

# Library Orientation and Information Literacy Skills as Correlates of Scholarly Research of Postgraduate Students of Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria

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**Abstract** - This study focused on library orientation, information literacy skills as correlate of scholarly research of postgraduate students at Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. The university has ten colleges with various departments. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all 1,361 postgraduates in Diploma, Masters and Doctor of Philosophy from the ten (10) colleges in the institution. Out of the population, 900 postgraduates were randomly selected using purposive sampling technique, while data were collected using questionnaire. Findings of the study revealed that there is no library orientation programme for postgraduates at FUNAAB, while the only form of information literacy available to them is the use of computer course. It was also found that information literacy skills of postgraduate are still low given that majority of them either cannot access the library's online catalogue or its electronic databases without assistance. The study therefore concluded that library orientation and information literacy skills are essential for postgraduate's quality research output and recommends for inclusion of library orientation, information literacy and any other user education programmes into postgraduate curriculum. Also, seminars and workshops on the online catalogue and electronic databases for research should equally be periodically organised for postgraduate students.

**Keywords:** Library orientation, information literacy, postgraduate students, scholarly research

## I. INTRODUCTION

Before the advent of information and communication technology (ICT), library collections were mainly housed and provided in printed format. The evolution of and continuous advancement in information and communication technology which permeates every aspect of human endeavour, has gradually affected the way we do things. In the library setting, the advent of ICT has drastically resulted in a change in the functions and activities of librarians, hence, information is now sought and provided through various technological and communication means; using different tools and equipment, and in different forms (print and electronic formats), which can be remotely accessed with the means of internet. The intricacies associated with accessing this information especially those in electronic formats; therefore require a lot of demonstrable

competencies, strategies and knowledge of the use of information technology, for users to be able to effectively utilise the available information sources and resources, for learning and research.

Library orientation and information literacy skills are integral components of a broader user education programme. While library orientation is designed to enable students and researchers familiarise with library resources and services; information literacy is aimed at equipping students with the ability to recognize when information is needed, to locate, and to evaluate and use effectively the needed information. According to Madhusudhan and Singh (2010), library orientation is an integral aspect of user education which is commonly carried out in academic libraries as a means of increasing users' familiarity with the library and its resources and services. In other words, the purpose of library orientation is to introduce new users to the library, get them acquainted with its resources and services, and is usually done at the beginning of academic session, for many users, not few, at a time (Adeyoyin, 2011). By its very design and purpose, library orientation rather serves to provide users with the basic overview of what the library has, in terms of resources and services; instead of intensive or holistic teaching or understanding of the library's inner workings and resources. Information Literacy on the other hand as defined by the American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, means a person's ability to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information (ALA, 1989). It is the ability of an individual to identify, locate and critically use and evaluate information for decision making, knowledge creation and problem solving (Bruce, 2003; US National Commission on Library and Information Science, 2003). Literacy skill has become imperative especially in this era of data proliferation where users have in abundance, a large amount of information available to them, but are constrained by lack of access to the right type of information they need at the right time. As a result, users are therefore required to be equipped with the skills necessary to assist them in becoming independent learners. This is

more so because, the abundance of information is not enough to build the information society, but what is more important is to acquire skills necessary to effectively use information (Hof, Sluijs, Asamoah-Hassan and Agyen-Gyasi 2010). Similarly, Okiki and Mabawonku (2013) opined that the availability and access to information is not sufficient to ensure that the information users will possess requisite skill to effectively make use of information resources at their disposal. Therefore, an average information resources user needs some skills which include knowing the sources of information services; arrangement of information in various formats, different means of using computers and websites to retrieve information, and being informed about laws ensuring their rights on use of information (Menou, 2002).

Postgraduate students all over the world and in Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta in particular, are required to complete one or more research works, as part of the conditions for the award of Postgraduate degree in their various fields of study. It may therefore be difficult for them to search and utilise information without adequate skills needed to navigate and manipulate information tools in the library and beyond. As a result, information literacy and orientation programmes are usually organised by academic libraries and most of the time include tutorials, seminars, workshops, one-on-one discussion, computer-aided instruction, user education, library tour and briefing, among others. The aim is to acquaint users with the way library operates; its resources and services; and as well, teach them how to use the library so they will be able to effectively utilise the resources and services of the library.

## II. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The imperativeness of library orientation and information literacy skills in enhancing the academic research of postgraduates in any university cannot be overemphasized especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century characterised by data proliferation and information starvation. This is more so because the success of any research exercise in an academic environment often depends to a large extent on the researcher's awareness of the location of specific information resources answering his needs, as well as the possession of relevant skills and search strategies that will enable him or her successfully retrieve it. Moreover, retrieving information from any source typically requires an understanding of how information was organised and stored. However, studies have shown that while most postgraduate students in general and those of Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta in particular, seem not to be aware of the information resources and sources available in the library, others have limited background of fundamental research and information literacy skills. As a result, they are not able to effectively search for information, or evaluate, synthesize and blend ideas, or may not even have learned how to use information in original work, or give proper bibliographic citation and references, for information used in their research work. The resultant

effect may be poor quality research work, plagiarism, or any other form of malfeasance.

Although it is possible that some students may have acquired basic computer skills for sending electronic mails; social media use among others, they may be constrained with how to effectively search the internet or use library electronic resources for academic purposes. This underscores the need for effective and efficient library orientation and information literacy programme integration into the tertiary education curriculum and is the focus of this writing.

## III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In view of the above, the following questions have been put forward to guide the study:

1. What are the library orientation and information literacy programmes available for postgraduate students at Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta?
2. What are the information literacy skills possessed by postgraduate students of FUNAAB?
3. What are the impacts of library orientation and information literacy skills on scholarly research of postgraduate students?

## IV. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study was to investigate the impacts of library orientation and information literacy skills on the academic research of postgraduate students of Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. Other specific objectives were to:

1. examine the library orientation and information literacy programmes available for postgraduate students at Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta
2. to determine the information literacy skills of postgraduate students of FUNAAB
3. to examine the impacts of library orientation and information literacy skills on scholarly research of postgraduate students

## V. LITERATURE REVIEW

Walsh (2008) defines library orientation as a short lecture delivered by a librarian, usually in a large room space located within the library building or in the classroom. The content of the instructional lecture consists of information about the services and resources offered by the library. However, this content varies considerably according to the category of students involved (whether undergraduate or postgraduate students). Library orientation is a factor of collaboration between lecturers (sometimes referred to as instructors) and the librarians in which librarians ask the lecturers are encouraged to bring the entire class in for an orientation.

According to Walsh, the librarians design the orientation to support the learning priorities and highlight the resources held by the library that are fundamental to completing the course and assigned projects. Other materials covered in a complete orientation include: the library's Web page, how to find it and how to use it, the physical layout of the library, how to locate various resources and service points, check-out procedures and privileges, an explanation of basic services, searching the catalog, requesting books and articles, and searching databases. The intention is to expose the student to the basic skills needed in completing their future information needs independently (information literacy). The orientation also informs the student of the kinds of help the library can offer if they are having trouble finding what they need on their own.

The term "information literacy" according to Nwosu, Obiamalu and Udem (2015), was first used in 1974 by the former President of United States Industry Association, Paul G. Zurkewski, to emphasize the need for people to become information literate in order to survive and compete in an emerging information society. Since then, the term has come to be widely used especially in the United States, as necessary for effective information resources and sources utilization and has been variously conceptualized. Furthermore, the American Library Association's Presidential Committee on Information Literacy defines information literacy as not only the ability to recognize when information is needed, but also the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information (ALA, 1989). Adeyoyin (2011) posited that there are six principal reasons for information literacy as a skill necessary for lifelong learning and the production of an informed and prosperous citizenry: The reasons are:

1. To reconsider the ways, we have organized information institutionally, structured information access and defined the roles of information in our lives at home in the community and in the workplace.
2. To promote public awareness of the problems created by information illiteracy.
3. To develop a national research agenda related to information and its use.
4. To ensure the existence of a climate conducive to students becoming information literate.
5. To include information literacy concerns in teacher education; and
6. To promote public awareness of the relationship between information literacy and the more general goals of literacy, productivity, and democracy.

In his view, Lock (2003) argued that there are two major approaches to information literacy skills in any learning environment. The first is concerned with the skills that the researchers, academic, students and numerous users of information apply during the process of their enquiries or research; and usually involves the ability of an individual to effectively utilise the library and other electronic resources for

advancement of knowledge towards the research that is being carried out; as well as the ability to conduct literature search, cite and properly reference sources. As a result of these, the individual will come to function effectively as a member of academic community.

The second perspective is concerned with an individual's ability to participate actively in any activity that is chosen for advancement of knowledge towards information literacy skills, in line with awareness and understanding of the programmes meant for information literacy. This may include how information is sourced, accessed, acquired, evaluated, and preserved for proper dissemination to the information seekers in different professions.

Therefore, information literacy skills can be said to be those abilities, competencies, and demonstrable knowledge, which enables individuals recognise when they information and as well, can locate and use such information. This has become imperative because of information explosion brought about by rapid changes and advancement in technology. Thus, the abundance of information is not enough to build the information society, but what is more important is to acquire skills necessary to effectively use information (Hof, Sluijs, Asamoah-Hassan and Agyen-Gyasi 2010) In his view, Ranaweera (2008) opined that information literacy skills equip the researcher with critical thinking abilities that will enable them become independent lifelong learner. In a similar way, Raja, Raja and Kamaruzaman (2011), information literacy skill enables one to solve problems, critical thinking, decision making and collaborative learning that will prepare an individual to be a better-informed citizen.

As an integral aspect of educational curriculum necessary for lifelong learning, academic libraries usually design and organize various orientation and information literacy programmes for students at all levels, the essence which is to familiarise them with the resources and services held by the library and empower them with the skills necessary to access and utilise information effectively, for research and learning, even after they would have left school.

According to Wash (2008) and Omeluzor, Bamidele, Onuoha and Alarape (2013), library orientation and information literacy programmes are usually organised by the university libraries and in most cases, cover lecture or tutorial, seminar, workshop, one-on-one discussion, online courses, computer aided instruction, user education, library tour and briefing by librarians. Specifically, library orientation and information literacy skills programme are only meant to educate newly admitted students of the University. The purpose is to enable new students acclimatize with library rules and available services for users which include opening and closing hours, procedures for book loan, identification of library sections, search tools, available information source and their locations, among others.

The significance of research in any academic environment, is that it facilitates knowledge sharing and insight; demonstration of scholarship, and gaining of creative thinking recognition (Lertputtarak, 2008). In today's environment characterized by information overflow, knowledge of available information resources and possession of search skills are very fundamental to achieving a quality research output, and which is the hub of library orientation and information literacy. In view of this, Madu and Dike (2012) observed that information literacy skills are those competencies which are necessary for achieving a good research output.

Many studies have therefore been carried out to examine the relationship between library orientation, information literacy skills and academic research of students. According to Walsh (2008), library orientation is the most commonly used techniques of increasing students familiarity with the library and its resources; hence, a survey carried out within the Ventura College Accreditation Report of 2004, indicated that there was a significant increase in students patronage statistics of the Ventura College Libraries as a result of increased library orientations to promote usage of library's resources and services. Also, another study undertaken by the Dublin City University library discovered that the institution's revamped library orientation programme was a significant contributing factor in the increased popularity and renewed interest exhibited by patrons.

Similarly, findings of a study by Suleiman (2012) revealed that user education helped students to increase their searching skills; and equally helped them appreciate and make better use of the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC). In the work of Nwosu *et al* (2015), the relationship between information literacy and research performance was explained using the Society of College, National and University Libraries' (SCONUL) "Seven Pillars of Information Literacy" Model. According to them, the process of developing an information literate user is an all-encompassing exercise, which touches all areas of the seven pillars of information literacy. This, therefore, enables a researcher to advance from the level of a learner to that of a professional as they progress in their research activities. These pillars are explained in subsequent paragraphs.

First is the pillar of identity. According to SCONUL, an information literate person is able to identify a need for information and have the ability to locate as much information that will enhance his or her research activity as possible, in order to provide answers to research questions. Such researcher, knowing well that information is constantly evolving daily, will develop a search habit so that new information and data are always actively sought. Furthermore, an information literate researcher can access information sources that are available, to understand what he or she does not know to occupy a niche in the body of existing research literature. He or she is also able to identify the scope and type of information that is being accessed such as data, people, videos and published information that will meet the researcher's information needs; have the

ability to identify relevant tools that will be utilized at different levels of literature search; examine data collection methods and formats in which information exist which could be in print, digital or multimedia; as well as have the ability to adapt to new tools as technology evolves.

Also, an information literate researcher is also able to use research questions clearly and in an appropriate language; define search strategies by using appropriate keywords, concept and Boolean operators to identify controlled vocabularies and taxonomies to aid in searching and develop specialist search tools that will be adequate to each individual needs.

Again, an information literate researcher should locate, and access information and data needed, by exploring different means of retrieval tools and resources, construct complex searches for use across digital and print resources. As a result, he or she can translate the search strategies to work at different resources, redefine a search strategy based on previous results obtained, sort and manipulate results sets. The researcher also should have the ability to access the full text information, both print and digital, read and download online materials; be abreast of new information, engage with scholarly community especially through collaboration and networking. More so, an information literate researcher can review the research process and compare and evaluate information, thus, distinguishing between information resources, such as web pages, scholarly, professional, trade and popular journals.

The researcher should also choose from a wide range of information materials on topics, using appropriate criteria, access the quality, recency, accuracy, relevance, bias, objectivity, reputation and credibility of the information sources. Another important pillar is concerned with the skills to professionally and ethically organise information by adopting appropriate bibliographical software to manage information, demonstrate awareness of issues relating to the right of other researchers and research participants, which includes ethics, data protection, copyright, plagiarism and other intellectual property issues, set and meet standards of conduct for academic integrity and make appropriate information available as may be required by information seekers.

Lastly, an information literate researcher should be able to apply the skills acquired in presenting his or her work, by synthesizing new and old information to add to the existing body of knowledge and disseminating it in a variety of ways. He or she is also able to use findings of his work, to address the research questions, summarize document downloaded and report verbally and in writing, analyze and disseminate data properly, incorporate new research findings into the context of existing knowledge, communicate effectively using adequate styles in a variety of formats, such as abstract, literature review, scientific report, journal articles, posters, conference papers, visually and web 2.0, use open access as well as traditional

publishing routes, develop personal profile in the scholarly community using appropriate personal and digital technologies as in discussion lists, social networking sites and blogs.

The literature review above, on orientation and information literacy in the library as it affects research outputs of students, is relevant to the present study because attempts were made to establish that awareness of the presence of information in a particular source or resources and the ability to effectively locate and use such information by the researchers and postgraduate students in particular, ultimately enhances their research productivity. More specifically, it helps in the professional and ethical use of information sources; appropriate referencing and bibliography, to the works establishing writer’s intellectual property; independent selection and retrieval, evaluation and use of information at disposal.

It is also relevant to this study because it pinpoints how postgraduate students and indeed other researchers can effectively utilise their information literacy skills in research activities thereby positively improving their research output.

### VI. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey method to examine library orientation and information literacy skills as correlate of scholarly research of postgraduate students at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta.

The population of the study is comprised of the total number of 1,361 postgraduate students from the ten (10) colleges of the institution. Simple random sampling was employed to ensure that every member of the population has equal and independent chance of being selected in the sample to be studied; while purposive sampling method was used to select 900 postgraduate students as sample that was studied.

The main instrument of data collection was questionnaire, which was administered to all the sample respondents. The rate of response was encouraging, as out of the 900 questionnaires administered, 881 representing 97.9% were duly completed and returned while 19 questionnaires (2.1%) were not retrieved. Results were analysed using tables, simple percentage, and frequency counts.

### VII. RESULTS

Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents by gender. The result of the study indicates that 61.9% of the respondents were male, while 38.1% were female.

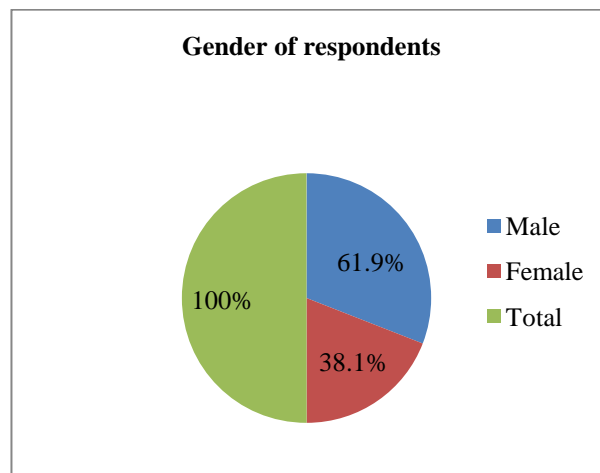


Fig.1 Distribution of respondents by gender (n=881)

TABLE I DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY PROGRAMME (N = 881)

Programme	Frequency	Percentage (%)
PGD	186	21.1%
M.Sc	519	58.9%
PhD	176	20%
Total	881	100%

Table I shows the distribution of respondents by programme of study.

Result indicates that 59.9% of the respondents were master’s degree students, while Postgraduate Diploma and Doctoral Degree students were 21.1% and 20% respectively.

The respondents were asked to indicate the forms of library orientation and information literacy skills available to them.

Findings from their responses indicated that only the use of computer course and seminar were available to Postgraduate students as indicated by 92.6% and 91.8% of the, respectively.

TABLE II LIBRARY ORIENTATION AND INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAMMES AVAILABLE FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

Sl. No	Item	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	Use of computer course	417	399	24	29	12
		47.3%	45.3%	2.7%	3.3%	1.4%
2	Seminar	469	340	36	19	17
		53.2%	38.6%	4.1%	2.2%	1.9%
3	Information literacy training	159	82	37	284	319
		18%	9.3%	4.2%	32.2%	36.2%
4	Use of library course	0	0	0	300	581
		0%	0%	0%	34.1%	65.9%
5	Library orientation exercise	0	15	41	367	458
		0%	1.7%	4.7%	41.7%	51.9%
6	Library tour	0	0	0	654	227
		0%	0%	0%	74.2%	25.8%

Note: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; U = Undecided; D = Disagree; and SD = Strongly Disagree.

As shown in table III above, all (100%) of the respondents know when they need information for studies, research, and any other academic activities; and can as well use the internet for information search.

TABLE IV IMPACTS OF LIBRARY ORIENTATION, INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS AND SCHOLARLY RESEARCH OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

Sl.No	Item	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	It enhances the quality of research output	582	293	6	0	0
		66.0%	33.3%	0.7%	0%	0%
2	It helps to ensures better use of the library's electronic resources	716	158	7	0	0
		81.3%	17.9%	0.8%	0%	0%
3	It encourages independent life-long learning	820	51	6	4	0
		93.1%	5.7%	0.7%	0.5%	0%
4	It helps to increase library patronage	592	275	2	6	6
		67.2%	31.2%	0.2%	0.7%	0.7%
5	It helps me in identification and retrieval of right information	446	399	18	12	6
		50.6%	45.3%	2%	1.4%	0.7%
6	It increases my knowledge of available information resources and sources within and outside the library	511	304	24	24	18
		58%	34.5%	2.7%	2.7%	2%
7	It helps in proper citation and referencing	318	481	18	40	24
		36.1%	54.6%	2%	4.5%	2.7%

Note: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; U = Undecided; D = Disagree; and SD = Strongly Disagree.

Table IV shows the relationship between library orientation, information literacy skills and scholarly research of postgraduate students. From their responses, 99.3% of the respondents confirmed that it enhances the quality of research output.

## VIII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings of the study revealed that the use of computer course and seminar were the only form of information literacy available for postgraduate students. This may be because most universities in Nigeria do not include library orientation and associated tours in the postgraduate students' curriculum; unlike their undergraduate counterparts where the programmes are designed to be provided to students upon admission in their first year. This finding therefore contradicts the findings of Abubakar and Adetimirin (2016) in Nigerian universities which revealed that library orientation, rather than the use of computer course (otherwise known as computer-aided instruction) or seminars was the major user education and information literacy programmes available to postgraduate students in conventional universities in Nigeria.

Another finding of the study on the level of information literacy skills among postgraduates revealed that students know when they need information for studies, research and any other academic activity and can also use the internet to search for any information anytime the need arises. This finding is in line with the findings of Okpala, Benneh, Sefu and Kalule's (2017) study among postgraduate students in University of Nigeria, Nsukka, which revealed that information literacy level of postgraduates was low, given that majority of the students though knowledgeable about use of search engines, lacked basic knowledge of emerging research trends such as virtual research environment, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), and use of online referencing tools, among others. Further finding of the study revealed that there is a positive relationship between library orientation, information literacy skills and scholarly research output of postgraduates because it enhances the quality of research output; facilitates better use of library's electronic information resources; encourages independent lifelong learning; and as well, helps to increase library patronage. This finding corroborates the finding of a study by Abubakar and Cholom (2017) on the relationship between user education, computer literacy and use of e-resources by postgraduate students in Nigerian universities which revealed that user education and computer literacy have significant positive relationship on postgraduate scholarly research.

## IX. CONCLUSION

Library orientation and information literacy skills are very germane to postgraduates who are largely considered research students; and by extension, to all faculty members undertaking research activities. Postgraduates need to be aware that the information resources relevant to their research activities are available in the library and be also trained to possess the right skills to locate, evaluate and use those resources. The idea is that awareness through proper library orientation will combine with literacy skills to produce a research work that is of high quality and will contribute to knowledge within the academic community

and beyond. From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that library orientation and information literacy programmes for postgraduates in the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB) are inadequate, typically still within the narrow confines of use of library course and seminar only; and does not extend into the broader concerns of equipping the students with the relevant skills for effectively locating, evaluating and using information resources. It was further concluded that postgraduate student's information literacy skills are still low and are bound to affect the quality of their research output. The contribution of this work can therefore be viewed from the point of literature, practice, and policy. With regards to literature, the study contributes to fresh empirical data that will be relevant for researchers undertaking studies on the same or similar subject matter. The data so provided will also be of importance to academic library management and relevant stakeholders in taking decisions relating to provision of library orientation and information literacy programmes, which may include a review of postgraduate curriculum.

## X. RECOMMENDATIONS

Consequent upon the above findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are hereby offered:

1. A more robust library orientation and information literacy programmes should be integrated into the postgraduate curriculum in Nigerian universities, to provide for intensive training of graduate students especially those coming from institutions where the programmes are either unavailable or ineffective. This will expose majority of them to the basics of library use and increase their information search skills and ultimately improve their research output.
2. There is need for synergy between the university managements and their institutions libraries on how best to design these programmes and make it very effective.
3. Academic libraries should equally educate the university authorities on the importance of user education and information literacy, as well as other forms of user education programmes, in enhancing the research output of the students, and increasing the institution's prestige. This will ensure their greater commitment to the success of the programme.
4. Intensive seminar or workshop on the use of online databases such as Ebscohost for research should be organized for postgraduate, as this will equally go a long way in enhancing their research output.
5. Audio-visual materials containing tutorials on how to do effective research could equally be helpful if provided to postgraduates, to encourage independent learning and research.

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