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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AMONG RECORDS MANAGERS IN NIGERIA'S PREMIER UNIVERSITY

by

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. This study was designed to investigate the awareness level, perception, and the adherence of record managers in the University of Ibadan to the provisions of the Nigerian Freedom of Information Law in relation to stages of records management practice.

Method. Survey design was adopted. The population comprised of 705 records managers and 255 were selected as sample. Data were collected using questionnaire and interview schedule and thereafter analysed using frequency distribution and percentage tables. The interview responses were transcribed and themes were identified using Nvivo version 12.

Results. Findings revealed that the level of awareness of records managers about FOI Law in the University of Ibadan is average. Also, there is high adherence to the provisions of the FOI Law on creation, storage, reliability, and disposal of records but low on access to records. More so, they have positive perception about the FOI Law. And the major constraint they face include: wrong information request and consideration of too many laws.

Conclusions. The study concluded that the success recorded by University of Ibadan in being one of the leading universities in Nigeria is not unconnected with the culture of effective records management. However, there is room for improvement, especially on access to records.

KEYWORDS: Freedom of Information (FOI) law, public institutions, records management practice, records managers, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of information/records in modern societies is no longer a matter of contention. Information, in its several forms, is the prerequisite for the functioning of modern society because success in every area of industry is ascribed to the ingenious use of information of the appropriate types (Omotayo, 2015). The efficient management of these resources is considered essential for the progress of any organisation. Hence, the ability of any institution whether public or private to carry out its directive efficiently depends on the availability and appropriate use of these resources (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2013). Records/information, therefore, must be properly managed for productivity, efficiency and attainment of institutional goals. Seniwoliba, Mahama and Abilla (2017) defined records management as the practices of maintaining the records of an institution from the time they are created up to the time of their disposal. It is the efficient and systematic control of records (both paper and electronic) through their life cycle.

A University, like every other institution, relies on records to function. Being a citadel of learning, it manages a lot of information and records. University creates, receives and holds information in a range of formats, and it must be managed appropriately in relations to its content, purpose and ongoing value (Forbes, 2012). These records/information serve as the institution's corporate memory and directs for effective planning and decision making (Atulomah, 2011). In essence, the foundation any institution of higher learning needs to deliver services and fulfill its obligation of accountability towards the community is sound records management practice (Ngeope, 2014). Public university as a public institution, therefore, must manage these records properly to achieve efficiency, accountability and transparency. Evidence of day-to-day business and

transactions must be kept as records for improved performance, accountability and transparency. This is because these records help in the formulation of policies, decision making, and continuity in administration.

Despite this importance, records in Nigeria's public institutions are poorly managed. Writing in support of this assertion, Igbekwe-Ibeto (2013) noted that for decades, public records hold no value as they are mismanaged. They are not treated as resources necessary for development. Yusuf (2012) also stressed that the operations of records management in public institution in Nigeria is surrounded by aura of mystery. Many a time, records were not created, and where created, they are not stored, and where stored, they were hurriedly disposed to erase or clear track(s) of wrong doings and corruptions. This has resulted to low productivity in public institutions. Following the poor performances of Nigeria public institutions regarding record management, members of the public have begun to ask questions about the management of these institutions. The quest to know led to the need to access records. But, unfortunately, applicants were denied access to records either because the records do not exist or the managers do not consider themselves answerable to the public (Yusuf, 2012). Consequently, this led to the agitation and call for review of records management practice in public institutions so as to make records managers in public institutions answerable to the public. Abone and Kur (2014) observed that it was the suppression of the press, the denial of applicants' access to records/information, that gave birth to the call for Freedom of Information Act in Nigeria.

Therefore, in order to save the falling standard of efficiency and productivity in public institutions and assist the fight against corruption majorly aided by mismanagement of records, the Nigerian government under the leadership of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan signed the FOI Bill into law. This law became the legal framework for record management practices in public institutions addressing the flow, use and maintenance of records in public institutions and private institutions in which any Federal, State or Local government has controlling interest and those private institutions performing public functions (Shepherd, Stevenson & Flinn, 2011, Yusuf, 2012, and Omotayo, 2013). Just as Egwunyenga (2009) observed, effective record management practice requires more than just ethics but also legal standing.

Freedom of Information, also referred to as access to information in many literature, is simply making information free and accessible as permitted by the law. It is the ability of the citizens of a country to have free access to information enabled by the legislation (Omotayo, 2015). According to Segun (2018), citing section 1(1) of the Nigerian FOI Act, FOI is the right of any person to access or request information which is in the custody or possession of any public official, agency or institution, whether or not such information is contained in written form. The FOI Act is the law that guarantees the right of the public to access information and ensures records are properly managed by public institutions. Anyanwu, Akanwa and Ossai-onah (2013) observed that the main purpose of the Freedom of Information Act 2011 is to make public records and information freely available to the public, protect public records on grounds of public interest and personal privacy as well as protect public officers who provide such information without authorization. Other objectives include to ensure; public institutions practice good records management, the right to take legal action in court to compel any public institution to comply with the Act is available, and many more (FOI Act, 2011).

These objectives informed the redefined manner for records management in public institutions. This is because there is no way we can talk about access to records without touching the other aspect of records management (creation, storage, locatability, reliability, and disposal). The FOI Law, therefore, addresses the totality of what happens to records from creation to disposal in order to achieve effective records management practices, accountability and transparency in public institutions which has been the bane of the country (Yusuf, 2012; Omotayo, 2015). By this, the FOI Law becomes the framework for record management practices in public institutions ensuring the flow, use and maintenance of records (Shepherd, Stevenson & Flinn, 2011; Yusuf, 2012).

The Freedom of Information Act 2011 is a robust body of law, having 32 sections. The law focuses on two major parties; applicants and public institutions (Segun, 2018). And, of course, these are the major parties involve in records life cycle; the manager who creates and maintain the records and the applicant who may request and use the records. With these 32 sections, the FOI Act caters for all involved in records life cycle. Applicants are requesters of records/information and are directly affected by one or two stages of records management process which are: access (when, how and who can get records); and disposal (destruction of

records considered not useful by institutions but needed or requested by applicants); but these two cannot be separated from other stages in records management process. The other party which is public institutions consists of persons with the corresponding legal duty to provide an applicant with the information or copies of records sought. They include any public official, agency or institution as well as public institutions (Segun, 2018). It is, however, disappointing that much has not changed in the management of public records in Nigeria despite the availability of this framework adjudged to be global best aid for effective records management practice. Records are still poorly managed. Based on available literature, the factors responsible for this are: low level of awareness of the FOI Law, negative perception of records managers about the FOI Law, and non-compliance to the provisions of the FOI Law by public institutions.

Therefore, the broad objective of this study was to investigate the practice of records management among records managers in the University of Ibadan in line with the provisions of FOI Law. The specific objectives were to find out the level of awareness of FOI Law among records managers, investigate the adherence of records managers to the provisions of the FOI Law on creation, locatability, reliability, access, archival and disposal of records, to find out records managers' perception of FOI Law, identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of FOI Law in records management practice, and identify the constraints that records managers face in the discharge of their duties in this era Freedom of Information. Based on these objectives, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the level of awareness of FOI Law among records managers in the University of Ibadan?
2. How are records managers adhering to the provisions of the FOI Law on creation, locatability, reliability, access, archival and disposal of records in the University of Ibadan?
3. What is the perception of records managers about FOI Law in the University of Ibadan?
4. What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of FOI Law in records management practice?
5. What are the constraints that record managers face in the discharge of their duties in this era Freedom of Information?

The rest of this paper is organised as follows: the next section presents a review of related literature which is then followed by the details of the methodology adopted in the execution of the study and the results. The discussion of the findings, conclusion and suggestions for further studies finalized the paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several definitions of record exist, but the consensus among scholars and institutions is that record is any evidence of transaction that is created and maintained by an organisation or person, as a proof of activity. For instance, Shepherd (2006) defines record as a recorded evidence of an activity that is undertaken by an individual or a work group in the course of their business which results in a definable outcome. The University of Adelaide (2015) in a published record management handbook expressed that record in everyday language is an account of something, a collection of information, a compilation of facts; something that is written or otherwise set down in a way that preserves its content. Hence, the University formerly defines records from its perspective, as that which comprises recorded information in any form (regardless of format) that is; created or received by the university in the course of transacting its business or carrying out its activities, and retained as evidence of that activity or business. These include; email, letter, lab book, diagram, photograph, set of lecture handouts, payment receipt- or anything else tangible (or reproducible) that shows what the university does, has done, or will be doing.

Therefore, records management according to Igbekwo-Ibeto (2013) is a way of looking at how records are created, used, maintained and ultimately disposed of. He further stressed that the main objectives in managing public records are to make the records serve the purpose for which they were created as cheaply and as effectively as possible, and to make a proper disposition of them after they have served those purposes. The need for records management cannot be over emphasized. It helps to organize records and information for effective handling. Igbokwe-Ibeto (2013) affirmed that records play important role in the life cycle of an organisation. These include: recruitment, training and development, promotion, development and also act as information resources. Deastyne (1985) and Shepherd (2006) in Igbokwe-Ibeto (2013) believe that records

management helps organisations to conduct business in an efficient, accountable manner, deliver services consistently, support managerial decision making and transparent policy formulation, and ensure continuity in policy execution, management and administration.

The survival of any institution depends on their position and attention towards records management. Hence, Popoola (2000) in Bakare, Abioye and Issa (2016) opined that records are barometers for measuring the performance of an organisation hence, organisations must do all to ensure its proper management because without it no organisation can function. More so, speaking directly on the need for record management in the university, Atulomah (2011) stated that it helps in the control of quality and quantity of information that is created for the university. It determines which records are to be kept and which are to be discarded, and offer advice on ways to file, store, and retrieve records economically and efficiently. The Victoria State Government of Australia (2017), on the need for records management in schools, listed the following: (i) to meet legislative responsibilities. (ii) to ensure records are stored when needed and destroyed when permissible (iii) to meet administrative responsibilities to staff and students.

Records Management Practice and Challenges in Nigeria Universities

Records management occupies a strategic place in the efficient and effective administration of universities (Bakare, Abioye and Issa, 2016). In fact, the practice is central in the administration of the institutions because it documents the planning and implementation of appropriate courses of services allowing proper monitoring of work (Egwunyenga, 2009). Universities in Nigeria generate a mammoth quantity and quality variety of records in their day-to-day transaction. These records include log book, admission register, visitors' book, inventory book, account book, receipts, and many others. Owing to the amount and the sensitivity attached to records handled daily, many universities have department of records to manage them for meaningful use. Nwankwo (2001) in Seniwoliba, Mahama and Abilla (2017) however, observed that Nigerian tertiary institutions have an information generation capacity of 76% but a utilization capacity of 3%. This is ascertained by Atulomah (2011) who stated that daily records are multiplied in numbers but no control over their creation, maintenance and use. Following this state of records creation, many scholars have lent their voices to the need for proper management of these records in universities.

The need for effective records management is not and cannot be a subject of debate. Although the main business of universities is learning, teaching, research, and community development, none of these can be done without records. Therefore, for purpose of continuity, transparency, accountability, and decision making, universities ought to handle records deliberately. More so, it is evident that the management of a university runs in many hands cut across different departments and units. Atulomah (2011) revealed that decision making in University system is at all times by committee system and each University has between twenty and sixty committees. Each of these committees is expected to specialize with regards to the terms of and focus of activities. Therefore, for uniformity and coherence in the activities, these committees are dependent on reliable records without which there will be confusion, duplication of functions and poor administrative function to mention a few.

However, in respect to saving the corporate memory of universities in order to foster administrative effectiveness, researchers have looked into the challenges of managing records in universities and their findings include: inadequate skilled and experienced management personnel, lack of sufficient funds and the placement of records management in a low priority pedestal in relation to other things, inadequate record keeping equipment, and weak technological support for efficient record keeping (Afolabi, 2004; Egwuyenga, 2009; Azameti and Adjei, 2013). Usman and Udensi (2013) added that archaic record-keeping methods and poor data storage facilities are part of the problems militating against record management. These problems have eaten deep into records management practice in Nigerian universities. Hence, there have been series of complaints by lecturers, students, guardians, parents and other educational stakeholders that record-keeping in Nigerian universities is very porous, time-consuming and the records are, at times, not available (Usman and Udensi, 2013). However, If the university organization is to perform well, there is need to look into the stated problems in order to strengthen their records management systems as these will make the management efficient and effective (Ifedili and Agbaire, 2011).

The following have been identified as some of the challenges of records management in Universities.

- i. Inadequate record keeping equipment: many universities are yet to upgrade fully to modern records keeping technology. Azameti and Adjei (2013) revealed that this is the case in many universities. This, therefore, leads to the breach in the flow of records as it goes through its life cycle.
- ii. Archaic record-keeping methods: while some are still battling to upgrade fully to modern technology of records keeping, many others are still using archaic methods. This strains the effect of records management (Usman and Udensi, 2013).
- iii. Poor knowledge of best practice among record keepers: many records keepers are ill-trained (Egwuyenga, 2009; Igbokwe-ibeto, 2013). They lack the knowledge of modern practice for effective management. For instance, many of them have poor knowledge in computerized records management systems.
- iv. Weak technological support and poor equipment for efficient record keeping: many universities struggle with this. Most of their equipments are of low quality and they lack technological support. This has resulted into frequent crashing of hard drives and freezing of computer systems thereby making it difficult to retrieve information and sometimes resulting to extreme loss of records.
- v. Interferences from superiors: due to the nature university administrative systems, many departments, even non-academic, are headed by people in academics. However, many of this people are not trained for administrative purposes. Many a time, they make decisions which are against the frameworks of best practice records management which records managers/officers must obey.
- vi. Low morale of record keepers: Azameti and Adjei (2013) attributed this to poor remuneration. As long as records keepers are not regarded and well taken care of, records in universities will continually suffer. Record keepers are the custodians of records, therefore, to achieve improved performance in records management their morale must be high all the time.

However, there is no way one can talk about the FOI in Nigeria without talking about the press and journalists. The journalists were the warlords. Ogbuokiri (2011) in (Abone & Kur, 2014) observed that it was the Media Right Agenda (MRA), Civil Liberty Organisation (CLO), and the Nigeria Union of Journalist (NUJ), Lagos state chapter that introduced the idea of FOI Law by drafting the manuscript of the Freedom of Information Bill (FIB). This bill went through several reviews before being presented to the National Assembly. The bill was passed by the lower chamber (The House of Representatives) and the upper chamber (the Senate) in the year 2004 and 2006 respectively, but the first President of the fourth republic, President Olusegun Obasanjo, could not sign it into law before leaving office in 2007 (Abone & Kur, 2014). The FOI bill was, again, presented to the 6th National Assembly in 2008, and this time after it was passed, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan signed it into law on 28th of May, 2011 (Dawodu, 2016).

Major Provisions of FOI Law in Relation to Record Life Cycle

FOI Law is a body of rules and standards that address key issues that the society has considered as a gap in the practice of information/records management. On the other hand, the record life cycle is a model that explains the stages records go through from creation to disposal; this is identified practice of managing records. Looking at the components of FOI Law in relations to records life cycle, it would be good to start by stating what makes them different. Majorly, the FOI Law did not address the management of records in stages of records life cycle but rather according to the composition and structure of laws and how it addresses issues in the human society (laws are written in sections and subsections). Hence, there are cases where the law refers back to previous section(s) and or preceding sections. But notably, directly or indirectly all the important stages of the practice are catered for. However, for this study the record life cycle as developed by University of Adelaide is adopted, therefore the position of the FOI law on each of the stages will be discussed subsequently.

(a) Creation of records:

Institutions create records. They need records to function. The FOI law recognises this, and that is why Section 2(1) of the law states that “*A public institution shall ensure that it records and keeps information*

about all its activities, operations and businesses.” And Section 2(3) also states *“A public institution shall cause to be published in accordance with subsection (4) of this Section, the following information...”*

These sections affirm that records managers create and maintain records. But more than just creation, the law further states what and how the records should be created; Section 2(4) of the act states that the list of records in Section 2(3) should be created and made readily available, even when no applicants are requesting for it (e.g. Manuals used by employees of the institution in administering or carrying out any of the programmes or activities of the institution, substantive rules of the institution, statements and interpretations of policy which have been adopted by the institution, final planning policies, recommendations, and decisions; factual reports, inspection reports, and studies whether prepared by or for the institution; information relating to the receipt or expenditure of public or other funds of the institution; the names, salaries, titles and dates of employment of all employees and officers of the institution; and many others).

(b) Reliability of Records:

This is the practice of ensuring that records to be a true and accurate picture of what happened, and they shouldn't be interfered with at a later date. in Section 10 of the Act, it is clearly stated that *“It is a criminal offence punishable on conviction by the Court with a minimum of 1 year imprisonment for any officer or head of any government or public institution to which this Act applies to wilfully destroy any records kept in his custody or attempt to doctor or otherwise alter same before they are released to any person, entity or community applying for it.”* Hence, it is the duty of records managers to ensure that records are accurate and reliable. However, in the case of some documents that require constant update and revfunctions.qich is not an evidence in the court of law, and which is not an act to alter information before giving applicants, Section 2(5) states *“A public institution shall update and review information required to be published under this section periodically, and immediately whenever changes occur”*.

(c) Access to Records:

Access has always been the big thing when FOI is mentioned. In fact, access to records is what makes the paths of records managers and applicants to cross; it brings them together. Many literature have tried to dissect the issues surrounding access to information from different angles, but just as we have FOI coming to spell it out directly on who gets information and how, these literature may not be directly needed here. Sections 1(1&2), 3(3&4), 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, and 19 of the Act address the issues relating to access. With this law, the records manager no longer by his/her will determines who gets information but the law does, and interestingly everyone who understands the law knows when he/she is qualified to access information. Section 1 of the Act provides that every citizen is entitled to have access to records under the control of any public institution. And that the application for information can either be in written or oral form and the applicant does not have to demonstrate and/or indicate any specific interest in the information applied for. Also, Section 3(3) allows an illiterate or disabled applicant to request for information through a third party.

To further strengthen the right to access, Sections 4, 5 and 6 of the Act deal with time frame for granting or refusing an application for information/records by a public institution. However, as it has always been mentioned, access to information does not allow breach to security. Therefore, Sections 7, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, and 19 are provided to determine what qualify and do not qualify applicants in accessing information/records.

(d) Locatability of Records:

This is the organization of files in a manner that it can be easily accessible now and in the future. Therefore, in locatability we talk about storage facilities, packaging (format) and ease of access to information/records. Just as it is considered important in practice of records management, it is also catered for in FOI Law. Section 2(2) of the Act states that; *“A public institution shall ensure the proper organization and maintenance of all information in its custody in a manner that facilitates public access to such information”*. This is addressing ease of access. Also, Section 2(4) emphasises the format of the records by stating that *“A public institution shall ensure that information referred to in this section is widely disseminated and made readily available to members of the public through various means, including print, electronic and online sources, and at the offices of such public institutions.”* And Section 9(2) of the Act states that *“Every government or public institution shall ensure that it keeps every information or record about the institution's operations, personnel, activities and other relevant or related information or records.”*

(e) Archival and/or Disposal:

This is the final stage of record life cycle, it centres on what happens to record when it is no longer in use or active use. In practice, it is decided by records managers based on the disposal policy/schedule of organizations, but again to stop record managers from deliberately disposing records in order to avoid it being accessed by applicants, the law also talks on when disposal of records could be wrong. Section 10 of the Act, stated that *“It is a criminal offence punishable on conviction by the Court with a minimum of 1 year imprisonment for any officer or head of any government or public institution to which this Act applies to willfully destroy any records kept in his custody...”* More so, for records that the institution considered important but are not in use for daily transactions, such can be kept permanently and that is ‘Archiving’. For this, Section 9(1) state; *“Every government or public institution shall ensure that it keeps every information or record about the institution's operations, personnel, activities and other relevant or related information or records”*, and Section 26(c) also, talks on what should happen to National Archives. It states that *“This Act does not apply to- material placed in the National Library, National Museum or non- public section of the National Archives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on behalf of any person or organization other than a government or public institution.”*

With this line of relationship drawn between FOI and Records life cycle, it is evident that the essence of the law is to ensure a smooth and responsible records management activity.

Records Management Practice and FOI Law

Before now, records management practice is governed and directed by ethics or principles designed by institutions and/or professional bodies with few legislation or law addressing some aspect of the practice. As a result of this, public institutions and records managers are positioned as sole determinants of what happens to records in various institutions. Records managers, in respects to organizational policy, position or view on issues at one point in time and/or discretion determines what to create and what not to create, what to share and what not to share, who gets records and who is denied, when can/will records be disposed and when can't/won't be deposited among others.

This practice grew to be surrounded by aura of mystery in the operations of public institutions' records (Yusuf, 2012), as the external records users (applicants) are excluded in the operation/practice by being denied records/information. Perhaps, the records were not created in the first place, and where created, it is not properly stored, and where stored; it is probably disposed off to cover up some shady deals or implications it will have on the institution. Just as The National Records of Scotland (2018) observed, *“any freedom of information legislation is only as good as the quality of records to which it provided access. Such rights are of little use if reliable records are not created in the first place, if they cannot be found when needed or if the arrangements for their eventual archiving or destruction are inadequate”*. Hence, this mystery and mal-practice in records management is what the FOI came to correct based on its stated objectives. Forbe (2012) expressed that a good records management practice that is clearly defined by a legal framework helps institutions work in a more efficient manner, as staff will be able to create, locate, understand, and retrieve information as and when required. Although, it is possible to archive an effective record management practice if the ethics and standards, especially as identified by the records life cycle is morally followed. But as observed by Igbokwe-Ibeto (2013) the practice is often marred by ill-trained public administrators who lack in-depth managerial skills and approaches to public sector records management, hence the need for a legal framework.

Therefore, unless one decides to be dogmatic or myopic, it is evident, based on available literature, that FOI and records management principle, ethics and standards are not opposing tools rather they are tools for effective records management practices. FOI Law was made to clearly show the legal issues in information/records creation, distribution and disposal; it spells out the offence in hoarding of information by public institutions and directs how records should be handled in public institutions to achieve effective records management. It is a law that separate right from privilege. Access to information is made a right and not a privilege as perceived by some ill-trained record managers.

In all countries where FOI law exist, one thing that comes up and, arguably, never dies is the measure of its level of compliance by records managers. This is important because without adherence to the provisions of the law, the whole essence for the law will be meaningless; the agitation, the fight, resources spent will all boil down to zero. This is, however, measured in many ways depending on time, resources, scope, and location. Also, measuring the level of adherence is determined by what the examiners or researchers want to achieve. From this, a methodology is defined. Many determine the level of adherence to FOI provisions by measuring the compliance of records managers on access to records alone, some measure using compliance on creation and access of records, many others go as far as checking the whole stages of records life cycle in relation to the provisions of the law to measure adherence. The truth is, all these stages are undoubtedly tied together. Therefore, it is rare to fail in one or two of them and still be effective in the others. While many countries are celebrating the level of success on compliance to the provisions of the FOI law, Nigeria seems to be having a different story to tell. For instance, Shepherd *et al.* (2011) reported that the United Kingdom FOI Act, 2005 has brought a lot improvement in the management of records in public institutions and all thanks to the high level of compliance by records managers in the country. But in Nigeria, reports have always shown low level of compliance, as many records managers, if not all, fail to adhere to it.

In the year 2013, eighteen months after the FOI Bill was enacted, Right to Know (R2K) looked into the height of negligence directed towards the provisions of the FOI law by public institutions. It reported that “*it is routinely impossible, given this challenge of record keeping for even the most well-intentioned of institutions to meet up with the 7 days limit for responding to requests*”. Many institutions failed to create and make available all records listed in Section 2 (4) in order to aid proactive disclosure. Also, it was reported that institutions still destroy records at will against Section 10 of the FOI Act which criminalizes willful destruction of any records. This is corroborated by Igbokwe-Ibeto (2013) who revealed that many institutions at will still determine what to create and what not to create.

More so, Public and Private Development Center (PPDC), an organisation that monitors the compliance of public institutions to the provisions of FOI law in Nigeria, reported that in the year 2014, only ten (10) out of sixty-seven (67) institutions monitored fairly complied with the FOI Act using level of access as the basic methodology. In 2015, PPDC reported that none of the 116 institutions monitored proactively disclosed information as stated in the FOI Law and Only 10 responded to an FOI request within seven days. Recently, in 2017, things have not changed much in the compliance level of institutions to FOI Law. Only 3 out of 166 institutions monitored proactively disclosed information, and 22 institutions responded to an FOI request within seven days. The most alarming thing is that over 40 institutions are in no way responsive to FOI law at all (www.procurementmonitor.org/foi-ranking/home/ranking 2014-2017). More still, Daily Trust Newspaper on October 10, 2016, revealed that there is widespread non-compliance of the FOI Law by public institutions in Nigeria based on the reports released by some Civil Society Organisations to mark the first Universal Access to Information Day. The report also revealed that even the National Assembly which passed the law has never complied with its provision. It is believed that the public institutions are comfortable in their culture of secrecy and poor records management practice. From these findings, it is evident that the compliance level of records managers on the provisions of the FOI Law in Nigeria is below average. This is bad and do not speak well for the future of the nation.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted descriptive survey design which helped to gather precise information through the use of questionnaire and interview. The survey method was adopted because it helped in reaching a good number of respondents. Also, similar studies have successfully used this design. The population of the study were administrative staff (Administrative and Executive cadre) in the University of Ibadan. Members of this population are responsible for the management of records that serve as evidence of activities within the university system. According to the department of Human Resource and Development (Non-Teaching), University of Ibadan, for 2017/2018 session, there are an aggregate of seven hundred and five (705) core administrative and executive cadre staff. Since the population of the study is determinate, a probabilistic sampling technique was used in selection of respondents. The sample size was calculated using the Slovin’s formula.

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

where; n is size of sample, N is the total number of population and e is the error margin.

Therefore, $n = 705 / (1 + 705 * 0.05^2)$

$n = 255.4$

The sample size for this study was 255.

A validated questionnaire and face-to-face structured interview were used to gather data from respondents. A structured interview schedule was used mainly but of-the-cuff questions were also used for getting additional information or clarity if necessary. A tape recorder was used with permission from the respondents to capture the responses more effectively. A total of 255 copies of a questionnaire were administered out of which 219 copies were retrieved but, only 217 copies were found useful for analysis giving a return rate of 85%. Ten interviews were also conducted with records managers. Collected data from the questionnaire were analysed using frequency and percentages distribution while those from the interviews were thematically analysed using Nvivo 12.

The demographic profile of the respondents showed that 44.7% (97) of them were male while 55.3% (120) were female. Also, 9.2% (20) of them were within the age of 20 – 29 years, 35.5% (77) were within 30 – 39 years, 34.5% (75) were within 40 – 49 years, 18.4% (40) were within 50 – 59 years, while 2.3% (5) were within 60 years and above. More so, 19.4% (42) of the respondents have 0 – 5 years working experience, 36.9% (80) have 6 – 10 years experience, 16.6% (36) have 11 – 15 years experience, 17.1% (37) of the respondents have 16 – 20 years experience, and 10.1% (22) have 21 years working experience. On highest educational qualification of the respondents, 10.6% (23) have OND, 52.5% (114) have B.Sc./HND, 35.9% (78) have M.Sc., and 0.5% (1) has PhD.

RESULTS

This section presents the results in line with the research questions.

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness of FOI Law among records managers in the University of Ibadan?

The different responses as regards level of awareness about Freedom of Information (FOI) Law are presented in Table 1

Table 1 Frequency Distribution of Records Managers' Level of Awareness about FOI Law

Level of Awareness about FOI Law	FULLY AWARE		PARTIAL Y AWARE		NOT AWARE	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
The Nigeria Freedom of Information (FOI) bill was signed into law in the year 2011	56	25.8	102	47.0	59	27.2
The FOI Act provides framework for effective management of public records	100	46.5	78	36.3	37	17.2
The FOI Law guarantees public access to public records	70	32.6	111	51.6	34	15.7
The FOI Law makes access to information a right and not a privilege	97	44.9	86	39.8	33	15.3
The right to public access require records be made available in any format (paper and electronic)	81	37.9	99	46.3	34	15.9
The FOI Law guarantees records managers right to protect information/records from unauthorised persons	67	31.2	104	48.4	44	20.5
The FOI Law addresses important stages of records management (creation, storage, access, and disposal/archiving)	78	36.1	104	48.1	34	15.7
Reply to information request must be provided within 7days	52	24.1	111	51.4	53	24.5
Where an information request is denied statement of reason(s) for denial must be given to the requester	75	34.9	100	46.5	40	18.6
The FOI Law requires training and retraining of Records Managers	81	37.7	92	42.8	42	19.5

Records Managers or Public Institutions can be sued for unlawful/wrongful denial of information request	72	33.3	108	50	36	16.7
An official or institution found guilty of wrongful denial of access to information can be fined up to N500,000	41	19	105	48.6	70	32.4
It is a criminal offence and punishable with a minimum of one year imprisonment to willfully destroy or falsify records.	64	29.6	96	44.4	56	25.9

Table 1 showed the result of records managers' level of awareness about FOI Law. It was revealed that, 25.8% (56) were fully aware that the Nigeria Freedom of Information (FOI) bill was signed into law in the year 2011, while 47% (102) were partially aware. Also, majority of the respondents 46.3% (99) were partially aware that the right to public access requires records be made available in any format (paper and electronic), 37.9% (81) were fully aware, while 15.9% (34) were not aware at all. Likewise, majority of the respondents 48.1% (104) were partially aware that FOI Law addresses important stages of records management practice (creation, storage, access, and disposal/archiving), 36.1% (78) were fully aware, while 15.7 (34) were not aware.

Based on the information provided above, it can be said that majority of the respondents are partially aware of information about Freedom of Information Law. Therefore, to measure records managers' level of awareness about Freedom of Information Law in University of Ibadan, answers provided in Table 2 are recoded and the result is provided in Table 2.

Table 2 Records Managers' Level of Awareness about FOI Law (Grouped)

Records Managers' Level of Awareness about FOI Law (Grouped)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High level	73	33.8
Moderate level	120	55.6
Low level	23	10.6

Table 2 shows the level of awareness of records managers about FOI Law in the University of Ibadan. It revealed that records managers in University of Ibadan have moderate level of awareness about FOI Law.

To support this, interview responses also give a view of this. The various levels of respondents rating on their level of awareness about FOI Law are created into nodes. It revealed that majority of the records managers rate their level of awareness as average. Figure 1 shows the nodes of records managers' level of awareness about the provisions of FOI Law.

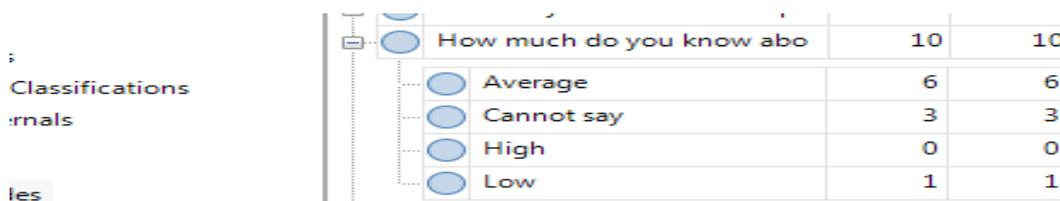


Figure 1 Screenshot of Interface showing Respondents' Grouping of Level of Awareness about the Provisions of the FOI Law.

Figure 2 shows the word cloud for the central themes identified under the level of awareness node, these are: not much, percent, and know something.



Figure 2: Word Cloud for Level of Awareness

This further emphasize that records managers have average knowledge about the provisions of the FOI Law. Below are some of the responses during the interview session:

“I will rate myself may be 60 over 100.”
“If I'm to rate myself on the scale of 1-10, I will say 5”
“I will rate it 30percent. Because it was what I heard from media...”
“I will say, 50 over 100, that is 50 percent”

Research Question 2: How are records managers adhering to the provisions of the FOI Law on creation, locatability, reliability, access, archival and disposal of records in the University of Ibadan?

The different responses as regards records managers’ adherence to the provisions of the FOI Law on creation, locatability, reliability, access, archival and disposal of records are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Records Managers on Adherence to the Provisions of the FOI Law on Creation, Locatability, Reliability, Access, Archival and Disposal of Records

Adherence to the Provisions of the FOI Law on Creation, Locatability, Reliability, Access, Archival and Disposal of Records	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Creation of Records					
I ensure proper creation/recording of university activities assigned to me	93 (43.3)	102 (47.4)	14 (6.5)	4 (1.9)	2 (0.9)
I create records on paper and electronic devices (e.g. computer)	91 (42.1)	103 (47.7)	17 (7.9)	3 (1.4)	2 (0.9)
Records of university rules and regulation exist and are readily available	103 (48.1)	94 (43.9)	13 (6.1)	3 (1.4)	1 (0.5)
University records on policy and reports are available	100 (46.3)	91 (42.1)	23 (10.6)	2 (0.9)	- (-)
Records on university’s expenditure, transactions and activities are created and are readily available	73 (33.8)	81 (37.5)	50 (23.1)	8 (3.7)	4 (1.9)
Records on University Staff and Students’ profile exist and are readily available	87 (40.5)	94 (43.7)	26 (12.1)	6 (2.8)	2 (0.9)
Locatability/Storage of Records					
I ensure records are properly organized at all times	105 (48.8)	97 (45.1)	11 (5.1)	2 (0.9)	- (-)
All University records are properly named and classified before storing	108 (50)	94 (43.5)	10 (4.6)	4 (1.9)	- (-)
Aside paper files, records are stored on other electronic devices (e.g. computer)	115 (53.5)	78 (36.3)	13 (6.0)	7 (3.3)	2 (0.9)
Our storage facilities for keeping records are adequate	60 (27.9)	103 (47.9)	21 (9.8)	28 (13)	3 (1.4)
Retrieving any stored University records is easy	65 (30.1)	105 (48.6)	21 (9.7)	17 (7.9)	8 (3.7)
Reliability of Records					
I ensure the review and update of records assigned to me when there are changes	74 (34.3)	116 (53.7)	21 (9.7)	4 (1.9)	1 (0.5)
Update of records are done immediately changes are made in activities	66 (30.7)	118 (54.9)	23 (10.7)	7 (3.3)	1 (0.5)
University records are true and accurate picture of what it is	55 (25.6)	97 (45.1)	53 (24.7)	8 (3.7)	2 (0.9)
Sometimes University records are falsified to make it presentable	13 (6)	36 (16.7)	57 (26.4)	49 (22.7)	61 (28.2)
Access to Records					

The provisions of the Freedom of Information Act are considered whenever information request is made.	44 (20.5)	126 (58.6)	34 (15.8)	7 (3.3)	4 (1.9)
Access to records is processed as soon as the qualification of the requester for the information is established.	54 (25.2)	123 (57.5)	34 (15.9)	3 (1.4)	- (-)
Sometime the approval for a requester access to information is done at my discretion	25 (11.6)	92 (42.8)	60 (27.9)	33 (15.3)	5 (2.3)
University records can only be accessed by literate who can read and write	47 (21.9)	85 (39.5)	49 (22.8)	31 (14.4)	3 (1.4)
Illiterate or Disabled cannot request for University records through a third party.	31 (14.5)	44 (20.6)	71 (33.2)	54 (25.2)	14 (6.5)
When information request is denied, notice and reasons for denial is given to the requester.	42 (19.4)	91 (42.1)	65 (30.1)	15 (6.9)	3 (1.4)
Disposal/Archiving of Records					
There is no university policy on disposal and archiving of records	15 (6.9)	31 (14.4)	67 (31)	71 (32.9)	32 (14.8)
Records are disposed or archived at my will	15 (6.9)	36 (16.7)	59 (27.3)	76 (35.2)	30 (13.9)
Important University records that are not used for daily activities are kept (archived)	57 (26.4)	105 (48.6)	39 (18.1)	14 (6.5)	1 (0.5)

Table 3 shows analysis of records managers' adherence to the provisions of FOI Law. On creation, it was revealed that 90.7% (195) of the respondents adhered to the provisions of FOI Law on creation of records by ensuring proper creation/recording of university activities assigned to them, while 2.8% (6) disagreed. Also, 89.8% (194) of the respondents agreed that they create records on paper and electronic devices, and 2.3% (5) disagreed. On storage of records, findings revealed that 93.9% (202) of respondents adhered to the provisions of FOI Law on locatability of records by ensuring records are properly organised at all times, while only 0.9% (2) disagreed. More so, on reliability of records, finding showed that 80% (190) of respondents adhered to the provisions of FOI Law on reliability of records by ensuring regular review and update of records assigned to them when changes are made. Furthermore, on access to records, finding showed that 79.1% (190) of respondents adhered to the provisions of FOI law on access of records by considering FOI Law when information request are made but on the other hand, findings revealed that 35.1% (75) respondents agreed illiterate or disabled cannot request for University records through a third party, and 33.2% (71) were undecided. And on disposal of records, finding revealed that 75% (162) of respondents adhered to the provisions of the FOI Law on disposal of records by ensuring that important University records that are not used for daily activities are kept (archived). These findings showed that there is strict adherence to FOI Law provisions on some basic stages of records management practice, such as; creation, locatability, reliability, and disposal. However, there is low adherence to some provisions of the FOI Law on access to records, which is the main trigger that birthed the need for the law.

In addition to this, responses from the interview showed that records managers adhere to the provisions of FOI Law on creation, locatability/storage, reliability, and archival and disposal of records. But however, some of the responses on access to records show restriction. The thematic analysis and responses for each of the nodes are presented below:

Creation of records:

Figure 3 presents the word cloud that identifies the themes under the adherence to the provision of the FOI Law node. The themes identified are; creation of records, availability of records, ensuring records are created daily, and records are created for future reference.



Figure 3: Word Cloud on Adherence to the Provisions of the FOI Law on Creation

This result in figure 3 shows that records are created and readily available in the University of Ibadan.

Below are some of the responses given by the respondents when asked how they adhere to the provisions of the FOI Law on creation:

“...we create records on student’s information.”

“...we have a records unit.”

“We create records and the records created are readily available.”

“By ensuring records are created daily,”

“We adhere to the provision of the law on records creation; as you can see we have records available.”

“Records are created for future references”

Storage and Locatability of Records:

In respect to how records managers in university of Ibadan adhere to the provisions of the FOI Law on storage and locatability of records, a query was initiated on their responses and word frequency was performed to identify the means of processing and storing records. Result got is show in table 4.

Table 4 Word Count of Respondents’ Response on Adherence to the Provisions of FOI Law on Storage and Locatability

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
Files	5	4	6.15
File	4	3	4.62
Paper	5	3	4.62
System	6	3	4.62
Access	6	2	3.08
Arranged	8	2	3.08
Easy	4	2	3.08
Located	7	2	3.08
Manual	6	2	3.08
Properly	8	2	3.08
Still	5	2	3.08
Stored	6	2	3.08

Table 4 shows the 12 most frequently used words by the respondents in providing answers to how they adhere to the provisions of the FOI Law on storage and locatability. The first on the list is file(s), then paper, and system. This shows that the methods of storing records include; paper filling and computer system. Figure 4 also shows the word cloud of the identified themes under storage and locatability node. This include: computers, paper files, arranged properly, easy access, and well stored.

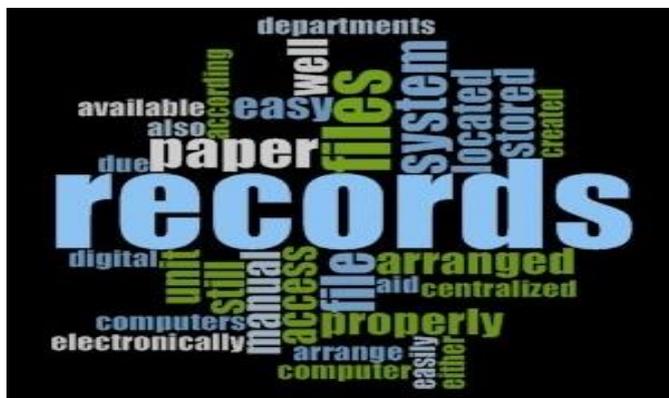


Figure 4: Word Cloud on Adherence to the Provisions of the FOI Law on Storage/Locatability.

The results presented figure 6 shows that records are available in different formats; paper and/or electronic devices. It also shows that they are well arrange and easy to locate. Some of the responses given by the respondents on their adherence to the Provisions of the FOI Law on Storage and Locatability are as follows:

“These records are mostly stored electronically.”

“Access to records is easy due to the filling system, we file unit by unit and according to years.”

“Our records are reliable and can easily be located, our files have tag names, and they are well arranged.”

“...we have some records in files and some on computers.”

“Most records are manual here; in other departments we have digital records. ...they are stored in file.”

“We have the paper ones like this, some on laptop. But the University generally we work on paper.”

Reliability of Records:

Under the adherence to the provisions of the FOI Law on reliability node, the identified themes are: update, reliable, genuine, and hardcopy. The word cloud is presented in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Word Cloud on Adherence to the Provisions of the FOI Law on Reliability

This result shows that in adhering to the provisions of the FOI Law on reliability, records are updated, made available in hardcopy, and previous documents are revisited.

Below are some responses given by respondents when asked how they adhere to the provisions of the FOI Law on reliability of records:

“...they are reliable because most of them are in hardcopy.”

“These records are mostly stored electronically and they are genuine.”

“I can say we create records and they are reliable.”

Access to Records:

Figure 6 presents the word cloud that identifies the themes under the adherence to the provisions of the FOI Law node. The themes identified are; procedures, follow long chain restriction, authority, among others.



Figure 6: Word Cloud on Adherence to the Provisions of the FOI Law on Access to Records

This result shows that there is high restriction on access to records. The processes to undergo in obtaining records appear to be ambiguous.

Below are some of the responses given by respondents when ask how they adhere to the provisions of the FOI Law on access to records:

“...getting information, one has to follow a trailer load process.”

“Once there is orderliness people can access information. There are procedures to follow before getting information and there are restrictions to some files.”

“Many of our files are confidential and may not be allowed to be given to anyone.”

“Once we see that the information is not information that will not implicate the University we will make it available. But we restrict ourselves from some information”

Archival and Disposal of Records:

Under the adherence to the provisions of the FOI Law on archival and disposal node, the identified themes are: keep, store, properly place, and don’t dispose. The word cloud is presented in figure 7.



Figure 7: Word Cloud on Adherence to the Provisions of the FOI Law on Archival and Disposal of Records

This result shows that records are properly kept in the University of Ibadan. Document that are not for day to day transactions are stored and outdated records are archived. Below are some of the responses given by respondents when asked how they adhere to the provisions of the FOI Law on access to records:

“We ensure these records are properly kept. In University of Ibadan we don't dispose records, we archive them.”

“...we don't just dispose records. Now that we have the technological factor; we keep records.”

Research Question 3: What is records managers’ perception of FOI Law in the University of Ibadan?

The different responses on the perception of records managers about Freedom of Information (FOI) Law are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Frequency Distribution of Perception of Records Managers about FOI Law

Perception of Records about FOI Law	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
FOI Law has made record management very difficult	21 (9.7)	44 (20.3)	45 (20.7)	79 (36.4)	28 (12.9)
FOI Law is a threat on records and information security	17 (7.8)	47 (21.7)	45 (20.7)	71 (32.7)	37 (17.1)
FOI Law is a burden on records managers	8 (3.7)	45 (20.7)	52 (24)	85 (39.2)	27 (12.4)
FOI Law slows down daily activities in records management	30 (13.8)	30 (13.8)	65 (30)	66 (30.4)	26 (12)
FOI Law is a good framework for effective public records management	52 (24)	78 (35.9)	51 (23.5)	35 (16.1)	1 (0.5)
Adhering strictly to the provisions of the FOI Law is not important	32 (14.9)	37 (17.2)	58 (27)	68 (31.6)	20 (9.3)
I will appreciate more training on FOI Law	61 (28.1)	115 (53)	30 (13.8)	10 (4.6)	1 (0.5)
The strengths of the FOI Law outweigh it weaknesses	41 (18.9)	84 (38.7)	77 (35.5)	15 (6.9)	- (-)
FOI Law does not favour Records Managers	19 (8.8)	54 (25)	72 (33.3)	63 (29.2)	8 (3.7)
FOI Law is unnecessary in public records management	27 (12.4)	59 (27.2)	59 (27.2)	54 (24.9)	18 (8.3)

Table 5 shows the analysis of the perception of records managers about FOI Law. It revealed that 49.3% (107) totally disagreed that FOI Law has made records management difficult. Also, 49.8% (108), 51.6% (112), and 42.4% (92) believed FOI Law is not a threat on records and information security; FOI Law is not a burden on records managers, and FOI Law does not slow down daily activities in records management practice respectively. Based on the findings provided above, it is evident that records managers in the University of Ibadan have positive perception about FOI Law on records management practice.

In addition, responses from the interview session showed that the FOI Law is good and records managers perceived it necessary for effective records management. The respondents' perceptions about the provisions of the FOI Law were grouped into two nodes, positive and negative, and presented in figure 8 It revealed that majority of the records managers have positive perception about the provisions of the FOI Law.



Figure 8 Screenshot of Interface showing the Grouping of Respondents Perceptions about the Provision of the FOI Law.

Also, figure 9 shows the world cloud for the themes identified under the opinion node. These are namely good, necessary, help, guide, and make record available, among others.



Figure 9: Word Cloud of Perception of Records Managers about FOI Law

Below are some of the responses given by respondents when asked about their opinion on the provisions of the FOI Law:

“I will say the FOI law is OK. It guides our knowledge of having a sense of how records can be managed.”

“Because information is vital for everyone. We need law to mandate the creation of records and its management to make it available.”

“It’s is a good law, at least it is to make records free and accessible.”

“...with or without the law, we are going to manage records accordingly. So, I don't think it really necessary.”

Research Question 4: What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of FOI Law in records management practice?

The different responses as regards the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of FOI Law in records management practice are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Frequency Distribution of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of FOI Law in Records Management Practice

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of FOI Law	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Strengths					
It is a law that all the parties involved must abide by.	81 (37.9)	108 (50.5)	18 (8.4)	6 (2.8)	1 (0.5)
The compulsion that public institutions must submit annual reports on the Institution’s compliance with the FOI Act	65 (30.4)	95 (44.4)	49 (22.9)	3 (1.4)	2 (0.9)
It addresses all important stages of public records management	63 (29.4)	110 (51.4)	38 (17.8)	3 (1.4)	- (-)
Protection for faithful Records Managers who discloses information without authorization	44 (20.6)	112 (52.3)	45 (21)	10 (4.7)	3 (1.4)
The right of the public to request for information	46 (21.6)	127 (59.6)	32 (15)	7 (3.3)	1 (0.5)
The promise of effective records management	51 (24.1)	112 (52.8)	46 (21.7)	3 (1.4)	- (-)
Punishment of erring records managers	60 (28)	104 (48.6)	40 (18.7)	9 (4.2)	1 (0.5)
Weaknesses					
Continued existence of other refraining laws such as Official Secrets Act, Penal Code, Criminal Code, etc.	56 (25.8)	116 (53.5)	28 (12.9)	7 (3.2)	6 (2.8)
Lack of supervisory body	62 (29.1)	87 (40.8)	53 (24.9)	8 (3.8)	3 (1.4)

Culture of defiance to the rule of law	62 (29.1)	88 (41.3)	49 (23)	11 (5.2)	3 (1.4)
The need for interpretation of some terms and sections	73 (34.3)	96 (45.1)	35 (16.4)	8 (3.8)	1 (0.5)
Opportunities					
Easy processing and organisation of records	55 (25.9)	128 (60.4)	25 (11.8)	3 (1.4)	1 (0.5)
Training and retraining of records managers	76 (35.7)	116 (54.5)	19 (8.9)	2 (0.9)	- (-)
Transparency and accountability	72 (33.8)	113 (53.1)	19 (8.9)	8 (3.8)	1 (0.5)
Stress-free working condition:	68 (31.9)	95 (44.6)	35 (16.4)	12 (5.6)	3 (1.4)
Control over information assets	65 (30.8)	108 (51.2)	35 (16.6)	3 (1.4)	- (-)
Threats					
The nature of administration (Bureaucracy)	83 (39.2)	87 (41)	25 (11.8)	16 (7.5)	1 (0.5)
Poor culture of record keeping	58 (27.5)	102 (48.3)	33 (15.6)	12 (5.7)	6 (2.8)
Widespread corruption	63 (29.7)	106 (50)	27 (12.7)	11 (5.2)	5 (2.4)
The existence of other acts such as: Evidence Act, the National Securities Agencies Act; among others	64 (30.3)	98 (46.4)	41 (19.4)	6 (2.8)	2 (0.9)

Table 6 shows the distribution of the responses of records managers on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of FOI Law. On the strength of FOI Law in records management practice, 88.4% (189) of the respondent agreed that one of the strengths is that it is a law that all the parties involved must abide by. 74.8% (160) agreed that the compulsion that public institutions must submit annual reports on the institution's implementation of compliance with the FOI Law is also a strength. More so, on the weakness of FOI Law in records management practice, 79.3% (172) believed that the continued existence of other refraining laws such as Official Secrets Act, Penal Code, and Criminal Code is a weakness. On the opportunities of FOI Law in records management practice, 86.3% (183), 90.2% (192), and 87.9% (185) agreed that easy processing and organisation of records, training and retraining of records managers, and transparency and accountability respectively are some of the opportunities of FOI law in records management. Furthermore, on the threats of the law in records management practice, 80.2% (170) agreed that the nature of administration (bureaucracy) is a threat. Likewise, 79.7% (169) of the respondents agreed that another threat of FOI Law is widespread corruption.

To support this, responses from the interview session were analysed using Nvivo 12. The themes identified under each SWOT analysis node are hereby presented below:

Strengths:

Under the strengths node, the themes identified are: it is a body of law, can be enforced, can punish offenders, anyone can be sued, and access to records is a right. Figure 10 presents the word cloud of respondents' responses pertaining to what they considered as the strengths of FOI Law in records management practice.



Figure 10: Word Cloud of the Strengths of FOI Law in Records Management Practice

This result shows that among other strengths of the FOI Law in records management practice, the major strength considered by records managers is that it a law and it is binding on all.

Below are some responses provided when asked what are the strengths of the FOI Law in records management practice:

“It’s a law; people can easily sue records managers.”
“It can be enforced. Someone can sue a record manager if information requested is not given.”

Weaknesses:

On the weaknesses of the FOI Law in records management practice, figure 11 shows the major themes from respondents’ responses. The themes identified are: need for interpretation of the law, issues of bureaucracy, to many procedures, and little awareness among others.



Figure 11: Word Cloud of the Weaknesses of FOI Law in Records Management Practice

Below are some responses provided when asked what are the weaknesses of the FOI Law in records management practice:

“It takes too much time, there is need to follow some procedures.”
“...low publicity - people have little awareness about it.”
“The issues of bureaucracy...”

Opportunities:

Under the node for the Opportunities of FOI Law in records management practice, figure 12 shows the major themes from respondents’ responses. The themes identified are; it helps records management and reduces corruption.



Figure 12: Word Cloud of the Opportunities of FOI Law in Records Management Practice

Below are some responses provided when asked what are the opportunities of the FOI Law in records management practice:

“It will help for transparency and reduce corruption.”
“With the law we can manage records better.”

Threats:

On the threats of the FOI Law in records management practice, figure 13 shows the major themes from respondents’ responses. The themes identified are: orientation towards work, and Laws on classified information.

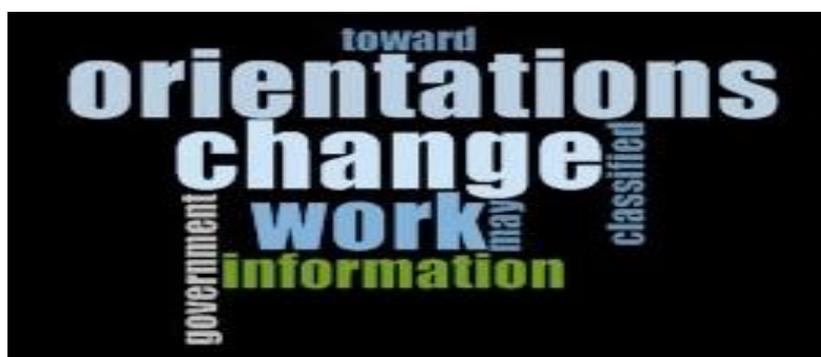


Figure 13: Word Cloud of the Threats of FOI Law in Records Management Practice

Below are some responses provided when asked what are the opportunities of the FOI Law in records management practice:

“...the right and law to protect some classified information.”
“Our attitude toward government work. It may not work if our orientations do not change.”

Research Question 5: What are the constraints that record managers face in the discharge of their duties in this era Freedom of Information?

Responses on the constraints faced by record managers in the discharge of their duties in this era freedom of information are presented in Table 7.

Table 7 Frequency Distribution of Constraints Faced by Record Managers in the Discharge of their Duties in this Era Freedom of Information

Constraints Faced in this Era Freedom of Information	Frequency	Percentage
There are too many laws to consider before taking actions	173	30.7
The need for interpretation of terms and sections in the FOI Law	96	17.1
Creation and management of records in many formats	111	19.8
Too many information requests which slows down daily activities	112	19.9
The fear of violating provisions of the law	70	12.5

Data in Table 7 shows the distribution of the responses of records managers on the constraints faced in the discharge of their duties in this era of FOI. Accordingly, as many as 173 (30.7%) comments by the respondents indicate that the constraint faced by record managers in the discharge of their duties in this era of freedom of information is that there are too many laws to consider before taking actions. For 112 (19.9%) comments, the constraint is too many information requests which slows down daily activities. Other constraints identified by the respondents as constraints faced by record managers in the discharge of their duties in this era of freedom of information include; creation and management of records in many formats (19.8%), the need for interpretation of terms and sections in the FOI Law (17.1%), and the fear of violating provisions of the law (12.5%).

The results also show that reproducing records in many formats, fear of violating law, wrong information request, and the need to keep records for long period among others are the themes identified under constraints faced by records managers' node. Below are some responses provided when asked about the constraints they face in the discharge of their duties in this era of Freedom of Information:

“Fear. Records managers get scared of releasing information. This is the fear of violating certain laws and regulations.”

“The attitudes of fellow records managers towards dissemination of information and records flow.”

“...wrong subject of information needed.”

“...the need to keep records for a long period of time because it can't be destroyed. So we confronted with managing thousands of records daily.”

“no adequate modern records management equipment that can handle easy management of records. The present structure of managing records is stressful.”

“...protecting information so that it doesn't get into the hand of wrong people.”

“The need to follow a long chain of command before processing some records. Also, the stresses of reproducing records in other format”

DISCUSSION

This study found that the level of awareness about the provisions of the FOI Law among records managers in the University of Ibadan is average. That is, majority of records managers have moderate knowledge about the provisions of the FOI Law. This is against the submission of Igbokwe-Ibeto (2013) who noted that there is low level of awareness about FOI Law among records managers in Nigeria public institutions, resulting to the continuous mismanagement of public records and mammoth problems confronting records management practices in public institutions. Although, the difference in the level of awareness seen may be due to the increased debates and reviews of the FOI Law on different media. For instance, during the interview session with some records managers, they clearly stated that their improved knowledge about the FOI Law is as a result of their attention to reviews on televisions, radio and some pages of the newspapers. Also, on the adherence of record managers to the provisions of the FOI Law in relation to the stages of records management practice, findings revealed that the provisions of the Law are highly adhered to on creation, reliability, storage/locatability, and disposal and archiving of records. This supports the assertion of Forbes (2012) which stated that universities create a lot of information which are managed for ongoing value. It also corroborates the findings of Seniwoliba, Mahama, and Abilla (2017) who noted that records are created in Nigerian tertiary institutions and they have an information generation capacity of 76%. Hence, the success recorded by the University of Ibadan is not unconnected with the culture of effective records management following her adherence to the provisions of the FOI Law on creation, reliability, storage/locatability, and disposal and archiving of records. Therefore, the practice of creation, storage, and archiving of records suits the traditional model or culture of records management in the University because, without proper records in place, the University management cannot plan well for the future (Khumalo & Chigariro, 2017). Also, just as Omotayo (2015) rightly noted, that information, in its various forms, is the requirement for the functioning of modern society because success in every area of industry is attributed to the smart use of information of the appropriate types.

However, it was discovered that there are shortfalls on the adherence to the provisions of the law on access to records. Findings revealed that some provisions of the FOI Law on access to records are not strictly adhered to and process of accessing records appears to be too rigid. This is in line with the observation of Anyanwu, Akanwa and Ossai-onah (2013) that many public institutions, even universities, do not adhere to the provisions of the FOI Law on access to records as they still deny applicants/students access to some records needed for research even when they know that they are permitted by the FOI Law. It also corroborates the findings of Public and Private Development Center [PPDC] (2014), that only few public institutions in Nigeria fairly complied with the FOI Law on access to records. Many of the respondents emphasizes the process, which is the long chain of command required to get any kind of information. This is against the reason for the creation of FOI Law, just as Duru (2016) emphasized, the Law is designed to provide citizens, students, researchers and politicians easy access to information. Findings also showed that records managers in the University of Ibadan have a positive perception about FOI Law. Importantly, majority of the records managers believed that FOI Law is a good framework for effective records management practice. This supports the finding of Aminu, Malgwi, Kagu, and Danjuma, (2011) that a good number of administrative managers in public and private institutions believed that the Nigeria FOI Act 2011 is expected to change the attitude of Nigerians towards record keeping. Many of the records managers in this study expressed that the introduction of the FOI Law in record management practice will not only make information flow easy, but it will also enhance transparency and reduce corruption in public information management. On the other hand, this contradicts the report of Surge (n.d) who noted that many records managers have negative perception about the FOI Law as the law is seen as a threat to their practice and/or as a law that only favours information requesters.

More so, the study shows that the major strengths of FOI Law in records management practice are; (a) it is a law- all the parties involved must abide by it, (b) public institutions are compelled to submit annual reports on the institutions implementation of compliance with the FOI Law, (c) protection for faithful records managers who disclose information properly. This finding is similar to the position of Inokoba (2014) and Dawodu (2016) that the key strength of the FOI Act is that it is a body of law, and because it is a democratic society no one is above the law. Similarly, the study showed that some of the weaknesses of the law are; continued existence of other refraining laws such as Official Secrets Act, Penal Code, and Criminal Code, and lack of supervisory body. These, of course, remain the major obstacles to the success of the framework. Madubuke-Ekwe and Mbadugha (2018) noted that some of the obstacles to the implementation of FOI Law include; culture of secrecy, non-domestication of the FOI Law by States, existence of conflicting laws among others. This finding supports the submissions of Oguokiri (2011) and Dawodu (2016) that the too many exemption sections and clauses in the FOI Law is its major weakness, hence it will be the limitation to the successful implementation of the law.

Also, on the opportunities of the law on records management practice, the study revealed that the opportunities include; easy processing and organisation of records, training and retraining of records managers, transparency and accountability among others. Furthermore, on the threats of the law in records management practice, findings showed that the threats of FOI Law in records management practices include: the nature of administration (bureaucracy), widespread corruption, and the existence of other acts such as: Evidence Act and the National Securities Agencies Act. This also supports the assertion of Ogbuokiri (2011) and Igbokwe-Ibeto (2013), that the major threat of the law is the existence of other acts that negate its provisions. Finally, findings revealed that of all the constraints faced by records managers in the discharge of their duties in this era of freedom of information, considering too many laws before taking actions was the most pronounced. This, obviously, is due to the existence of other laws that affect the management of records. Also, the study discovered that another key challenge faced by records managers is too many information requests which slows down their daily activities. Other constraints revealed are: creation and management of records in many formats, the need for interpretation of terms and sections in the FOI Law, and the fear of violating provisions of the law. This finding aligns with the observation of Kimario and Said (2014) who noted that records managers today are confronted with a lot of challenges which include: growing size of the archival collection, knowing what is confidential and how to comply with open records requests without violating confidentiality, and maintaining the authenticity and trustworthiness of records.

Conclusion and Suggestion for Further Studies

There is no doubt that one of the key contributing factors to the success of any institution that would stand the test of time is good and effective records management practice. This helps organisations to trace her past, understand the present, and make important decision for the future. Consequently, this study concludes that the success recorded by University of Ibadan is not unconnected with the culture of effective records management following her adherence to the provisions of the framework for managing records effectively in relations to important stages of records management practice. However, there is room for improvement especially on access to records. This can be done by working towards improving the level of awareness of records managers about the provisions of the FOI Law in the University of Ibadan.

This study focused on the practice of records management among records managers in the University of Ibadan in line with the provisions of FOI Law. An area for further studies could be a wider study carried out on this same topic that would incorporate more universities (both federal and state) in Nigeria to give a broader perspective on FOI Law and records management practice in Nigeria universities. Also, another area would be Freedom of Information Law and records management practice in some selected government agencies and an investigation into the factors influencing the compliance and adherence of selected public institutions to the provisions of FOI Law in records management practice.

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