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Information Seeking Behaviour of Academic Staff in a Nigerian College of Education

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the information seeking behaviour of academic staff in the college of education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of this study is 249 (Two hundred and Forty-Nine) full-time academic staff working in the college of education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria. A total of 249 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents and 228 (92%) copies were returned and found sufficient enough for the study. The data collected via the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency count and percentage). The findings revealed that the preferred sources of information by the academics are books, journals, internet sources, electronic resources, colleagues and friends, reference materials, among others. The finding also revealed that academics need information on research, career advancement, teaching, personal self-development, condition of service/ promotion criteria, among others. It was revealed from the findings that the academics demand for the information they require by consulting books, journals, internet/ online webpages, electronic resources, interacting with colleagues and friends, and demand for information using less of associational meetings, index/ abstracts, bibliographies, and government documents/ websites. The respondents indicated that they use information for getting materials for research purposes, materials for teaching purposes, to advance their academic career, to understand the condition of service/ promotion criteria, among others. It was revealed from the findings that the challenges that militate against the access and use of information by the academic staff are too many outdated library materials, issues with ascertaining trustworthiness of information sources, *information explosion, erratic power supply, poor information evaluation/ searching skill, no adequate assistance from information professionals, among others. It was recommended that library management should acquire more recent books, journals, and electronic information resources since they remain the preferred information source of the academics, and training should be undertaken for the academics in the college of education to enable them to ascertain with ease if an information source is trustworthy or not.*

KEYWORDS: *Information Seeking Behaviour; Academic Staff; College of Education; Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

Colleges of education can be considered one of the classes of Nigeria's institutions of higher education. Colleges of education were created for the exceptional preparation and training of individuals seeking to build a career in academia. The academics working in colleges of education are saddled with the responsibility of imparting the requisite knowledge to the students boosting their confidence and independence. For academics to play their primary functions effectively they should be able to ascertain when information is required, know the sources of information that can meet their needs, know how to access information that can meet their needs, know how to use the information to fill their knowledge gap, as well as mitigate the challenges that affect their access to information.

Over the past decades, librarians have been studying the information seeking behaviour of professionals in the diverse field of life in view of serving them better. Wilson (2008) posits that information seeking behavior is the conscious seeking for information as a consequence of a need to meet some goal. Case (2002) estimated that as early as the 1990s there were more than 10, 000 publications on information seeking behaviour. Understanding the information seeking behaviour of academics will unveil their various information needs, preferred sources of information, how they demand information to meet their needs, their purpose of using information, and the challenges that militate against their access and use of information. To corroborate the aforementioned affirmation. Thilagavathi and Thirunavukkarasu (2015) posited that understanding the information needs of library clientele is necessary for planning and providing high-quality library services as well as to avoid misallocating resources. In the same vein, Okonoko, Uche, and Ejiro (2015) posited that the investigation of the information seeking behaviour of the academic staff is vital in supporting them to access and use information resources to meet their required information needs. The knowledge of accessing and using information exhaustively will play a great in the career of academics. Bruce (2005) affirmed that in our daily professional and personal lives, information plays a crucial role and we are continually obligated to find information that we need for jobs, entertainment, and routine choices and tasks. Thilagavathi and Thirunavukkarasu (2015) affirmed that information is recognized as a vital source indispensable for the development of the individual and the society. Academics require and use information for research purposes, lesson note preparation, health needs, entertainment and to get current news and happenings around them.

The need to understand the information seeking trend of academics in the college of education, Agbor Delta State, Nigeria prompted the need for this study. The findings of this study would enable the college library to provide library services that are directly channeled to the information needs of the academics as well as help mitigate the challenges that militate against their access and use of information. Currently, no study has been conducted on the information seeking behaviour of academics in the study area. This study is hereby undertaken to fill the gap in knowledge and serve as a reference for future researchers studying the information seeking behaviour of academics in colleges of education.

STUDY AREA

The College of Education, Agbor in Delta State of Nigeria was created in October 1979 by the former Bendel State Government, to undertake the training of professional teachers; a training that shall result in the award of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) (College of Education, Agbor, 2006). The College was officially opened on Tuesday, 18 August 1981, by the late Professor Ambrose F. Alli, the then Governor of the former Bendel State. With the formation of the Edo and Delta States on 27 August 1991, the Delta State Government now owns the college (College of Education, Agbor, 2006). The college has the vision to be an institution of excellence aimed at producing trained teachers who are willing to address the demands of quality education. The college also has a mission to produce well-motivated teachers capable of adopting useful pedagogical and ICT skills to improve students' analytical abilities at the level of basic education (College of Education, Agbor, 2006).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to ascertain the information seeking behaviour of academic staff in College of Education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- ✓ Find out the preferred sources of information by the academic staff in College of Education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria.
- ✓ Ascertain the information needs of the academic staff in College of Education.
- ✓ Determine the information demand strategies of the academic staff in College of Education.
- ✓ Discover the purpose of using information by academic staff in College of Education.
- ✓ Find out the challenges militating against the accessibility and use of information by the academic staff in College of Education.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study provided answers to the following research questions:

- ✓ What are the preferred sources of information by the academic staff in College of Education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria?
- ✓ What are the information needs of the academic staff in College of Education?
- ✓ What are the information demand strategies of the academic staff in College of Education?
- ✓ What are the purposes of using information by the academic staff in College of Education?
- ✓ What are the challenges militating against the accessibility and use of information by the academic staff in College of Education?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review was arranged in line with the objectives of the study.

Preferred sources of information by the academic staff in College of Education

There are a lot of studies carried out on the preferred information sources by academic staff. Okonoko, Uche, and Ejiro (2015) studied the information seeking behaviour of faculty members in Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun (FUPRE). The findings of the study revealed that the respondents prefer using books (print & electronic) and journals (print & electronic) as their preferred source of information. Khan (2012) explored the use of information sources by faculty members and research scholars of the Faculty of Commerce, AMU, Aligarh. The study revealed that the academic staff, as well as research scholars, used mainly indexed journals and scholarly publications in Emeraldinsight.com and Science Direct.com for accessing information that meets their needs. Ahiauzu and Ani (2015) surveyed the information seeking behaviour of academic staff in Rivers State University of Science and Technology (RSUST), Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The findings revealed that the academic staff studied prefers to rely on the internet as their preferred information source. Ugwoke and Asogwa (2015) studied the information needs of lecturers in the business administration university of Nigeria. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents depend on the internet for their information needs, followed by communicating with colleagues, mass media, and the library. Okiki (2013) studied the availability of information resources for research output by Academic Staff Members in Nigerian Federal Universities. The findings revealed that the academic staff preferred electronic information resources for their academic and research needs.

The information needs of the academic staff in College of Education

According to Spacey (2018), information needs are the details that a person desires, requires, or expects from a source of information, which are inspired by curiosity or the desire to make a good decision or complete a mission. Omah and Urhiewhu (2019) studied the information needs, use, and seeking behaviour of academic staff in Taraba State University, Nigeria. The findings of the study showed that specialised information was the major information needs of the academic staff, this is followed by information on the description of objects, information on simple fact data which is peculiar to lecturers in the sciences, and information to keep up to date about life generally. Assoh (2013) studied the information needs and information seeking behaviour of academic staff of the Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria. It was revealed from the findings that the academic staff information needs are education information needs, research information needs, health information needs, security information needs, promotion information needs, and curriculum-related information needs, career-related information needs, among others. Folorunso (2014) evaluated the information seeking behaviour of social science academics in a research institute in Nigeria, and the findings showed that the academic require information for research purposes mainly and to keep up to

date with recent happenings in their profession. Ojohwoh (2019) studied the information seeking behaviour of academic staff in Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro. The findings of the study revealed that academics require information on teaching and learning, research purpose, information to form lecture notes, and information in rendering services to the community, among others. Bhatti (2010) studied the information needs and information seeking behaviour of faculty members at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur. The finding of the study revealed that the faculty members require information for teaching purposes, literature search/reference collection, research, renewing their knowledge, among others.

Information demand strategies of the academic staff in the College of Education

Academics in colleges of education employ various information demand strategies in meeting their information needs. Patel and Chaudhari (2015) studied the information seeking behaviour of faculty members of the Agriculture universities in Gujarat. The findings of the study revealed that academics demand information using the internet, followed by reading the latest books, reading the newspaper, among others. Okonoko, Uche, and Ejiro (2015) studied faculty members' information seeking behaviour in a Nigerian university. The findings revealed that the faculty members demand information using Google and other online sources, books, journals (print & online), visiting the library, interaction with colleagues, newspapers, among others. Siamian, Yaminfirooz, Dehghan, and Shahrabi (2013) studied the use of information Sources by Faculty Members of Babol University of Medical Sciences, Iran. The findings of the study revealed that the information demand strategies of the faculty members are mainly through books, journals, and the internet. Though searching the internet was easy and convenient, the faculty members indicated that they mainly use the internet for checking emails; they meet their information needs using print books. Mostofa (2013) studied the information needs and seeking behaviour of faculty members of DarulIhsan university of Bangladesh. The findings of the study revealed that the faculty members demand information to meet their needs through the internet. Rafiq & Ameen (2009) studied the information seeking behaviour and user satisfaction of university instructors of the National Textile University (NTU). The findings revealed that the respondents demand information mainly using google, yahoo, and MSN.

The purpose of using information by academic staff in the College of Education

Academics use information to meet their various information needs. Haliso and Toyosi (2013) studied the influence of information use on the academic productivity of lecturers in Babcock University, Nigeria. It was revealed from the findings that the academics make use of the information they get to keep abreast with current developments in their field as indicated by the majority of the respondents. The study of Popoola (2008) revealed that getting materials for research purposes is the major key reason why academics in institutions of higher learning seek information. Renwick (2005) studied knowledge and use of electronic information resources by medical sciences faculty at the University of the West Indies. It was revealed from the study that the academics use the information for communication, professional and personal purpose; other

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reasons are research, supporting teaching activities, administrative and recreational reasons. The study of Popoola and Haliso (2009) revealed that academics use the information to be able to teach the students effectively. Tella, Orim, Ibrahim, and Memudu (2018) studied the use of information in electronic formats by academic staff at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. The findings revealed that academics use information in electronic formats for research, curriculum development, and self-educational development. Also, Barfi, Agyapong and Afful-Arthur (2018) studied the utilisation of library resources by lecturers at the University of Cape Coast. The findings revealed clearly that the respondents visit the library for research purposes, consult reference materials and borrow books.

Challenges militating against the accessibility and use of information by the academic staff

A lot of challenges still militate against the accessibility and use of information by academic staff. Makinde, Jiyane, and Mugwisi (2019) studied the factors and challenges affecting the information seeking behaviour of science and technology researchers. The findings of the study revealed that factors that militate against their use of information are trustworthiness of the source, accessibility issues, time factors, and limited financial resources. Akinola (2009) studied the information seeking behaviour of lecturers in faculties of education in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife and University of Ibadan. The findings of the study revealed that the challenges affecting the access and use of information were the non-availability of information materials, some of the information materials available are old, and information scattered in too many sources, among others. Onyeneke, Solomon-Uwakwe, and Aniche (2016) studied the information needs and gathering behaviour of lecturers in the faculty of law, Imo State University, Owerri. It was revealed from the findings that outdated books and journals, the inadequacy of information resources, disjointed series of law reports, unreliable Internet services, expensive nature of information sources, and non-renewal of subscriptions to online resources/databases are the challenges militating against the access and use of information by the law lecturers. Katrodia (2019) studied the information needs and information seeking behaviour of commerce and management academics at Saurashtra University. The findings revealed that incompetent or not well-trained library staff, lack of technical support, lack of computer hardware or software, information is scattered in too many sources, information explosion or too much information, language barrier, non-availability of electronic resource (e-journals and databases), lack of information about available sources, and too many classes or administrative work are the challenges that militate against the accessibility and use of information by the academics.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study is 249 full-time academic staff in the College of Education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria. The total enumeration sampling technique was adopted for the study because of the small size of the academics understudy. The instrument adopted for data collection was a structured questionnaire which was distributed by the researchers with the aid of two research assistants who were trained adequately on the questionnaire and data collection processes. The data collection period lasted for one (1) month after which the data collected via the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency count and percentage).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the study based on the study objectives. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics i.e. tables, frequencies, and percentages.

Questionnaire Response Rate

Table 1: Questionnaire Response Rate

No of Questionnaire Distributed	No of Questionnaire Retrieved	Percentage
249	228	92%

It was revealed from **Table 1** that a total of 249 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents and 228(92%) copies were returned and found usable for the study. The response rate of 92% is considered appropriate for the study as the standard response rate for most studies is 60% (Dulle, Minish-Majanja & Cloete, 2010).

Section A: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Table 2: Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	124	54%
Female	104	46%
Total	228	100%

It is glaring from **Table 2** that 124(54%) of the respondents were male, while 104(46%) of the respondents were female.

Section B: Analysis of the key findings of the study

Find out the preferred sources of information by the academic staff in College of Education, Agbor, and Delta State, Nigeria

Table 3: Preferred sources of information by the academic staff in College of Education

Preferred Sources of Information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Books	228	100%
Journals	224	98%
Reference Materials	182	80%
Other Serials (Newspapers and Magazines)	155	68%
Electronic Resources (E-books, E-journals, E- Reference tools, etc.)	202	88%
Internet Sources	224	98%
Colleagues/ Friends	196	86%
Association Meetings	124	54%
Index and Abstract	104	46%
Bibliographies	98	43%
Government documents/ Websites	74	32%
Academic Software	48	

From **Table 3**, it was revealed that the preferred sources of information by the respondents were majorly books, journals, internet sources, electronic resources, colleagues and friends, reference materials, other serials, association meetings, index and abstract, bibliographies, government documents/ websites, and academic software.

Ascertain the information needs of the academic staff in the College of Education

Table 4: Information needs of the academic staff in College of Education

Information Needs	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Information on career advancement	228	100%
Information on research	228	100%
Information on personal self-development	218	96%
Information on new trends in my field	156	68%
Information on news/ current affairs	175	77%
Information on health and wellbeing	138	61%
Information on teaching	224	98%

Information on entertainment	122	54%
Information on government policies	87	38%
Information on condition of service/ promotion criteria	204	89%

Table 4 showed the information needs of the respondents. The respondents indicated information on research, career advancement, teaching, personal self-development, condition of service/ promotion criteria, news/ current affairs, new trends in their field, health and wellbeing, entertainment, and government policies as their major information needs.

Determine the information demand strategies of the academic staff in College of Education

Table 5: Information demand strategies of the academic staff in College of Education

Information Demand Strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Consulting Books	228	100%
Consulting Journals	224	92%
Checking Reference Tools	158	69%
Consulting other serials (Newspapers, and Magazines)	152	67%
Consulting Electronic Resources (E-books, E-journals, E- Reference tools, etc.)	192	84%
Checking the internet/ online webpages	206	90%
Interacting with Colleagues/ Friends	178	78%
Attending Associational Meetings	68	30%
Consulting Index/ Abstracts	48	21%
Consulting Bibliographies	44	19%
Consulting Government Documents/ Websites	39	17%
Using Academic Softwares	36	16%

From **Table 5**, the respondents indicated they demand the information they require by consulting books, journals, internet/ online webpages, electronic resources, interacting with colleagues and friends, consulting reference materials, other serial materials like newspapers and magazines, attending association meetings, consulting index/ abstracts, bibliographies, government documents/ websites, and academic software.

Discover the purpose of using information by academic staff in College of Education

Table 6: Purpose of using information by academic staff in College of Education

Purpose of using information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Keep abreast with current developments in my field	194	85%
To advance my academic career	208	91%
For getting materials for research purpose	228	100%
For getting materials for teaching purpose	224	98%
For recreational/ entertainment purpose	166	73%
To understand my health and healthy living	144	63%
To keep abreast with the latest news/ current affairs	178	78%
For personal self-development	162	71%
To understand government policies for academics in colleges	128	56%
To understand the condition of service/ promotion criteria	202	89%

From **Table 6**, the respondents indicated they use information for getting materials for research purpose, materials for teaching purpose, to advance their academic career, to understand the condition of service/ promotion criteria, to keep abreast with current developments in their field, to keep abreast with the latest news/ current affairs, for recreational/ entertainment purpose, to get materials for personal self-development, to understand their health/ healthy living, and to understand government policies for academics in colleges.

Find out the challenges militating against the accessibility and use of information by the academic staff in College of Education

Table 7: Challenges militating against the accessibility and use of information

Challenges militating against the accessibility and use of information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Information explosion	222	97%
Poor internet facilities	174	76%
Lack of awareness of information sources	122	54%
Erratic power supply	212	93%
Poor information evaluation/ searching skill	204	89%
Poor ICT skills	158	69%

Inadequate time to search for information	154	67%
Expensive nature of some information sources	168	74%
Issues with ascertaining trustworthiness of Information Sources	228	100%
Information scattered in too many sources	194	85%
No adequate assistance from information professionals	196	86%
Too many outdated library materials	228	100%

From **Table 7,** the respondents indicated that the challenges militating against their accessibility and use of information are too many outdated library materials, issues with ascertaining trustworthiness of information sources, information explosion, erratic power supply, poor information evaluation/ searching skill, no adequate assistance from information professionals, information scattered in too many sources, poor internet facilities, expensive nature of some information sources, poor ICT skills, inadequate time to search for information, and lack of awareness of information sources.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The study was carried out to ascertain the information seeking behaviour of academic staff in the College of Education, Agbor, and Delta State, Nigeria. The study recorded a response rate of 92% which was considered adequate for the study. It was revealed from the data that there were more male respondents than female in the study.

Preferred sources of information by the academic staff in College of Education

It was revealed that the preferred sources of information by the respondents were majorly books, journals, internet sources, electronic resources, colleagues and friends, reference materials, other serials, association meetings, index and abstract, among others. This finding agrees with the study of Okonoko, Uche, and Ejiro (2015) which revealed that the academics in federal university of petroleum resources, Effurun prefer using books (print & electronic) and journals (print & electronic) as their source of information for meeting their needs. The findings also align with the study of Ahiauzu and Ani (2015) which revealed that the academic staff in Rivers State University of Science and Technology (RSUST), Port Harcourt rely on the internet as their preferred information source. This implies that books, journals, internet sources, and electronic resources are playing a key role in meeting the information needs of the academics in the college of education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria.

Information needs of the academic staff in College of Education

The finding revealed that the academics need information on research, career advancement, teaching, personal self-development, condition of service/ promotion criteria, news/ current

affairs, new trends in their field, health and wellbeing, among others. This finding agrees with the study of Ojohwoh (2019); Folorunso's (2014); and Bhatti (2010) which revealed that academics require information mainly for research and teaching purpose. This implies that the information needs of the academics understudy are mainly related to getting materials for research, teaching as well as information on career advancement.

Information demand strategies of the academic staff in College of Education

It was revealed from the findings that the academics demand for the information they require by consulting books, journals, internet/ online webpages, electronic resources, interacting with colleagues and friends, and demand for information using less of associational meetings, index/ abstracts, bibliographies, and government documents/ websites. This finding agrees with the study of Siamian, Yaminfirooz, Dehghan, and Shahrabi (2013) which revealed that the academics of Babol University of Medical Sciences, Iran information demand strategies are mainly through books, journals, and the internet. This implies that when the required books and journals are acquired, swift internet access is made available, and sufficient electronic resources provided the academics in colleges will have seamless access to information resources that meet their exact information need.

Purpose of using information by academic staff in College of Education

From the findings, the respondents indicated that they use information for getting materials for research purpose, materials for teaching purpose, to advance their academic career, to understand the condition of service/ promotion criteria, to keep abreast with current developments in their field, to keep abreast with latest news/ current affairs, for recreational/ entertainment purpose, among others. This finding is in agreement with the study of Popoola (2008) which revealed that getting materials for research purposes is the major key reason why academics in institutions of higher learning seek information. This finding also aligns with the study of Barfi, Agyapong, and Afful-Arthur (2018) which revealed that the lecturers at the University of Cape Coast seek for information mainly for research purposes. The finding disagrees with the study of Renwick (2005) which revealed that the medical sciences faculty at the University of the West Indies uses information for communication, professional and personal purpose

Challenges militating against the accessibility and use of information by academic staff in College of Education

It was revealed from the findings that the challenges that militate against the access and use of information by the academic staff are too many outdated library materials, issues with ascertaining trustworthiness of information sources, information explosion, erratic power supply, poor information evaluation/ searching skill, no adequate assistance from information professionals, information scattered in too many sources, poor internet facilities, among others. This finding aligns with the finding of Onyeneke, Solomon-Uwakwe, and Aniche (2016) which revealed that outdated books and journals are the major challenges militating against the access

and use of information by the law lecturer in faculty of law, Imo State University, Owerri. The library and college management have a great role to play to curb some of these challenges that are management-related issues affecting the information seeking behaviour of the academics in the college.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study on the information seeking behaviour of academic staff in the college of education, Agbor, Delta State is undertaken at the right time as it has unveiled the preferred sources of information of the academic staff, their information needs, information demand, the purpose of using information and the challenges that militate against the access and use of information by the academic staff. The academics in the college of education understudy know the value of information as the majority of them rely on majorly books, journals, internet sources, electronic resources, colleagues, and friends as their preferred information source. The academics seek information on research, career advancement, teaching, personal self-development, condition of service/ promotion criteria, news/ current affairs, new trends in their field. The challenges that affect the access and use of information by academics are too many outdated library materials, issues with ascertaining trustworthiness of information sources, information explosion, erratic power supply, poor information evaluation/ searching skill, no adequate assistance from information professionals, information scattered in too many sources, poor internet facilities, among others.

This study can assist library and university management plan for academics in the area of understanding their exact information needs, acquiring information resources that are preferred by them, understanding their information demand strategies, understanding the purpose for which they use information as well as the factors that limit their access and use of information. Knowledge of the aforementioned grey areas about academics can result in policy formation that caters for and aid the information seeking behaviour of academics in colleges of education. Given the foregoing, the following recommendations are made:

- ✓ Library management should acquire more recent books, journals, and electronic information resources since they remain the preferred information source of the academics in the college of education, Agbor, Delta State.
- ✓ College management should ensure a swift internet access is made available to academics since internet sources are also among their preferred information source.
- ✓ Acquisition of library materials should be in line with the needs of the academics in college of education.
- ✓ Training should be undertaken for the academics in college of education to enable ascertain with ease if an information source is trustworthy or not.
- ✓ Training should also be conducted for the academics to boost their information evaluation/ searching skill.

✓ College management should have a steady alternative power supply to complement the power supply of the government as this will ensure uninterrupted power supply to the academics and the entire college community.

✓ Librarians should put more effort into assisting academics whenever they seek information from the resources in the library.

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