African context, academic libraries have increasingly adopted digital information s ystems and electronic resources in order to improve access to scholarly materials. Many universities across the continent are implementing automated library systems, institution al repositories, and electronic databases to support academic activities. Despite these de velopments, several challenges still hinder effective access and utilization of informatio n retrieval tools among students. These challenges include limited digital literacy skills, i nadequate training, poor internet connectivity, and insufficient awareness of available lib rary resources (Shikali, Muneja & Kassim, 2024). Consequently, many students prefer usi ng general internet search engines rather than specialized academic databases provided by libraries.

At the national level, Tanzania has made considerable efforts to modernize academic lib raries through the integration of digital technologies and electronic information services. Academic libraries in universities and colleges have adopted various information retrieva l tools to improve access to information resources and support academic research. Thes e include electronic databases, online catalogues, and digital repositories which facilitat e easier access to scholarly materials. However, studies indicate that the effective use of these resources remains limited due to inadequate information literacy skills and lack of sufficient user training among students (Nalaila & Eliab, 2024). Similarly, research condu cted in Tanzanian academic libraries indicates that although libraries are introducing ad vanced technologies and digital information services, the level of awareness and utilizati on among users is still uneven (Ponera & Kyumana, 2024).

At the institutional level, the library of the Agency for the Development of Educational M anagement (ADEM) located in Bagamoyo provides access to various academic resource s and information retrieval tools designed to support students and staff in their learning



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and research activities. These tools are intended to help users locate and retrieve relevan t academic materials efficiently. However, it is observed that some users may not fully ut ilize these information retrieval tools due to limited awareness or insufficient knowledge of how to use them effectively. This situation may result in underutilization of available l ibrary resources and overreliance on general internet sources which may not always prov ide reliable academic information.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Academic libraries have invested heavily in a variety of information retrieval tools such a s Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC), electronic databases, institutional repositorie s, and digital libraries in order to improve users' access to scholarly information. These t ools are intended to enable students to locate relevant, accurate, and up-to-date informat ion efficiently for learning and research purposes (Patel, Batcha & Ahmad, 2021).

Despite the availability of these systems, studies show that many students are either not aware of these information retrieval tools or do not know how to use them effectively. As a result, they tend to rely on general internet sources instead of using specialized library r etrieval systems, which leads to underutilization of available academic resources (Tenya, Maina & Awuor, 2024).

In many African academic institutions, lack of information literacy skills, limited user trai ning, and inadequate awareness have been identified as major challenges affecting the effective use of information retrieval tools (Shikali, Muneja & Kassim, 2024). Therefore, t his study seeks to assess the level of users' awareness of information retrieval tools in th e academic library at ADEM in order to identify gaps and improve library user education and services.

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study



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### 1.3.1 General Objective.

The general objective of this study is to assess the level of users' awareness of informati on retrieval tools in the academic library at ADEM (Agency for the Development of Educa tional Management College, Bagamoyo).

### 1.3.2 Specific Objectives

i. To identify the types of information retrieval tools available in academic librari es.

ii. To examine users' skills in retrieving library materials.

iii. To find out challenges facing users to retrieve information using the retrieval t ools.

iv. To suggest possible strategies for improving user awareness of information re trieval tools in academic libraries.

## 1.4 Research Questions

i. What types of information retrieval tools are available in the library?

ii. Do library users have skills for retrieving library materials?

iii. What challenges do library users face in using retrieval tools?

iv. What strategies can be used to overcome challenges in using retrieval tools?

## 1.5 Significance of the Study

This study on user awareness of information retrieval tools in academic libraries is signi ficant because it directly contributes to improving the information retrieval skills of librar y users. Users who are familiar with tools such as catalogues, indexes, abstracts, and ele



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ctronic databases are able to locate relevant information more quickly and accurately, th ereby enhancing research outcomes and promoting efficient use of library resources (Ba wden & Robinson, 2012; Saracevic, 1996).

Moreover, the study will enable academic libraries to assess the effectiveness of their cu rrent services. Findings can guide librarians in identifying weaknesses in service delivery and implementing improvements such as enhanced user education programs, better acc ess to digital resources, and more effective support services, which are essential for fost ering a user-centered library environment (Lynch & García, 2020).

In addition, the study contributes to the development of information literacy skills amon g users, which involves the ability to identify information needs, locate and evaluate sour ces, and use information effectively (Association of College & Research Libraries [ACRL], 2016). By understanding user awareness of information retrieval tools, libraries can desi gn programs that strengthen these competencies and support academic success. The fi ndings may also inform library policy and decision-making, assisting administrators and policymakers in developing strategies to improve library infrastructure, expand digital col lections, and implement regular training programs (Tenopir et al., 2015). Furthermore, thi s research adds to the existing body of knowledge in Information Science, providing a us eful reference for future studies related to information retrieval systems, user awareness, and library service development (Saracevic, 1996).

## 1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the level of user awareness of information retrieval tools in acade mic libraries and examines how this awareness affects the ability of users to efficiently access, retrieve, and utilize information resources. It covers both traditional resources, su ch as books, journals, and indexes, and digital resources, including electronic databases



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and Online Public Access Catalogue (OPACs), within higher learning institutions (Bawden & Robinson, 2012; Tenopir et al., 2015).

The study is limited to library users, including students, researchers, and academic staff, and seeks to identify gaps in knowledge, challenges faced in using retrieval tools, and strategies for enhancing information literacy (Case, 2012; ACRL, 2016). The findings aim to provide insights for librarians and policymakers in improving library services, infrastructure, and training programs, thereby facilitating better access to information and supporting teaching, learning, and research activities in academic settings (Lynch & García, 2020; Rubin, 2010).

### 1.7 Limitations of the Study

One key limitation of this study is its reliance on self-reported data from students about their awareness and use of information retrieval tools in the university library, which may be subject to bias or inaccuracy. Participants might overestimate or underestimate their actual awareness or use due to memory lapses, a desire to give socially acceptable responses, or misunderstanding of the questions, thereby affecting the validity of the findings (Zama & Moluh, 2019).

Additionally, the study's focus on a single institution limits the generalizability of the results to other universities or academic settings with different infrastructures, levels of digital literacy, or library services (Zama & Moluh, 2019).

Another limitation is the study's time frame, which captures data at a single point in time and may not reflect long-term trends in user awareness and utilization of information retrieval tools as library technologies and training programs evolve. Because technological tools and user training initiatives continue to change rapidly, the cross-sectional nature of the research may limit its ability to account for these dynamic developments. These constraints suggest that future research could use longitudinal designs or include multiple institutions to enhance the depth and breadth of understanding of how academic user



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s engage with information retrieval tools over time and across contexts.

## 1.8 Definition of Key Terms

### Information Retrieval

Information retrieval refers to the process of searching for, locating, and accessing releva nt information from various sources such as books, journals, electronic databases, and d igital repositories in order to satisfy users' information needs (Baeza-Yates & Ribeiro-Net o, 2011).

### User Awareness

User awareness refers to the level of knowledge and understanding that library users hav e about the availability and use of library resources, services, and information retrieval to ols (Case, 2012).

### Academic Library

An academic library is a library established within an institution of higher learning, such as a university, college, or institute, to support teaching, learning, and research activities t hrough organized collections and services (Lynch & García, 2020).

### Electronic Databases

Electronic databases are digital collections of scholarly information such as journal arti cles, research papers, and e-books that users can access via computers or the Internet to support research and learning (Tenopir et al., 2015).



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# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature related to user awareness of information retrieval tools in academic libraries. The review focuses on the types of information retrieval tools availab le in academic libraries, user skills in retrieving library materials, challenges faced by use rs when using retrieval tools, and strategies for improving user awareness. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the theoretical and empirical foundation for the study and i dentify knowledge gaps that the current research intends to address (Bawden & Robinso n, 2012).

## 2.1 Types of Information Retrieval Tools Available in Academic Libraries

Academic libraries provide various information retrieval tools to help users locate and ac cess information resources efficiently. These tools assist users in searching for books, jo urnals, research papers, and other scholarly materials available in library collections. One common retrieval tool is the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), which allows users to search for library materials using computers or internet-enabled devices. OPAC provide s bibliographic information such as titles, authors, subjects, and location of materials wit hin the library (Bawden & Robinson, 2012).

Another important retrieval tool used in academic libraries is electronic databases. These databases contain large collections of scholarly materials including journal articles, conf erence papers, theses, and e-books. Examples of commonly used academic databases i nclude EBSCOhost, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, and ProQuest, which provide access to peer-re viewed academic information for research and learning (Tenopir et al., 2015).



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Academic libraries also provide indexes and abstracts, which help users identify relevant research materials by summarizing and organizing scholarly publications according to s ubject areas. Indexing and abstracting services make it easier for users to locate relevant literature without reading entire documents (Baeza-Yates & Ribeiro-Neto, 2011). In additi on, digital repositories and institutional repositories are increasingly used in academic lib raries to store and provide access to locally produced research outputs such as dissertati ons, theses, and faculty publications (Lynch, 2017).

These information retrieval tools are essential for supporting teaching, learning, and rese arch in academic institutions. However, their effectiveness depends largely on users' awa reness and ability to use them properly.

### 2.2 User Skills in Retrieving Library Materials

User skills play an important role in effective retrieval of information from library system s. Information retrieval skills refer to the ability of users to search, locate, evaluate, and u se relevant information from different information sources. According to Bawden and Ro binson (2012), users need both basic and advanced search skills in order to effectively u se library retrieval tools.

Basic skills include the ability to search library catalogues, identify keywords, and locate materials in the library. Advanced skills involve the use of search techniques such as Bo olean operators, phrase searching, truncation, and filtering search results within electroni c databases (Case & Given, 2016).

Studies have shown that many library users, particularly students, often lack adequate s kills for using advanced information retrieval tools. As a result, they may experience diffi culties in locating relevant materials or retrieving accurate information for academic pur poses (Solomon, Onwuesi, & Ijeh, 2022). Therefore, improving user skills through training and information literacy programs is necessary for enhancing effective use of library res ources.



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## 2.3 Challenges Facing Users in Using Information Retrieval Tools

Despite the availability of various information retrieval tools, users in academic libraries still face several challenges when searching for information. One major challenge is lack of awareness about available library resources and retrieval tools. Many students are not familiar with tools such as OPAC, electronic databases, and digital repositories, which li mits their ability to access information effectively (Zama & Moluh, 2019).

Another challenge is insufficient information literacy skills. Without proper training, users may struggle to formulate search queries, select appropriate databases, or evaluate retrie ved information (Case & Given, 2016). Additionally, technical and infrastructural challeng es such as poor internet connectivity, limited access to computers, and power interruptio ns can affect users' ability to utilize electronic retrieval tools effectively, especially in dev eloping countries (Tenopir et al., 2015). Complex system interfaces and lack of user-frien dly search systems can also make it difficult for users to navigate library databases and retrieve relevant information.

## 2.4 Strategies for Improving User Awareness of Information Retrieval Tools

Several strategies can be implemented to improve user awareness and effective utilizati on of information retrieval tools in academic libraries. One important strategy is the provi sion of information literacy training programs. These programs equip users with the nec essary skills to search, evaluate, and use information resources effectively (Association of College & Research Libraries, 2016).

Another strategy is the organization of library orientation programs for new students and researchers. Orientation sessions introduce users to available library resources, retrieval t ools, and search techniques that can help them locate information easily. Libraries can a lso develop online tutorials, user guides, and help desks that provide instructions on how to use electronic databases, OPAC, and other retrieval systems. Additionally, improving li brary infrastructure, including reliable internet connectivity and adequate computer facilit



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ies, can enhance access to digital information retrieval tools (Tenopir et al., 2015).

Through these strategies, academic libraries can improve user awareness and ensure eff ective use of information retrieval tools.

### 2.5 Research Gap

Recent studies show that academic libraries have increasingly adopted various informati on retrieval tools such as Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC), electronic databases, digital repositories, and discovery systems to improve access to scholarly information. T hese tools play an essential role in supporting teaching, learning, and research in higher education institutions.

However, despite the availability of these technologies, several studies indicate that man y library users still experience difficulties in effectively utilizing them due to limited awar eness and insufficient information retrieval skills (Islam et al., 2023; Shikalipo & Amuten ya, 2024). In many cases, users rely mainly on general internet search engines instead of specialized library retrieval tools, which limits their ability to access reliable academic res ources. This situation demonstrates a gap between the availability of information retriev al systems and users' ability to use them effectively for academic purposes.

Furthermore, previous research has often concentrated on technological developments i n academic libraries, such as digital collections and automated library systems, while les s attention has been given to examining users' practical experiences, challenges, and lev els of awareness in using information retrieval tools within specific academic contexts. Studies also show that issues such as inadequate training, lack of information literacy p rograms, and limited user support services continue to affect the effective use of library r etrieval tools in many higher learning institutions (Tachie-Donkor & Ezema, 2023; Boaten g & Liu, 2022). Therefore, there remains a need for more research that specifically exami nes the types of information retrieval tools available in academic libraries, users' skills in retrieving information, and the challenges they encounter when using these tools. This st



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udy seeks to address this gap by assessing user awareness of information retrieval tools and proposing strategies that can enhance their effective utilization in academic librarie s.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.0 Introduction

This chapter presented the research methodology that was used to conduct the study at the Agency for the Development of Educational Management College (ADEM), Bagamoy o. It explained the research design, study area, target population, sampling techniques, s ample size, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and ethical consideration s



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### 3.1 Research Design

Research design referred to the overall plan that guided the researcher in collecting, mea suring, and analyzing data (Kothari, 2019). It helped to ensure that the research objective s were achieved in a logical and systematic manner. This study adopted a descriptive res earch design. The descriptive design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher t o examine and describe the level of user awareness of information retrieval tools availab le in the academic library. It also helped to understand users' experiences, knowledge, an d challenges when retrieving information resources (Kothari, 2019).

### 3.2 Area of the Study

Area of the study referred to the specific place where the research was conducted (Kotha ri, 2004). This study was conducted at the Agency for the Development of Educational M anagement College, Bagamoyo. The area was selected because the campus had an aca demic library that supported teaching, learning, and research activities for students and l ecturers. The library provided both printed and electronic information resources such as books, journals, electronic databases, and institutional repositories. It also offered infor mation retrieval tools including the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) and digital d atabases that helped users search for and access academic information easily (Patel, B atcha & Ahmad, 2021). Therefore, the campus provided a suitable environment for study ing user awareness and the use of information retrieval tools in academic libraries.

### 3.3 Target Population

Target population referred to the entire group of individuals or elements that the research er intended to study. It included all members who shared similar characteristics relevant t o the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, the target population is 100 which consisted of library users including students, lecturers, and library staff who i nteracted with information retrieval tools. These groups were selected because they were



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