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FREQUENCY OF USE AND AWARENESS OF ELECTRONIC DATABASES BY UNIVERSITY LECTURERS IN SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The introduction of electronic databases by university libraries has presented university lecturers with opportunities of obtaining accurate, timely and up-to-date information with little effort. However, research reports have revealed that there is low level of use of electronic databases by university lecturers. Hence this study investigated the frequency of use and awareness of electronic databases by lecturers in universities in South-west, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to: i. examine the extent of awareness of electronic databases for teaching and research by university lecturers in South-west, Nigeria; ii. identify the means through which awareness of electronic databases are created; and iii. determine the frequency at which university lecturers in South-west, Nigeria, use electronic databases. The study adopted the descriptive research design of a correlational type. The population comprised 10,452 lecturers in fifteen public universities in South-west, Nigeria from which a sample size of 836 was drawn using a multi-stage sampling procedure. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics at 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study revealed that university lecturers in South-west, Nigeria are aware of the usefulness of most of the electronic databases for teaching and research; university libraries in South-west, Nigeria use different promotional methods to create awareness of the usefulness of databases; and the frequency at which University lecturers in South-west, Nigeria use electronic databases was very low. It can be concluded from the study that the frequency at which university lecturers in South-west, Nigeria, use electronic databases is very low. It is therefore recommended that university libraries should expand their library orientation programmes.

Keyword

Awareness, Electronic Databases, Frequency of use, Lecturers, South-west, University

Introduction

Lecturers are in the business of training students in order to harness their potentials, skills, talents and distinctive abilities for the service of the society. Also, lecturers strengthen the skills, knowledge, competencies, and abilities in graduates to survive, adapt and thrive in the fast-changing world. Lecturers are involved in human capacity building; hence, they need current and up-to-date information (Eiriemiokhale, 2019). As supported by Akpan and Etor (2012), the human capacity building efforts in universities involve teaching and training of students.

Nwachukwu and Asom (2015) stated that the functions of university lecturers are focused on attaining the university's goals as specified in the National Policy on Education (2017). These goals include research; teaching; dissemination of existing and new information; pursuit of services to the community and being a storehouse of knowledge. To achieve these tasks, required appropriate information. Hence, lecturers in universities are expected to be in persistent touch with up-to-date information to successfully and confidently improve students' learning. In order to satisfy the growing information needs of lecturers, Edem and Egbe (2016) affirmed that the 21st Century had experienced a significant increase of electronic databases which have greatly improved the information seeking and attitude of academics globally. Electronic databases are major sources for information dissemination in the universities, especially for lecturers.

The merits of electronic databases to lecturers in universities are enormous. Databases provide many merits over traditional print-based resources: they contain current information that is updated frequently; offer advanced search capabilities for lecturers; offer flexibility in the storage of the results and improve lecturers' access to information without the constraints of time and location (Yusuf & Farouk, 2017). Electronic databases are often faster to consult than print resources especially when searching retrospectively, and they are straight forward when using keywords. They provide the possibility of searching multiple files at a time. Electronic databases

can be searched, printed and saved to be repeated or consulted at a later date (Emwanta & Nwalo, 2013; Chima-James & Ogaraku, 2018). The submission implies that the relevance of electronic databases to lecturers cannot be over-emphasised.

Information explosion has increased the number of electronic databases available. However, Kumar, Singh and Yadav (2011) argued that access to the precise information is tasking because information is rich, but users are handicapped in knowing whether it is available and where to locate it. Awareness of databases affects their usage. When users have adequate information on what resources are available in the library, they are encouraged to use them as the need arises. Baro, Endouware and Ubogu (2011) revealed that, though awareness may lead to usage of databases, users' awareness level may be higher than usage. They reported that the awareness level of their respondents about online resources was more than usage. Similarly, Eiriemiokhale and Ibeun (2017) asserted that, there is a correlation between awareness and accessibility and usage of library resources. The correlation, according to them, is that what a user is not aware of is hardly wanted and once something is not wanted, it will not be required and once it is not required, it will not be sought for and once it is not sought for, it will not be accessible for use.

Despite the huge benefits accruing from electronic databases usage and the huge sums of money spent by university libraries in subscribing to electronic databases, preliminary investigations and studies (Edem, 2016; Abubakar & Akor, 2017) have shown that the use of electronic databases by university lecturers in Nigeria is low. This situation is not desirable as it will impede effective teaching and quality academic research, thereby reducing the professional productivity of university lecturers.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to investigate awareness and use of electronic databases by university lecturers in South-west, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- i. examine the extent of awareness of electronic databases for teaching and research by university lecturers in South-west, Nigeria;
- ii. identify the means through which awareness of electronic databases are created; and
- iii. determine the frequency at which university lecturers in South-west, Nigeria, use electronic databases.

Review of Related Literature

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (2011), awareness is defined as the ability to feel, perceive or to be conscious of events, objects or sensory patterns. Basiru and Okwilagwe (2018) stated that awareness raises consciousness and knowledge about a certain technology; it is of social benefits and personal. This opinion supported the findings of the study, which established awareness as the central determinant of user attitude and behaviour towards technology. Aina (2014) investigated awareness, accessibility and use of electronic databases among academic staff of Babcock University Business School. The survey research design was adopted. The entire population of the study was 116. Simple random sampling technique was adopted. The close-ended questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The results showed that the level of awareness of electronic databases by lecturers in Babcock Business School is varied. A bulk of the respondents were aware of the academic Journal (69.4%), which was followed by JSTOR (56.5%), as well as Theses and Dissertation (54.1) and Ebscohost (50.6). The analysis further revealed that the bulk of the respondents were not aware of World BankOpen Knowledge Repository, Book boon, and National Virtual Library with (25.9%), (32.9%) and (29.4)

respectively. The findings also revealed that, nine out of the thirteen databases under consideration were averagely aware of by the respondents. Also, the findings of Ibegwam, Ogunyade and Ajuwon (2013) on awareness and use of electronic databases by lecturers of two medical colleges in Nigeria, namely University of Ibadan and University of Lagos, showed that 80% of the respondents who were lecturers at different levels, were aware of the availability of electronic databases in the two colleges of medicine libraries.

In a similar vein, Ani and Edem (2012) reported a survey conducted to explore the extent of access and use of electronic databases by lecturers in the University of Calabar, Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that although the vast majority (96.3%) of the lecturers were accessing and using relevant online databases for teaching and research, the frequency of usage was low, as most of the respondents (48.1%) used these databases occasionally. From the findings of the study, the key factors that impeded access and use of electronic databases by lecturers in the university include non-subscription to relevant electronic databases by the university library, cost of access and usage, lack of awareness, lack of access to relevant databases and insufficient Internet skills for appropriately accessing the university library. Equally, Bashorun, Isah and Adisa (2011) stated that there was low frequency in utilising electronic resources by lecturers in the University of Ilorin because of lack of time, lack of electronic resources awareness, power outage, ineffective communication channels, slow network and inadequate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities, lack adequate power supply and lack of training.

Edem (2016) researched faculty awareness and utilisation of the Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL) database for teaching and research in the University of Calabar, Nigeria. The survey research method was adopted. A structured questionnaire was designed and used for data collection from lecturers of Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Wildlife Resources

Management. Eighty copies of the questionnaire were distributed randomly to the respondents. Sixty (60) copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and used for data analysis (with 75.0% respondent rate). Findings revealed that the majority (88.3%) of the respondents were aware of TEEAL databases, while only a few of the respondents (11.7%) indicated their non-awareness of the database in the library. it is an indication of usage of the electronic databases for teaching and research.

However, Okiki's (2012) study revealed that the level of awareness of available electronic resources by academic staff at the University of Lagos was low. The results showed that out of 113 respondents, 61 (54.0%) indicated unawareness of e-resources when compared to 52 (46.0%) who agreed with the level of awareness of electronic resources. It implies that the level of awareness of available electronic resources is quite low. It goes to show that the university library has not done enough in creating awareness to the users' community. On his part, Kwadzo (2015) investigated the awareness and usage of databases by Geography and Resource Development Information Studies graduate students at the University of Ghana. The survey design was adopted, and the questionnaire was used to elicit data. Sixty-seven students from the two departments participated in the survey. The finding of the study showed that majority of the respondents heard about the available databases. 97.0% responded in the affirmative. Also, Chirra and Madhusudhan (2009) examined the use of electronic databases by doctoral research scholars of GOA University, India. The findings of the study showed that all the respondents (100.0%) were aware of the electronic databases of the consortium and accessed them.

University libraries are an integral part of universities and have a key role to play in assisting the core mission of the university that is learning, teaching and research. Naqvi (2012) investigated the use of electronic databases by postgraduate students and research scholars at

GBPUAT library, India. The findings of the study showed that a bulk of the respondents (95.7%) were well aware of the available databases and used them for different purposes. Baro, Endouware and Ubogu (2011) argued that though awareness may lead to usage of databases, this is not always the case. The awareness level of a user may be higher than actual usage. They reported that the awareness level of their respondents about online resources was more than usage. They found that while 23.2% were aware of the Medline database, only 17.0% used it. Also, while 60.8% were aware of HINARI, only 38.8% used it. Also, Swain (2010) argued that awareness could be influenced by the exposure and users' interest in the database. In his study of students' keenness on the use of databases in the Business School of Orissa, India, the study revealed that 62.5% of students were aware of EBSCOhost, 52.6% were aware of Emerald and below 40% were aware of other databases.

Kumar and Gopalakrishnan (2016) submitted that the challenges of higher education institutions could be met via creativities in electronic-learning by placing much emphasis on the critical role of e-resources utilisation in modern academic libraries. Various empirical studies such as El-Berry (2015) and Akpojotor (2016), reported findings on user awareness of electronic databases availability in libraries. Such studies found that users were aware of and used the electronic databases available to them. For example, Chirra and Madhusudhan (2009) investigated the use of electronic journals by doctoral research scholars of Goa University, India. The findings of the study indicated that all (100.0%) of respondents were aware of the e-journals of the Consortium and accessed them. It is an indication that awareness of the availability of electronic databases in a library promotes their use. Thanuskodi and Ravi (2011) also investigated uses of digital resources by lecturers and research scholars of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, India found out that about 67.1% of the respondents were familiar with the use of digital resources. The

study also reported that the majority of the respondents used digital resources for research purpose. Moreover, the respondents were observed to have developed a keen interest in learning the required skills for using electronic resources. Antony and Vijayakumar (2016) findings are in agreement with the findings of Thanuskodi and Ravi (2011).

In another study, Yebowaah and Plockey (2017) examined awareness and use of electronic databases by lecturers in the University for Development Studies Library, Ghana. The study adopted a quantitative approach through the use of survey design. Finding of the study indicated that most of the respondents 54 (67.5%) did not use electronic databases of the library while only 26 (32.5%) respondents indicated that they have been using electronic databases in the library. The findings also revealed the frequency of electronic databases utilisation in the library. It was found that only 2 (7.7%) respondents use electronic databases of the library every week, while 4 (15.4%) respondents used it twice every week. It was also discovered that 11 respondents (42.3%) used the electronic databases of the library once in every month, while 9 (34.6%) respondents used the facilities once a while.

Methodology

The study adopted survey method. The population comprised 10,452 lecturers in public universities in South-west, Nigeria. Eight hundred and thirty six (836) lecturers were proportionately selected through multi stage sampling procedure across twelve universities. Questionnaire was used for data collection from the respondents. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

Data Analysis and Discussions

Response Rate

A total of 836 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, out of which 815 (98.0%) copies were returned representing response rate. However, after a thorough examination of the returned copies, 804 (96.0%) were properly completed and found usable for the analysis.

Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Figure 1 presents the distribution of the respondents by gender.

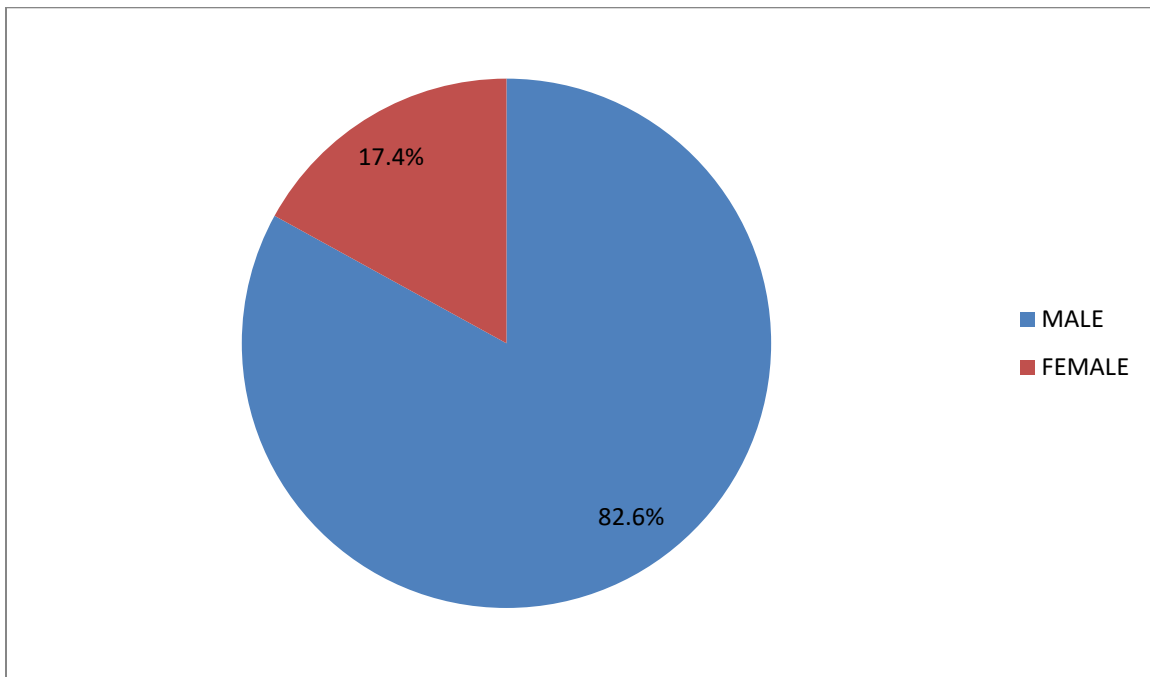


Fig. 1: Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Figure 1 shows that majority of the respondents 664 (82.6%) were male.

Distribution of the Respondents by Educational Qualification

Figure 2 presents the distribution of the respondents by educational qualification.

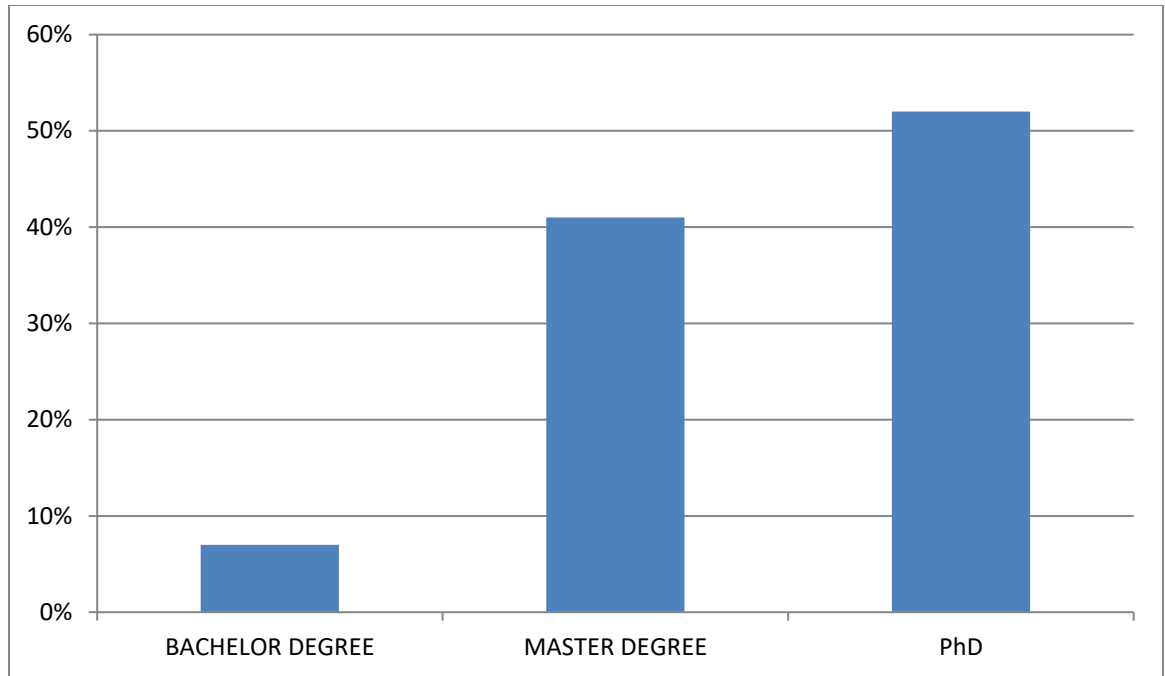


Fig. 2: Distribution of the Respondents by Educational Qualification

Figure 2 reveals the educational qualification of the respondents. It shows that majority of the respondents 422 (52.5%) were PhD holders.

Distribution of the Respondents by Job Status

Figure 3 presents the distribution of the respondents by job status.

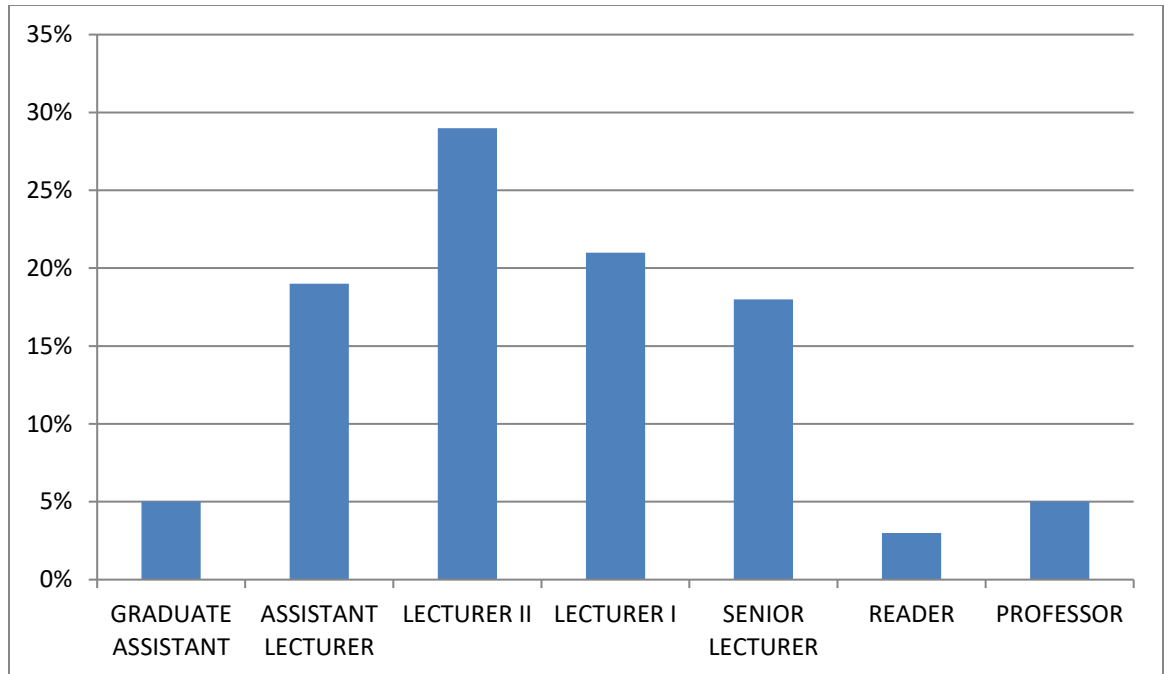


Fig. 3: Distribution of the Respondents by Job Status

Figure 3 revealed that majority of the respondents 232 (28.9%) were Lecturer II.

Distribution of the Respondents by Marital Status

Figure 4 presents the distribution of the respondents by marital status.

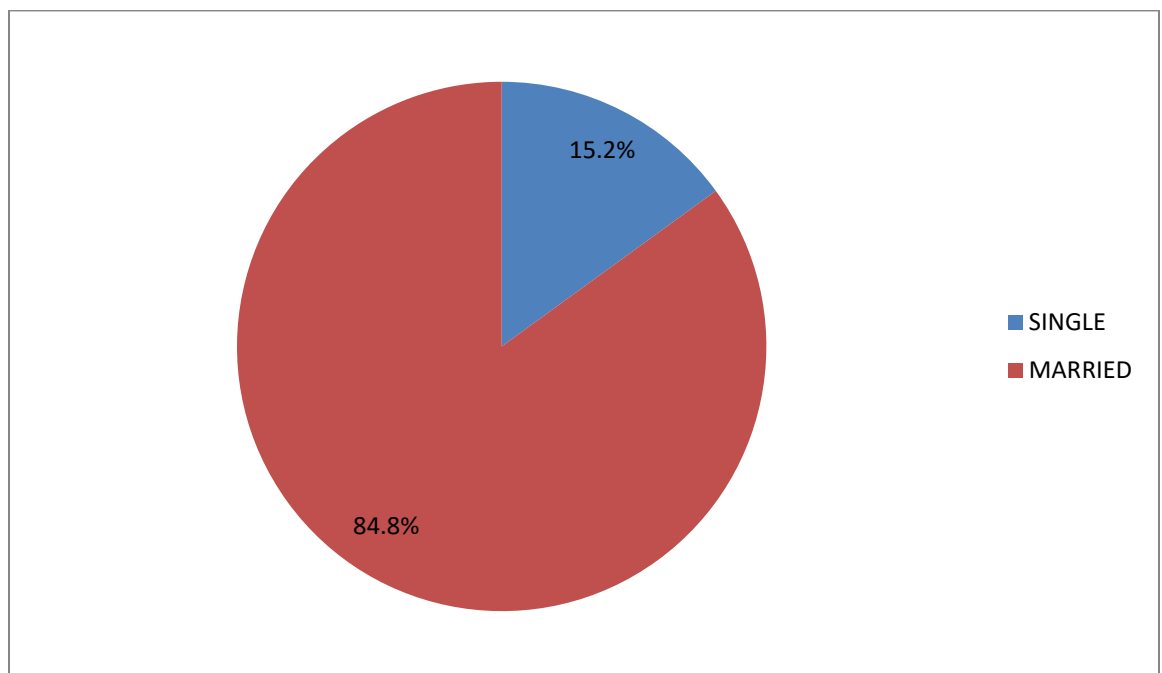


Fig. 4: Distribution of the Respondents by Marital Status

Figure 4 reveals the marital status of the respondents. It shows that majority of the respondents 682 (84.8%) were married.

Distribution of the Respondents by Age

Figure 5 presents the distribution of the respondents by age.

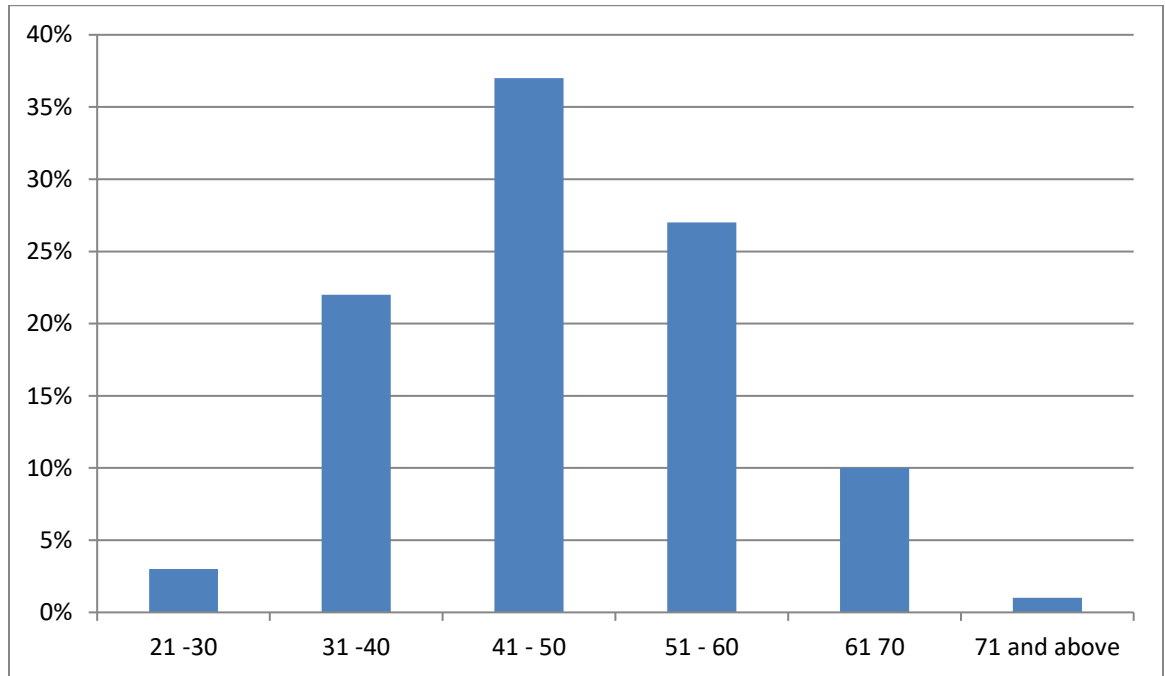


Fig. 5: Age Range of the Respondents

Figure 5 shows the distribution of respondents by age range. The table revealed that majority of the respondents 295 (36.7%) were within the age group of 41 to 50.

Distribution of the Respondents by Years of Work Experience

Figure 6 presents the distribution of the respondents by years of work experience.

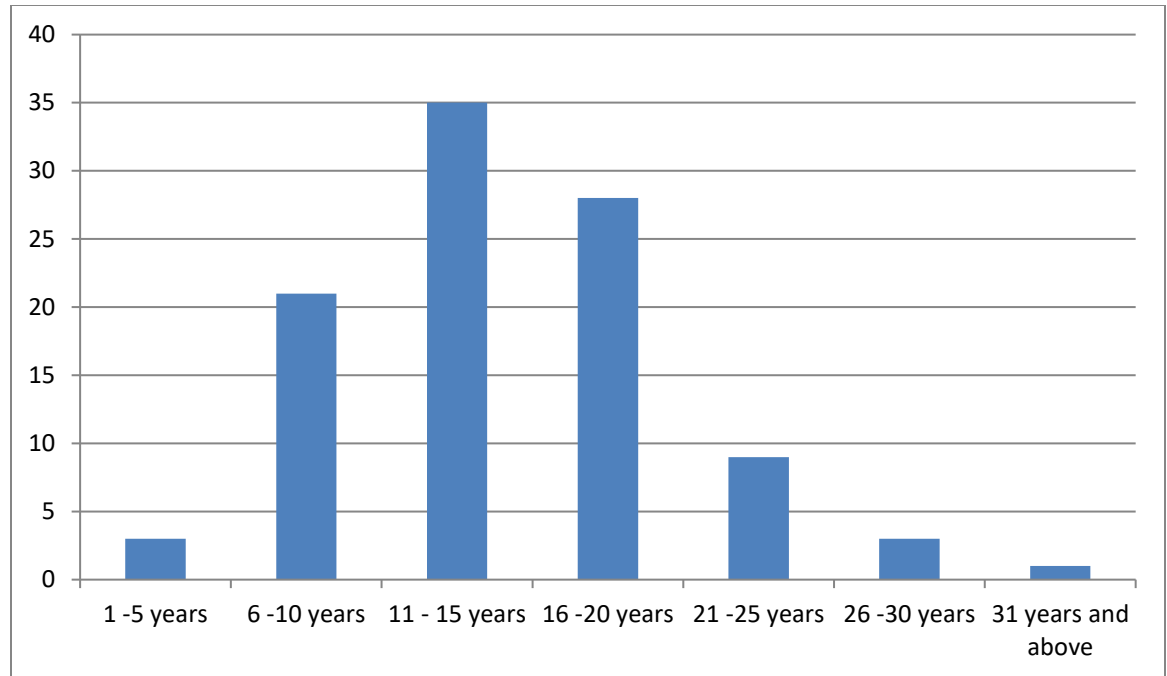


Fig. 6: Distribution of the Respondents by Years of Work Experience

Figure 6 shows the distribution of respondents based on their years of work experience. The table reveals that majority of the respondents 282 (35.1%) has 11 to 15 years work experience.

Research Question 1: To what extent are university lecturers in South-west, Nigeria aware of available databases for teaching and research?

Table 1 presents the extent of awareness of databases for teaching and research.

Table 1: Extent of Awareness of Databases for Teaching and Research

S/N	Awareness of Databases	Aware		Not Aware		Remark
		F	%	F	%	
1	AJOL (African Journal Online)	771	95.9	33	4.1	Aware
2	DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journal)	733	91.2	71	8.8	Aware
3	World Bank	467	58.1	337	41.9	Aware
4	Science Direct	728	90.5	76	9.5	Aware
5	International Research Journal	728	90.5	76	9.5	Aware
6	National Virtual Library	695	86.4	109	13.6	Aware
7	JSTOR	428	53.2	376	46.8	Aware
8	Cambridge Journals	500	62.2	304	37.8	Aware
9	Encyclopaedia of Life Support System	471	58.6	333	41.4	Aware
10	Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC)	652	81.1	152	18.9	Aware

11.	Digital Library for Earth System Education Online	433	53.9	371	46.1	Aware
12	Emerald	428	53.2	376	46.8	Aware
13	Academic Library Online	728	90.5	76	9.5	Aware
14	Google Scholar	695	86.4	109	13.6	Aware
15	TEEAL (The Essential Electronic Agricultural Libraries)	510	63.4	294	36.6	Aware
16	INASP (International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications)	652	81.1	152	18.9	Aware
17	Bookboon	328	40.8	476	59.2	Not Aware
18	Chicago Journals	395	49.1	409	50.9	Not Aware
19	BioMed Centre	252	31.3	552	68.7	Not Aware
20	Sage Online Journal	295	36.7	509	63.3	Not Aware
21	Sage OARE	328	40.8	476	59.2	Not Aware
22	Database of African Thesis and Dissertation (DATAD)	324	40.3	480	59.7	Not Aware
23	AGORA	180	22.4	624	77.6	Not Aware
24	Ebscohost	285	35.4	519	64.6	Not Aware
25	HINARI (Health Internet-Work Access Research Information)	176	21.9	628	78.1	Not Aware
Average Frequency and Percentage		487	60.6	317	39.4	Aware

The result as revealed in Table 1 showed that lecturers were aware of most of the electronic databases for teaching and research. The table also showed that some of the respondents indicated that they were not aware of some of the electronic databases for teaching and research. On the overall, 487 (60.6%) respondents indicated they were aware of the electronic databases for teaching and research, while 317 (39.4%) respondents indicated not aware. This implies that the lecturers were aware of the various common electronic databases for teaching and research. This finding agrees with the one by Basiru and Okwilagwe (2018) which reported that majority of academic staff in private universities in South-west, Nigeria were aware of electronic databases. Similarly, the findings of Ibegwam, Ogunyade and Ajuwon (2013) reported that lecturers at different levels are aware about the availability of e-resources in the colleges of medicine.

The results further indicated that the respondents were not aware of the following databases: HINARI, AGORA, Sage OARE, BioMed Centre, Bookboon, Ebscohost, Chicago Journal, Sage Online Journal and DATAD. This result is buttressed by the findings of Aina (2014), which showed that the level of awareness of electronic resources among the academic staff of Babcock Business School is varied. This situation is worrisome as the lecturers are not aware of the usefulness of the databases for teaching and research.

Research Question 2: Through which means do university lecturers in South-west, Nigeria get awareness of databases?

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation scores of the means university lecturers in South-west, Nigeria get awareness of the databases.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Responses on the Means of Awareness of Databases for Teaching and Research ($N=804$)

S/N	Sources of awareness of Databases	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Remark
1	Colleagues	4.22	0.60	Agreed
2	Orientation by the library	4.14	0.60	Agreed
3	Conferences	3.99	0.74	Agreed
4	Social media	3.72	0.74	Agreed
5	Fliers from the library	3.50	0.99	Agreed
6	E-mails from the library	2.29	1.20	Disagreed
7	SMS from the library	2.13	1.00	Disagreed
Weighted average		3.43	0.84	Agreed

From Table 2, based on the decision level of 3.0, the various ways through which lecturers in South-west, Nigeria became aware of electronic databases were orientation by the library, colleagues, social media and fliers from the library. It is evident from Table 2 that university libraries are not creating enough awareness of electronic databases for lecturers. Lecturers only get to become aware of the databases from external sources. It can be deduced from the finding university libraries in South-west, Nigeria are not doing enough to create awareness of their

available electronic databases. This finding is in agreement with that of Nkanga (2002) which reported that promotional techniques such as personal contacts, circulars, memos, telephone calls, meetings, direct mailing, displays, talks, newsletters, library tours and leaflets were widely used. The results is also supported by that of Yi (2016) which highlighted the promotional tools that can be used by academic libraries to promote their services and resources include: digital media, such as the library's Website, blogs and podcasts; print materials, such as posters, handouts and giveaways; events such as orientation tours and workshops; and other tools such as library publications, contests, brochures, direct mail, Web 2.0 applications and displays. This finding is in line with that of Basiru and Okwilagwe (2018) which reported that most respondents claimed that their information interaction with colleagues enabled them to use e-databases.

It is also seen from the results that libraries are not taking advantage of electronic mails and SMS to promote the use of their products and services. On the part of the library, the study revealed that the awareness media created by the library was very low. Further findings revealed lack of in-depth orientation on library usage in respect of library online services. Most of the lecturers have resorted to self-help in obtaining information about electronic databases.

Research Question 3: What is the frequency at which university lecturers in South-west, Nigeria use electronic databases?

Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation of respondents' frequency of electronic databases usage.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Respondents' Frequency of Electronic Databases Usage (N=804)

S/N	Frequency of Databases Usage	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Remark
1.	International Research Journal	3.37	0.88	Often used
2.	Academic Library Online	3.00	1.05	Often used
3.	World Bank	2.99	0.99	Often used
4.	Google Scholar	2.99	1.09	Often used
5.	AJOL (African Journal Online)	2.64	1.07	Often used

6.	Cambridge Journals	2.47	1.21	Often used
7.	Emerald	2.36	0.98	Rarely used
8.	Chicago Journals	2.36	1.34	Rarely used
9.	Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC)	2.27	1.01	Rarely used
10.	DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journal)	2.23	1.28	Rarely used
11.	Encyclopaedia of Life Support System	2.16	1.12	Rarely used
12.	Sage Online Journal	2.08	1.08	Rarely used
13.	National Virtual Library	2.08	0.85	Rarely used
14.	INASP (International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications)	1.91	0.79	Rarely used
15.	Science Direct	1.89	0.84	Rarely used
16.	Ebscohost	1.76	0.66	Rarely used
17.	JSTOR	1.75	0.84	Rarely used
18.	Digital Library for Earth System Education Online	1.67	0.92	Rarely used
19.	Bookboon	1.64	0.83	Rarely used
20.	BioMed Centre	1.63	0.78	Rarely used
21.	Database of African Thesis and Dissertation (DATAD)	1.63	1.02	Rarely used
22.	Sage OARE	1.54	0.57	Rarely used
23.	TEEAL (The Essential Electronic Agricultural Libraries)	1.49	1.03	Rarely used
24.	AGORA	1.32	0.64	Rarely used
25.	HINARI (Health Internet-Work Access Research Information)	1.22	0.59	Rarely used
Weighted average		2.00	0.94	Rarely used

Table 3 reveals the frequency at which the respondents utilize electronic databases. Based on decision level of 2.5, the table shows that the respondents indicated that they rarely use most of the databases. On the overall, the respondents indicated that they rarely utilize the various electronic databases subscribed to by their university libraries ($\bar{X} = 2.00$, $SD = 0.94$). This implies that the usage of electronic databases by university lecturers in South-west Nigeria is low. This result is supported by that of Abubakar and Akpor (2017) which revealed the frequency of use of electronic information in the Agriculture Universities. The analysis of data revealed that the respondents used electronic databases monthly. Perhaps, low level of awareness by most users may have contributed to the low frequency of usage

This finding is at variance with various empirical studies such as El-Berry (2015), Akpojotor (2016) and Azubuike (2016) which reported findings on user awareness of e-resources availability in libraries. Such studies have found that clients were aware of and used the e-databases available to them. For example, Chirra and Madhusudhan (2009) in a survey on the use of electronic journals by doctoral research scholars of Goa University, India, revealed that all (100%) of respondents were aware of the e-journals of the Consortium and accessed them. This suggests that awareness of the availability of e-resources in a library promotes their use.

This is a disheartening report. A situation where electronic databases are available, but the frequency of use is low is discouraging. This result can be traced to the low level of awareness of lecturers on the available databases, since it is not possible for someone to utilize what he does not know exists.

Summary of Findings

Findings of the study were that:

- i. University lecturers in South-west, Nigeria are aware of most of the electronic databases for teaching and research.
- ii. University libraries in South-west, Nigeria use different promotional methods to create awareness of the usefulness of databases. The major techniques include: orientation by the library, fliers from the library. In addition, lecturers also receive similar information from professional colleagues, conferences and social media.
- iii. The frequency at which University lecturers in South-west, Nigeria use electronic databases was very low. They only rarely use electronic databases.

Conclusion

The study concluded that, the frequency at which university lecturers in South-west, Nigeria, use electronic databases is very low. There is also low level of awareness creation by university libraries in South-west, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made to improve the awareness and frequency of use of electronic databases by university lecturers in Nigeria.

- i. University libraries in Nigeria should intensify their promotional activities geared towards marketing their electronic databases. New campaign methods on social and new media should be adopted.
- ii. In order to increase electronic databases usage by lecturers, university libraries should expand their library orientation programmes, constantly distribute fliers and send notifications via e-mails and sms. University libraries in Nigeria need to identify ways to motivate lecturers to use electronic databases available in the library. Continuous sensitization campaigns should be done. Training of lecturers on the use of databases, as well as working with the university management to improve internet connection on campus.
- iii. Nigerian university lecturers should take advantage of the rich databases available in their university libraries. They should increase the frequency at which they utilize electronic databases

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