Influence of Legal Information Resources use on Research Productivity of Law Lecturers in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

Purpose: *This study examined the influence of legal information resources use on law lecturers' research productivity in Nigerian universities.*

Methodology: *The descriptive survey research design was adopted. Multistage sampling technique was used to select 414 out of 905 lecturers from 16 law faculties out of 29 state and federal universities offering law across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria (North-East=29; North-West=74; South-East=76; North-Central=95; South-South=75 and South-West=65). A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The research questions were analysed using descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviations and variance, while the hypothesis was tested with Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.*

Findings: *The study finds that legal information resources such as law reports, legal periodicals, legislation and statutes, indexes and abstracts, law book, non- legal materials, reference materials, digests and e-resources were used daily by the law lecturers in universities in Nigeria.*

Implications: *This is about the first empirical evidence on the influence of legal information resources use on law lecturers' research productivity in Nigerian universities with strategic suggestions that: constant awareness programmes in law libraries, continuous training of law lecturers on the use of legal information resources, need for universities to invest more on access to legal information resources and provision of well equipped and up-to-date law libraries with current legal information are critical for enhanced utilisation of legal information resources.*

Value/Originality: *The study's educational value rest on the recommendations that that improved research productivity of law lecturers reside in utilisation of varied legal information resources which should be made available and accessible for lecturers to utilise. Law lecturers should therefore continue to use the available legal information resources.*

Keywords: *Utilisation, Research productivity, Law lecturers, Legal information resources, Nigeria.*

Paper Type: *Empirical*

Introduction

Information is an essential commodity that is needed for improved productivity of lecturers in the Faculties of Law in Nigerian universities. In their research duties, Law lecturers are expected to create new knowledge and to re-order and repackage old relevant knowledge for the benefit of the community. Information has power only when used and applied effectively. Thus, Library services can only be achieved through the availability and utilisation of library collections. Nkiki and Yusuf (2008) observe that information is an essential part of a nation's wealth and access to it is a basic human right. A university library houses a wide variety of information resources. Information is not only a national resource but also a medium for social communication. Information availability, accessibility and use are very important to the teaching, research and community service activities of lecturers in the Nigerian university system. One of the critical factors used in determining academic productivity is research output. Apart from competence in professional duties, research and publications are compulsory indices or indicators of assessment of academic productivity of lecturers (Joyce 2006).Information plays a central role in achieving successful work performance of academic staff. According to Kirk (2004) information use involves the development of documents in a variety of forms and formats. Information utilisation can be seen as the effective use of information that is available.

Usability is an important concept that is closely related to usefulness of the content of a document. It means the interaction a user has with the information systems. It is because of this, Tsakonas and Papatheosorou (2006) note that "usability is concerned with the ease of use of a given system in an efficient, effective and satisfactory way." A user-friendly system is considered a usable system because it enables the easy flow of data/information between the user and the system features. Ease of use of scholarly electronic publications permits users to conclude their information tasks, and consequently, their tasks successfully. Systems that are easy to use minimise the time and effort users spend (Tsakonas and Papatheosorou, 2006). In Nigeria, academic libraries are underfunded and have not been able to achieve the strategic function of facilitating Internet access to scholarly electronic publications by the university communities. Lamenting the sorry state of funding of academic libraries, Akintunde (2006) notes that funding by government which has been the sponsor of 75 per cent of the libraries has been dwindling and quite unreliable in the last few years. Furthermore, as indicated by Gudmunndottier (2005), access to scholarly electronic publications does not imply usage. Information is worthless if it is not used. It has been accepted and recognized as a survival input of man in the information age (Posner, 2009). Popoola (2006) defined information as facts, news, opinions, messages, symbols, signals and processed data that are capable of improving the knowledge state of a user on a random phenomenon. Information is a prerequisite to raising education standards, advancing democracy, participating in decision making, developing the economy and enhancing the quality of life of the populace (Tise, 2000). According to Mchombu (2000), one might not have knowledge unless one gets information. Thus, the fact that legal information resources are available or accessible does not mean it is being used. Studies that dwell on availability, accessibility and use of information resources have received considerable attention by researchers. Stevenson (1997) therefore defined availability of information resources "as being able to be obtained, or used". These information resources could be in form of books, periodicals, abstracts, indexes, reference materials, audio-visuals, information technologies (IT), and databases. Uhegbu (2001) affirmed that, without available information, accessibility will be difficult and its utilisation impaired. Availability of relevant legal information resources affects how frequently law lecturers' use them. (Abels, Liebscher, and Denman, 1996 and Eason, Richardson, and Yu, 2000). The use of information varies among individuals and professionals, depending on their information needs and statuses. An important consideration in the process of legal information resources gathering is accessibility and use of such information. Odutola (2003) opines that the availability of information is one thing, access to and use of the available information is another. Dervin (2003) states that information use is a process whereby the user tries to make sense of discontinuous reality in a series of information use behaviour. Availability of information resources helps in facilitating legal research (Ainoko and Boman, 2009). Thus, it is very important for available legal information resources to be accessible to law lecturers'.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. find out types of legal information resources that law lecturers utilised for

   research;

2. find out the extent of use of legal information resources by law lecturers in the

   Faculties of Law under study to enhance research productivity;

Research Hypothesis

H_{01} There is no significant relationship between availability of legal resources and

    research productivity of the law lecturers in law faculties in universities in Nigeria

H_{02} There is no significant relationship between utilisation of legal information

    resources and research productivity of the law lecturers.

Literature Review

Performance can be defined as continuous improvement of the employees in an organization. This depends on the productivity of employees. If they are productive, they perform well and achieve the targets of the organization. The productivity consists of both effectiveness and efficiency and both have relation with each other. University teaching is a

profession that demands continuous learning, teaching and contribution towards creation of new knowledge particularly through research during the career (Senaratne, 2007).Lecturers all over the world are faced with constant pressure to publish their work in order for their scholarship to gain recognition both internationally and locally. This is found to be the case in Kemoni (2002) study of information needs of academics. Based on these findings, one may conclude that information is an important element in the working life of lecturers. Information utilisation involves the development of documents in a variety of forms, papers, reports, training manuals and action plans, work-in-progress and final versions in electronic and printed forms (Kirk, 2004). When data is structured and receives a purpose, it becomes information; it can then be expressed in documents. Information is often used by academic staff to make decisions in relation to teaching and research for the achievement of the institutional goal. The use of information in the university by the academic staff has increased over the years. Nowadays, there is a huge demand for planning support systems that is incorperated with the management information systems of the universities (Haliso and Toyosi, 2013). Academic staff regard information as useful if presented to them in reasonably aggregated formats, in a timely manner and cover sufficient scope in terms of future research activities. But the relevance of the information characteristic depends on and should be adapted to the contexts within which these academic staff has to operate (Case, 2002).

Okiy (2007) reports that students and Faculty members in the Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria, make use of the newspapers, journals, textbooks, magazines, projects, dictionaries, encyclopaedias and government documents. Moreover, Popoola, (2001) discovers that academic social scientists in the Nigerian universities utilise the following library information services: current awareness, photocopying, referencing, statistical data analysis, email, selective dissemination of information and online database searching in support of their research output. Kemoni (2002) studies the utilisation of archival information by researchers in the University of Nairobi, Kenya and finds out that they utilised maps and atlases, gazettes, theses and dissertations, newspapers, statistical abstracts, video films, political record books, journals and conference papers.

Ojedokun and Owolabi (2003) investigates internet access competence and use for teaching and research activities by the University of Botswana academic staff.

Information resources utilisation is referred to as the practical and maximum use of library information materials identified and acquired by a user for the purpose of solving a problem (Emesalu, 2012). Several studies such as Abels, Liebscher and Denman (1996); Ehikhamenor (2003); Tenopir (2003); Peansupapa and Walker (2005); and Popoola (2008) have shown the relationship between research and utilization of scholarly electronic publications. Popoola (2008) in a study of the use of information sources and services and its effect on the research output of social scientist in Nigerian universities found that the use of information sources or services will improve the research output of the respondents (social scientists in Nigerian universities) and if information's resources and services available in their institutional information system or elsewhere are used their research output is more significantly enhanced. In the same study, Popoola (2008) reveals that electronic information resources services such as the Internet, e-mail and CD-ROM searches were not popular among social scientists. This does not imply that social scientists do not use electronic information resources. However, when compared to other information resources available to them, their rate of use of electronic information resources is low. Buckland (1991) defines information as a process which occurs in the mind when a problem is united with data that can help solve it. Information is part of a process of converting messages received into knowledge. Aiyepeku (1992) views information as something that reduces uncertainty in decision-making. The survival of a social scientist in any university system depends on the ability to exploit available information resources. In order to ensure proper and effective utilization, Kantumoya (1992) in Uhegbu (2002) opine that information must not just be made available in the right quantity and at the right time. Additionally, it must be accurate, its sources must be credible, reliable and they must be proximate to the users. Stoan (1991) agrees with this finding by submitting that only a small percentage of social scientists regularly use formal information resources such as databases.

Roberts (1980) asserts social scientists use information resources far less than those in the sciences. The problems facing social scientists in

the Nigerian university system include poor searching skills, inadequate and obsolete library materials, ineffective provision of information services, and poor knowledge of existing information products and services in the library. Tyagi (1994) says that the problem is compounded when indigenous information resources in developing countries are not well known. Hobohm (1999) asserts that practitioners of the applied social sciences working in developing countries have a particularly urgent need for better information resources, which could be addressed using indigenous information and knowledge. Haladu (1989) stresses the importance of both formal and informal information exchange. Ojo-Ade and Jagboro (2005) ascertains that academic staff in the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, used subject catalogues to locate and retrieve the needed information materials. The use of relevant and timely information is likely to enhance the academic output of lecturers. No wonder Popoola and Haliso (2009) reports that the use of information sources could help lecturers to carryout innovative studies, which in turn make them (lecturers) support their communities through research and development.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted. Multistage sampling technique was used to select 414 out of 905 lecturers from 16 law faculties out of 29 state and federal universities offering law across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria -North-East=29; North-West=74; South-East=76; North-Central=95; South-South=75 and South-West=65 (*NUC Bulletin,* 2009). A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The research questions were analysed using descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviations and variance, while the hypothesis was tested with Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What is the extent of use of various legal information resources by law lecturers?

The descriptive statistics show the frequency of use of various legal information resources by law lecturers. From the simple percentage analysis, the results indicated that the following legal information resources are used daily by the law lecturers of universities in descending order. Law books, (94.2%); legal periodicals, (52.1%); law reports, (48.3%); e-resources, (47.1%); reference materials, (13.2%); indexes and abstracts, (10.8%); legislation and statutes, (10.3%); non - legal materials, (9.6%); and digests, (3.3%). This is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Utilisation of legal information resources in Faculties of Law in Nigerian universities

S/N	Legal Information Resources	Daily N%	Weekly N%	Monthly N%	Quarterly N%	Never Used N%	Mean	SD
1	Law Reports	200 (48.3%)	63 (15.2%)	101 (24.3%)	50 (12.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4.1867	1.26059
2	Legislation and Statutes	43 (10.3%)	56 (13.5%)	211 (50.9%)	87 (21.0%)	17 (4.1%)	3.8200	1.22650
3	Legal Periodicals	216 (52.1%)	97 (23.4%)	78 (18.8%)	15 (3.6%)	8 (1.9%)	3.9400	1.16567
4	Government Publications	0 (0.0%)	22 (5.3%)	248 (60.0%)	108 (26.0%)	36 (8.6%)	1.9800	1.00649
5	Law Books	390 (94.2%)	10 (2.4%)	8 (1.9%)	6 (1.4%)	0 (0.0%)	3.2667	1.37897
6	Reference Materials	55 (13.2%)	152 (36.9%)	99 (23.9%)	75 (18.1%)	33 (7.95%)	3.0400	1.26851
7	E-Resources	195 (47.1%)	85 (20.5%)	57 (13.7%)	47 (11.3%)	30 (7.2%)	2.0800	.97980
8	Online Legal Databases	65 (15.7%)	58 (14.0%)	44 (10.6%)	70 (16.9%)	177 (42.7%)	1.6933	.71369
9	Non Legal Materials	40 (9.6%)	62 (14.9%)	60 (14.4%)	69 (16.6%)	183 (44.2%)	2.8533	1.38732
10	Indexes And Abstracts	45 (10.8%)	55 (13.2%)	102 (24.6%)	123 (29.7%)	89 (21.4%)	3.5067	1.24106
11	Digests	14 (3.3%)	50 (12.0%)	20 (4.8%)	41 (9.9%)	289 (69.8%)	1.8200	1.19321
12	Newspapers	15 (3.6%)	9 (2.1%)	41 (10.0%)	128 (30.9%)	221 (53.3%)	1.5333	.67224
13	Loose Leaves	2 (0.5%)	20 (4.8%)	30 (7.2%)	180 (43.5%)	182 (43.9%)	1.7267	.79340

Research Question 2: What are the types of legal information resources utilised by the law lecturers for research?

In order to answer the fourth research question, the types of legal information resources utilised by lecturers in law faculties in Nigerian universities were defined by eleven (11) components and they were measured with a scale of 3 items (1 – Not Used, 2 – Hardly Used, 3 – Mostly Used). Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data collected and the results are presented below in Table 2.

The overall result reveals that legal periodicals were mostly used by lecturers in Faculties of Law in Nigerian universities with a frequency score of (96.8%) followed by law books (96.6%), e-journals (87.9%), reference materials (87.4%), lexis-nexis (85.2%), law reports (84.0%), e-books (82.1%), and legislations and statutes (76.0%). Based on the analysis of the mean scores obtained, it could be deduced that legal periodicals, law books, e-journals, reference materials, lexis-nexis, law reports, e-books, legislation and statutes were the types of resources that are mostly utilised by law lecturers for research in law faculties in Nigerian universities.

Table 2: Types of legal information resources in Law faculties in universities in Nigeria

S/N	Legal Information Resources	Mostly Used N%	Hardly Used N%
1	Law Reports	348 (84.0%)	66 (15.9%)
2	Legislation And Statutes	315(76.0 %)	99(23.9%)
3	Legal Periodicals	401 (96.8%)	13 (3.1%)
4	Government Publications	289 (69.8 %)	125(30.1%)
5	Law Books	400 (96.6%)	14(3.3%)
6	Reference Materials	362 (87.4%)	52 (12.5%)
7	Law Pavilion	280 (67.6%)	134 (32.3%)
8	Nexis-Lexis	353 (85.2%)	61 (14.7%)
9	E-Journals	364(87.9%)	48(12.0%)
10	E-Books	340(82.1%)	74(17.8%)
11	Non-Legal Materials	22 (5.3%)	392 (94.6%)

N = 414

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between availability of legal information resources and research productivity of Law lecturers in Faculties of Law of Nigerian universities.

The study shows that there was a significant positive correlation between availability of legal information resources and research productivity of law lecturers from the sampled Nigerian universities ($r = 0.392$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The result is in agreement with the findings of Ugah (2008) which reveals significant relationships among availability, accessibility and the use of library services which could lead to increase in publication output. It is also in concordance with the findings of Ainoko and Boman (2009) which asserts that availability of information resources helps in facilitating legal research (See Table 3).

Table 3: Relationship between availability of legal information resources and research productivity of lecturers in Faculties of Law in Nigerian universities

		Availability of legal information	Research productivity
Availability of legal information	Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.392*
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	4653.973	265.913
	Covariance	11.241	0.643
	N	414	413
Research productivity	r	.392*	1
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	265.913	3045.195
	Covariance	0.643	7.373
	N	413	413
Mean		28.9867	10.3826
SD		5.58880	4.53604

Note: N = 414; *P < .05 (2-tailed test); (Tabulated Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient = 0.088).

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between utilisation of legal information resources and measure of research productivity of lecturers in Faculties of Law in Nigerian universities.

Results on Table 4 confirmed a significant positive correlation between utilisation of legal information resources and research productivity of law lecturers from the sampled Nigerian universities (r = .986, P <0.05). Hence, there is a significant correlation between utilisation of legal information resources and research productivity among the law lecturers in Faculties of Law in Nigeria. Based on this, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4 Relationship between utilisation of legal information resources and research productivity of lecturers in Faculties of Law in Nigerian universities

		Utilisation of legal information resources	Research productivity
Utilisation of legal information resources	R		.986*
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	16873.573	10.040
	Covariance	4.15	0.024
	N	414	413
Research productivity	R	.986*	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	10.040	3045.195
	Covariance	0.024	7.373
	N	413	413
Mean scores		26.6133	10.3826
SD		10.64168	4.53604

Note: *N = 414; *P < .05 (2-tailed test); (Tabulated Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient = 0.159).*

Discussion of Findings

The study finds that legal information resources such as law reports, legal periodicals, legislation and statutes, indexes and abstracts, law book, non- legal materials, reference materials, digests and e-resources were used daily by the law lecturers in universities in Nigeria. The findings of this study is in agreement with Ocholla (1996) who studied academics from four faculties of the Moi University, Kenya and ranked the information resources they used in the following order of frequency: journals, textbooks, research reports, conference literature and others. This shows that journals are most frequently used by lecturers among other information resources. Popoola (2008) in a study of the use of information sources and services and its effect on the research output of social scientist in Nigerian universities find that the use of information sources or services will improve the research output of the respondents (social scientists in Nigerian universities) and if information's resources and services available in their institutional information system or elsewhere are used, their research output is more significantly enhanced.

Also, the result revealed that legal periodicals were mostly used by lecturers in law faculties in Nigerian universities followed by law books, then e-journals, reference materials, lexis-nexis, law reports, e-books, legislation and statutes. Based on the findings of the analysis obtained, it could be deduced that legal periodicals, law books, e-journals, reference materials, lexis-nexis, law reports, e-books, legislation and statutes were the types of resources that are mostly utilised by law lecturers for research in Faculties of law in Nigerian universities. The findings disagreed with Olalude (2007) who studied utilisation of internet sources for research by information professionals in sub-Saharan Africa and found out that the scholarly electronic publications were available in Federal universities in Nigeria, but there was low use of scholarly electronic publications by lecturers in federal universities in Nigeria compared to their counterparts in Britain, United State, and even in Botswana and South Africa.

Conclusion

The inference that can be drawn from the outcome of this study is that legal information resources availability, accessibility and utilisation play a crucial role in enhancing the research productivity of Law lecturers. There is no doubt that improved research productivity of law lecturers reside in utilisation of varied legal information resources which should be made available and accessible for lecturers to utilise. Law lecturers should therefore continue to use the available legal information resources.

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