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### The Extent of Awareness of Open Access Resources in Libraries of Private Universities by Postgraduate Students in Nigeria

#### Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of awareness of open access resources in libraries of private universities by postgraduate students in Nigeria. Four research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at .05 level of significance. A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study (603) consisted of all postgraduate students in Nigerian private universities, irrespective of their courses of study. A total sample size of 120 respondents was selected using multi-stage sampling technique. The researcher developed a questionnaire titled: Awareness of Open Access Resources Questionnaire (AOARQ) and an observation checklist, which were used to collect data for the study. A total of 120 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents, out of which 113 copies were returned and found to be correctly filled. This gave a response rate of 94.2%. The data collected were analyzed using Mean (X) and Standard Deviations to answer the research questions. The major findings of the study were that the overall availability of open access sources in the libraries was poor. Also, the general awareness of open access resources amongst postgraduate students was also low. Some major challenges that led to the preceding were that libraries did not organize seminars and workshops to sensitize students on open access resources, little or no information materials on open access resources in the library, among others. Based on the findings, it was strongly recommended that the library should often organize seminars and workshops on open access for both students and other library stakeholders, the library should acquire information materials that teach the basics of open access and how to utilize it maximally, making open access a compulsory course to be taught in class to create its awareness, among others.*

**Keywords:** *Private University, Postgraduate students, University library, Open access resources, Awareness*

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#### 1.1 Introduction

The concept of private university connotes different meaning to different

authors. However, according to Gabriel (2013), a private university is one established and run by entities other than a state or federal

government which may include those run by faith-based organizations, individuals, and community development associations, among others. Gabriel (2013) further stressed that in Nigeria, faith organizations, group of individuals and individuals largely constitute proprietorship of private universities. Private university education was first articulated in 1983 following a pronouncement of the Supreme Court of Nigeria that it was constitutional to allow individuals to establish private universities. Not until 1999, when President Olusegun Obasanjo rekindled the issue of private participation in University education to complement the effort of the government, which led to the establishment of few private universities where both undergraduate and postgraduate education programmes were run.

Postgraduate education, in the submission of Asogwa, Wombo and Ugwuoke (2014) involves learning and studying for degrees, professional or academic certificates or other qualifications for which a first or Bachelor's Degree generally is required and it is normally considered to be part of higher education. Pertinently, those involved in postgraduate education, as the name implies, should also be postgraduate students.

Nevertheless, a university library is an intellectual power house where these students are expected to be 'baked' and it houses all sorts of materials including books and non-book materials. It is also an important agent in the pursuit of academic excellence in higher institutions. Its main goal is to support the objective of the host institution, which has to do with learning, teaching, research and other services. A university library is also called an 'academic library'. **This is why Susan and Skinner (2009)** put it that an academic library which also is a university library is attached to a higher educational institution which serves two complementary purposes to support the school's curriculum, and to support the research of the university faculty and students.

However, free exchange and use of information especially research based information forms the basis for economic, cultural, social and scientific development, yet this has been compromised by restricted access model of publishers and the dependency of researchers on research works published in qualitative but restricted access journals (Canada, 2009). Canada further opined that Open Access is capable of fostering information and knowledge sharing within research, educational and scientific communities especially in traditionally or economically disadvantaged regions. Therefore, open access to knowledge has become essential for a country's educational, socio-cultural, and scientific development. Since the emergence of Open Access initiative, the concept has been defined in different ways by numerous authors. The concept of Open Access was first defined globally by Budapest Open Access Initiative cited in Swan (2012:15) thus:

*Free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the Internet itself [p15].*

Besides, accepting and implementing open access initiative, while putting into cognizance its numerous benefits, would be of great advantage to libraries of private universities especially in this time of recession where information resources such as foreign journals and books have skyrocketed. The usual inadequate funding of

Nigerian university libraries especially libraries of private universities that solely depend on internally generated revenue like school fees has not helped matters. This inadequacy is evident in their limited collection development and has negatively affected users' patronage, students' performance in both internal and external examinations, and even poor theses/research works produced by these students, particularly postgraduate students. Therefore, it is worthy of note that most of these challenges mentioned can be minimized or even eradicated completely if information custodians and library managements can take advantage of open access initiative.

However, from the preceding facts on the concept of open access and its numerous benefits to library users, awareness can only be said to be a pre-requisite to subsequent use of open access publications unless an individual uses it unknowingly. Besides, Stevenson (2008), saw awareness as having knowledge of something thus, it will not be gainsaying to state that a user needs to be aware of the existence of a resources material before he/she can talk on how to access and utilize it.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Libraries in higher institutions of learning are central to the attainment of the goals of their parent institutions. The effectiveness of any library depends to a great extent on the quality and quantity of the resources at its disposal, in-which finance plays a vital role. In fact, effective library services cannot be carried out nor sustained without sufficient funds. Like any other library, a library in a Nigerian private university requires adequate funding for the provision of information, human and physical resources. The proprietors of Private Universities in Nigeria are the major sources of funding for their university libraries and sadly, this major source of funding has been

reported to be not forthcoming or grossly inadequate. Besides, private universities rely heavily on tuition fees from the students and other Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) to meet their expenditure. This has adversely affected resources provision which in turn has led to so many of the private universities failing NUC accreditation exercise in many subject areas because of limited or inadequate collection of information resources.

Also, collection development, especially in libraries of private universities has been hampered by high costs of essential information resources. Even for the rich students, these resources are not quite easy to come-by for purchase. Therefore, this has put students' personal and individual search for knowledge and understanding at stake. This has also resulted in poor academic performance of these students in both internal and external professional examinations as a result of shallow knowledge-level. In other words, a basic problem that affects the academia is the rising price of scholarly publications especially the ones published in current international academic journals.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the awareness and utilization of open access resources in libraries of private universities by postgraduate students in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the open access sources available in libraries of private universities for postgraduate students in Nigeria;
2. Determine the extent of awareness of open access resources in libraries of private universities to postgraduate students in Nigeria;
3. Identify challenges associated with awareness creation for open access resources in libraries of private universities for postgraduate students in Nigeria;

4. Proffer strategies for enhancing open access awareness in libraries of private universities among postgraduate students in Nigeria;

#### 1.4 Research Questions

To achieve the purpose of the study, the following research questions were raised:

1. What are the open access sources available in libraries of private universities for postgraduate students in Nigeria?
2. To what extent is the awareness of open access resources in libraries of private universities to postgraduate students in Nigeria?
3. What are the challenges associated with awareness creation for open access resources in libraries of private universities for postgraduate students in Nigeria?
4. What are the strategies for enhancing open access awareness in libraries of private universities among postgraduate students in Nigeria?

#### 1.5 Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1.  $H_{01}$ : There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of awareness of open access resources in libraries of private universities by postgraduate students in Nigeria.
2.  $H_{02}$ : There is significant difference in the mean ratings of awareness of open access resources in libraries of private universities by postgraduate students in Nigeria.

#### 2.1 Review of Related Literature

A number of related studies have been conducted on open access awareness and use in libraries in Nigeria. Among such studies is

that conducted by Arosanyin and Ajibili (2014) on the awareness and utilization of open access resources in Asom Bur Learning Resource Centre, University of Mkar by undergraduate students. Result of their studied revealed that the undergraduate students of University of Mkar were moderately aware of the existence of open access resources (OARs). Majority of the students who used open access resources did so to supplement the library's inadequate relevant information material. Erratic power supply disrupted the flow and stability of Internet service, and lack of Internet searching skills affected the maximal utilization of open access resources. Some recommendations were made such as the training and retraining of librarians who will in turn assist these users explore OARs online, provision of power backup such as power inverters and solar power, organizing open access week/seminars or workshops for sensitization.

In a related work, Mohammed and Garba (2013) investigated the awareness and use of open access scholarly publications by postgraduate students of Faculty of Science in Ahmadu Bello University (A.B.U.) Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria. The study found that majority of the postgraduate students of Faculty of Science in A.B.U., Zaria became aware of Open Access publications by surfing or searching through the Internet haphazardly, majority of the respondents were not aware of the major sources of Open Access publications, the respondents predominantly used Open Access publications to support their theses/dissertations work, among others. It was however recommended that libraries should organize training on interval bases for both staff and postgraduate students of Faculty of Science on the importance of Open Access publications. Faculties should guide and encourage their students on the need for publishing in Open Access journals among others.

An empirical study was carried out by



Ivwithreghweta and Onoriode (2012) on awareness and use of open access journals by LIS students at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The study disclosed that students' use of open access journals was still far from expectation. Majority of the students were not aware of the existence of *Library Philosophy and Practice*, *Libri* and several others as being open access journals. This situation might have been due to the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of workshop/conferences and poor Internet use due to poor services. Some recommendations made by the study included: Authorities of postgraduate schools with strong collaboration of heads of departments such as the one under study, the library and other stakeholders should intensify efforts in the creation of awareness of existing research/study aids under which open access journals falls. Such efforts would bring about the practical implementation of an aspect of library function that talked about awareness creation through workshops/ conferences. Secondly, librarians and instructors of ICT should sit up by ensuring that students have effective and efficient skills in the use of their gadgets and facilities such as Internet search engines.

Another study was conducted by Obuh and Bozimo (2012) on the awareness and use of open access scholarly publications by Library and Information Science (LIS) lecturers. The study revealed a high level of usage of open access publications by both senior and junior LIS lecturers and that the

awareness of open access concepts accounted for the tendency of LIS lecturers in Southern Nigeria to use open access publications. The study recommends that efforts should be geared towards inculcating the awareness of the concept, techniques, technologies and benefits of open access in scholarly communities. Also, universities should develop and encourage open access strategies such as institutional repositories, open access archives, among others. Furthermore, universities' managements should develop enabling infrastructure and formulate policies that would encourage mandatory deposit of scholarly works in open access archives.

### 3.1 Research Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study (603) consisted of all postgraduate students in Nigerian private universities, irrespective of their courses of study. A total sample size of 120 respondents was selected using multi-stage sampling technique. The researcher developed a questionnaire titled "Awareness of Open Access Resources Questionnaire" (AOARQ) and an observation checklist, which were used to collect data for the study. A total of 120 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents, out of which 113 copies were returned and found to be correctly filled. This gave a response rate of 94.2%. The data collected were analyzed using Mean (X) and Standard Deviations to answer the research questions.

## 4.1 Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

**Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents on Availability of Open Access Sources**

S/N	Open Access Sources (OAS)	Response Rate	Name of University						Overall		D	R
			PAU		MU		IU		NA	AV		
			NA	AV	NA	AV	NA	AV				
1	Directory of Open Access Journals	Freq %	19 48.7%	20 51.3%	26 68.4%	12 31.6%	2 5.6%	34 94.4%	48 42.5%	65 57.5%	AV 3 <sup>rd</sup>	

Directory of Open Access Books	Freq	20	19	26	12	2	34	48	65	AV 3 <sup>rd</sup>
	%	51.3%	48.7%	68.4%	31.6%	5.6%	94.4%	42.5%	57.5%	
Journal Storage	Freq	30	9	0	38	2	34	32	81	AV 1 <sup>st</sup>
	%	76.9%	23.1%	.0%	100.0%	5.6%	97.2%	28.3%	71.7%	
Bentham Science Publishing	Freq	34	5	36	2	36	0	106	7	NA 9 <sup>th</sup>
	%	87.2%	12.8%	94.7%	5.3%	100.0%	.0%	93.8%	6.2%	
Hindawi Open Access Journals	Freq	31	8	36	2	36	0	80	33	NA 6 <sup>th</sup>
	%	79.5%	20.5%	94.7%	5.3%	100.0%	.0%	70.8%	29.2%	
BioMed Central	Freq	34	5	36	2	33	3	73	40	NA 5 <sup>th</sup>
	%	87.2%	12.8%	94.7%	5.3%	91.7%	8.3%	64.6%	35.4%	
High Wire Press	Freq	21	18	36	2	36	0	90	23	NA 7 <sup>th</sup>
	%	53.8%	46.2%	94.7%	5.3%	100.0%	.0%	79.6%	20.4%	
Open Journals Gate	Freq	30	9	36	2	36	0	102	11	NA 8 <sup>th</sup>
	%	76.9%	23.1%	94.7%	5.3%	100.0%	.0%	90.3%	9.7%	
African Journals Online	Freq	30	9	3	35	4	32	37	76	AV 2 <sup>nd</sup>
	%	76.9%	23.1%	7.9%	92.1%	11.1%	88.9%	32.7%	67.3%	
Bioline International	Freq	30	9	36	2	36	0	102	11	NA 8 <sup>th</sup>
	%	76.9%	23.1%	94.7%	5.3%	100.0%	.0%	90.3%	9.7%	
Online Access to Research in the Environment (OARE)	Freq	30	9	36	2	35	1	67	46	NA 4 <sup>th</sup>
	%	76.9%	23.1%	94.7%	5.3%	97.2%	2.8%	59.3%	40.7%	
Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative	Freq	5	34	2	36	1	35	37	76	AV 2 <sup>nd</sup>
	%	12.6%	87.2%	5.3%	94.7%	2.8%	97.2%	32.7%	67.3%	

\*Key1: PAU-Pan Atlantic University, MU-Madonna University, IU-Igbinedion University.

\*Key2:AV-Available, NA-Not Available, D-Decision, R-Rating.

Table 1 shows the percentage distribution of respondents on availability of open access sources (OAS). The overall ranking showed that Journal Storage/JSTOR had a response rate of 71.7% and was ranked highest among the open access sources available in the library while Bentham Science Publishing which had a response rate of 6.2% was ranked lowest among the open access sources available in the libraries studied. From the results gathered, the table showed that the respondents decisively indicated that only 5 items (Directory of Open Access Journals/DOAJ, Directory of Open Access Books/DOAB, Journal Storage/JSTOR, African Journals Online/AJOL and Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative/HINARI) out of the twelve items listed were available in their libraries.

**Table 2: Mean Ratings of Extent of Awareness of Open Access Resources**

SN	Items	Name of University						Overall		Rating	Decision
		PAU		MU		IU		Mean	SD		
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
1	Free Online Articles	3.3	.57	3.0	.27	2.8	.72	3.0	.58	1 <sup>st</sup>	GE
2	Free Online Journals	3.2	.68	3.0	.16	2.7	.72	3.0	.60	2 <sup>nd</sup>	GE
3	Free Online Books	3.1	.61	3.0	.23	2.8	.82	3.0	.61	3 <sup>rd</sup>	GE
4	Free Online Reference Materials e.g. dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, yearbooks, Britannica, directories, maps, atlases, manuals, indexes, abstracts, bibliographies	2.8	.90	2.3	.48	2.7	.70	2.6	.74	4 <sup>th</sup>	GE
5	Free Online Video files	2.8	1.0	2.2	.45	2.4	.5	2.5	.7	5 <sup>th</sup>	GE
6	Free Online Pamphlets	2.6	.86	2.6	.48	2.1	.7	2.5	.7	6 <sup>th</sup>	GE
7	Free Online Government Publications	2.7	.86	2.6	.48	2.0	.6	2.5	.7	7 <sup>th</sup>	GE
8	Free Online Conference Papers	2.6	.86	2.6	.48	2.0	.5	2.4	.7	8 <sup>th</sup>	L
9	Free Online Theses/Dissertation/Project	2.6	.84	2.6	.55	2.0	.7	2.4	.7	9 <sup>th</sup>	L
10	Free Online Audio files	2.5	.79	2.2	.45	2.3	.4	2.4	.6	10 <sup>th</sup>	L
11	Free Online Photographs	2.7	.48	2.1	.51	2.0	.6	2.3	.6	11 <sup>th</sup>	L
12	Free Online Annual Reports	2.0	.72	2.6	.50	2.3	.7	2.3	.6	12 <sup>th</sup>	L
13	Free Online Bulletins	2.2	.98	2.3	.58	2.3	.4	2.3	.7	13 <sup>th</sup>	L
14	Free Online Archives	2.1	.86	2.6	.48	1.9	.7	2.2	.7	14 <sup>th</sup>	L

**\*Key1:** PAU-Pan Atlantic University, MU-Madonna University, IU-Igbiniedion University.

**\*Key2:** GE-Great Extent, LE-Low Extent.

Table 2 shows the Mean ratings of the respondents on the extent of awareness of open access resources. The **overall Mean showed that** Free Online Articles (Mean = 3.09) **was ranked highest while** Free Online Archives (Mean = 2.25) **was ranked lowest among the** extent of awareness of open access resources. **Also, using the principle of real limit of numbers, the table shows that the respondents were aware of** open access resources **to a great extent on items 1-7** (free

online articles, free online journals, free online reference materials e.g. dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, yearbooks, Britannica, directories, maps, atlases, manuals, indexes, abstracts, bibliographies, etc., free online video files, free online pamphlets, and free online government publications) **on the other hand, aware to a low extent on items 8-14** (free online conference papers, free online theses/dissertation/project, free online audio files, free online photographs, free online annual reports, free online bulletins, and free online archives).

**Table 3: Mean Ratings of the Challenges Associated with Awareness of Open Access Resources**

SN	Challenges	Name of University						Overall		Rating	Decision	
		PAU		MU		IU		Mean	SD			
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD					
1	The library does not organize seminars or workshops to sensitize the students on open access resources	3.1	.8	3.71	.61	3.0	.3	3.30	.68	1 <sup>st</sup>	A	
2	There are no information materials on open access resources in the library	2.9	.74	3.0	.16	2.8	.71	2.94	.60	2 <sup>nd</sup>	A	
3	There is no campaign on campus, on the awareness of open access resources	1.8	.54	3.74	.64	2.9	.51	2.84	.97	3 <sup>rd</sup>	A	
4	I was not given orientation by my lecturers or supervisor(s) on open access resources	2.7	.96	2.2	.5	3.06	.41	2.7	.74	4 <sup>th</sup>	A	
5	No Internet facilities in the library to browse & acquaint myself with the concept of open access resources	2.15	.9	1.9	.52	2.0	.77	2.0	.75	5 <sup>th</sup>	A	D

**\*Key1:** PAU-Pan Atlantic University, MU-Madonna University, IU-Igbiniedion University.

**\*Key2:** A-Agree, D-Disagree.



Table 3 shows the mean ratings of the respondents on the challenges associated with awareness of open access resources. The overall mean showed that the library did not organize seminars or workshops to sensitize the students on open access resources (Mean = 3.30) hence received the highest response rate while item 5 which states, “no Internet facilities in the library to browse and acquaint myself with the concept of open access resources (Mean = 2.06)” was ranked lowest among the challenges associated with awareness of open access resources. This indicates that the libraries all had Internet facilities and were connected to the net.

**Table 4: Mean Ratings of the Strategies for Enhancing Awareness of Open Access Resources**

SN	Items	Name of University						Overall		Rating	Decision		
		PAU		MU		IU		Mean	SD				
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD						
1	The library should acquire information materials that teach the basis of open access and how to utilize it maximally	3.92	.27	4.00	.00	3.86	.35	3.93	.26	1 <sup>st</sup>	A		
2	Library staff should be given in-house training and orientation on the general concept of open access and how to help users access these resources online easily	3.59	.64	4.00	.00	3.89	.32	3.82	.45	2 <sup>nd</sup>	A		
3	Provision of Internet services to enhance access & acquaintance with open access resources online			3.21	.47	3.92	.27	3.50	.51	3.54	.52	3 <sup>rd</sup>	A
4	Organizing of seminars and workshops on open access for both students and library stakeholders			3.18	.51	3.05	.23	3.86	.35	3.35	.52	4 <sup>th</sup>	A
5	Making open access a compulsory course to be taught in class by lecturers or librarians, to create its awareness			3.15	.54	3.21	.41	3.50	.51	3.28	.51	5 <sup>th</sup>	A

\*Key1: PAU-Pan Atlantic University, MU-Madonna University, IU-Igbinedion University.

\*Key2: A-Agree, D-Disagree.

Table 4 shows the mean ratings of the respondents on the strategies for enhancing awareness of open access resources. The overall mean showed that item 1 which states that the library should acquire information materials that teach the basis of open access and how to utilize it maximally had a mean rating of 3.93 and was ranked highest while item 5 which states that making open access a compulsory course to be taught in class by lecturers or librarians, to create its awareness had a mean rating of 3.28 and was ranked lowest among the listed strategies for

enhancing awareness of open access resources. This could be because the students dread extra academic workload, hence their reason for the negative response.

#### 4.2 Test of Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance.

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of awareness of open access resources in libraries of private universities by postgraduate students in Nigeria.

**Table 5: Regression Analysis for Testing the above Hypothesis**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	P
1 (Constant)	2.979	.186		16.013 .000
Postgraduate Students of Private University	.088	.087	-.095	1.009 .315

*Dependent Variable: Level of awareness of open access resources*

Table 5 shows *Regression Analysis* for testing the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of awareness of open access resources in libraries of private universities by postgraduate students in Nigeria. The result reveals that postgraduate students of private universities have no significant differences on awareness of open access resources in Nigerian (B=.088, P>.05). Since this test is not significant, the null hypothesis is accepted showing there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of awareness of open access resources in libraries of private universities by postgraduate students in Nigeria.

#### Conclusion

There were clear indications that private university libraries rarely organized seminars or workshops to sensitize the students on open access resources, also there were little or no information materials on open

access resources in these libraries. Furthermore, there were no campaigns on campus on the awareness of open access resources, and no proper orientation was given to students by their lecturers or supervisor(s) on open access resources. In other words, the promotion and advocacy of open access resources in libraries of private universities was extremely poor and close to non-existing. If private universities through their libraries could gain from the numerous benefits of Open Access Initiative, then there is the need for them to consciously uphold, promote and advocate for open access resources via methods recommended by this present study to create its awareness and knowledge amongst students, especially postgraduate students who are the key users of research and scholarly materials. Once adequate awareness is created with good accessibility to Information and Communication Technology (ICT), then

maximum utilization is ensured, hence increase in users' productivity e.g. improved academic performance and quality research.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. It is recommended that libraries, especially libraries of private universities should endeavour to provide and display various open access sources with their websites to enable their users have knowledge and access to numerous options to free scholarly articles in their different fields of study.
2. Libraries are encouraged to continue with the provision of Internet since they are a major medium which awareness can be created among users in the course of browsing.
3. As a way of getting rid of open access ignorance, the university management should occasionally (at least bi-annually or annually) organize seminars or workshops on open access for both students and library stakeholders such as lecturers, researchers and the like.
4. It is also recommended that this present study should be accessed online, downloaded, printed, bound and made available in libraries alongside other information materials containing concepts and basics of open access resources to create awareness.
5. The challenge of poor awareness of open access resources among students, especially postgraduate students, can be handled when the university management in collaboration with the library management incorporates into the school's curriculum, a compulsory General Studies (GST) course on open access to be offered by all students.

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