



USE OF SERIAL PUBLICATIONS FOR ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES BY LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATORS IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH-CENTRAL, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the accessibility and use of serial publications for academic activities by Library and Information Science Educators (LISE) in federal universities in North-central, Nigeria. The study was guided by two objectives and two research questions. The objectives of the study were to: the extent of use of serial publications by LISE for their academic activities in federal universities in North-central, Nigeria. Survey research design method was adopted for the study. The population for the study was 136 LISE. Total enumeration or census was carried out because the population size was manageable. Questionnaire was the only research instrument used for data collection. Out of the 136 copies of questionnaire administered, 121 copies were filled, returned and used for the analysis. Descriptive statistical tool involving frequency counts and percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the data. The findings of the study revealed among others that the extent of use of serial publications by the educators for their academic activities with weighted mean score of 2.93. The study revealed further that the factors hindering accessibility and use of serial publications among the educators were agreed with the weighted mean score of 2.69. The study recommended among others that



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the management of federal universities in North-central, Nigeria where the university libraries are established should provide adequate serial publications especially on directories, transactions and memoirs of society and government documents that will be available and appropriate for the academic activities of LISE.

Keywords: Academic activities, Library and Information Science Educators, Serial publications, Use

Introduction

University libraries are established to support the attainment of the overall objectives of their parent institutions. These objectives include provision of information resources for undergraduates, postgraduates, lecturers, researchers as well as supporting their academic activities. According to Saka and Mahmud (2020), one singular objective of establishing university libraries is to provide information resources to support teaching and research (academic activities) of faculty members and for these objectives to be achieved, university libraries provide a variety of information resources (both print and non-print). It was further stated that research plays an important role in facilitating the prosperity of a nation and the well-being of her people as it provides solutions to industrial, societal, economic, scientific, engineering and social problems through the outcomes or findings.

Academic activities of Library and Information Science Educators (LISE) include research, teaching, attending seminars, conferences and community services. Ifijeh and Ogbomo (2018) defined research as the process of rigorous, systematic, validating, verifiable, empirical, critical, analysing and interpreting information to answer questions. Salami *et al.* (2021) stated that LISE are expected to conduct research like their counterparts in other disciplines because it is also their professional obligation. Research in LIS is a systematic investigation of issues relating to practice and education in LIS to increase the sum of knowledge in the field. Teaching is a process by which one interacts with another person with the intention of influencing the learning of that person. It is the interplay between the teacher and the learners. Teaching therefore, calls for educator's competence, creativity, improvisation and expressiveness (Guzman *et al.*, 2017). Academic activities inspire LISE towards working hard, fill the gaps of previous researches and create an opportunity for future research (Wada *et al.*, 2022). Most of the academic activities of LISE and other academics are disseminated via publications. Academic activities through research publications enable LISE to earn recognition in academic circles locally and internationally.

Serials are publications issued in successive parts normally at regular intervals and intended to be continued indefinitely. It could be published weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly, bi-annually and so on (Tomomowo-Ayodele, 2018). University and research libraries acquire, organise, store, retrieve and disseminate information contained in serials for researchers, educators, students and other interested persons in their various disciplines. There are many kinds of serials. These include newspapers, magazines, newsletters, accessions, journals, indexes, abstract, reports, proceedings and transactions of societies to mention but a few. Serials are publications in any medium issued in successive parts bearing numerical or chronological designations and intended to be continued indefinitely (Nutsupkui & Christopher, 2017).



Serial publications constitute an important source of information in university libraries in Nigeria. Their usefulness is found in the current information they carry. The information these vital sources carry, educate and entertain the readers and keep them abreast or informed about what happens in the society around them (Bala, 2023). The accessibility and use of serial publications provide vital information, which makes them one of the most important and crucial sources of information among LISE. The use of serials is not a new ideology in university libraries, but efforts are being made by librarians to acquire serials that will translate to qualitative research by LISE and other users in their various institution. Kanwar Library (2019) posited that serials acquired should be effectively and ethically obtained at a reasonable and available cost, when needed, to reflect the needs of the university curriculum. It is also in this regard that the usefulness of serials is very essential for LISE to communicate with their counterparts at large.

Serials are used by LISE for their academic activities, which is to teach and conduct researches. The use of resources especially serials, according to Barman (2020), could be a result of information seeking, browsing or discovery of new or existing phenomena. Azonobi (2021) highlighted some of the reasons lecturers select and use serial sources which include: the quality and characteristics of the content of a source, the characteristics of the source itself; the trustworthiness of the source; the usability of the source; the similarity of the source and the scope of the source.

Statement of the Problem

Serial publications are information resources that contain current information. They are available in print and electronic formats which help to support academic activities of the LISE in the university community. Serials are the backbone of research and teaching in the academic world as stated by Ogunrombi in (Akerle *et al.*, 2011). LISE and other researchers know that without serial publications, academic activities cannot be carried out efficiently. However, it has been observed in previous literature by the researcher that in spite of the fact that the university libraries management in North-central, Nigeria have made worthwhile efforts to acquire serial publications for the use of clientele including LISE, there seems to be low level of patronage of these resources for research which may affect effective academic activities. It is on this note, that the researcher wants to find out the accessibility and use of serial publications for academic activities by LISE in federal universities in North-central, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This study set out to:

1. determine the influence of use of serial publications by library and information science educators for their academic activities in federal universities in North-central, Nigeria; and
2. identify the factors hindering accessibility and use of serial publications among library and information science educators for academic activities in federal universities in North-central, Nigeria.



Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do library and information science educators' access and use serials publications for academic activities in the federal universities in North-central, Nigeria?
2. What are the factors hindering accessibility and use of serial publications among library and information science educators for academic activities in federal universities in North-central, Nigeria?

Significance of the Study

The study's findings will benefit multiple stakeholders, including university management, librarians, LISE, researchers, and LIS students. For university management, the research underscores the role of serials in achieving institutional goals and suggests ways to improve access to serial publications, thereby enhancing their use in academic activities. Librarians will gain insights into how extensively LIS educators use serials and the challenges they face, helping inform policies on serial usage standards. For LIS educators, the study highlights the accessibility and value of serial publications, which can support their academic and research activities by providing current and reliable information. Finally, researchers and LIS students will find the study valuable as a reference, expanding the literature on serial publication accessibility and use among LIS educators in Nigerian federal universities, particularly in North-central, Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

The title scope of this study focused on the accessibility and use of serial publications for academic activities by LISE in federal universities in North-central, Nigeria. The geographical scope covered federal universities in North-central, Nigeria namely: Federal University, Lafia, Federal University, Lokoja, Federal University of Technology, Minna, Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi, University of Abuja, University of Ilorin and University of Jos. The content scope of this study covered the types of serials publication available for academic activities of LISE, how library and information science educators access serials publication for academic activities, extent of use of serials publication by LISE for their academic activities, factors hindering accessibility and use of serials publication among LISE on academic activities and possible strategies enhancing accessibility and use of serials publication among LISE on academic activities in federal universities in North-central, Nigeria. The population scope of this study comprised LISE in federal universities in North-central, Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Serials play important roles in the life of every meaningful research. This is because, the information contained in serials are the product of research findings carried out by ardent scholars in different areas of specialisation. The information contained in serials is factual, current and up-to-date which are relevant for research. Adeola and Monisola (2017) defined



serial as a publication in any medium issued in successive parts, bearing numeric or chronological designations and intended to be continued indefinitely.

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Serial publications are categorised into periodicals and non-periodicals based on intended frequency of publication. A periodical is intended to appear more regularly and more often than once in a year which includes: journal, newspapers and magazines. According to Sambo and Akpojotor (2016), periodicals are publications published either regularly or irregularly and are not usually paid for in advance of publications which include: annual conference proceeding, monographic, newsletters, indexes, abstracts, reports and transaction of societies.

Owusu-Ansah and Nutsupkui (2017) defined serials as a publication in any medium issued in successive parts bearing numerical or chronological designations and intended to be continued indefinitely. Serials are very unique and contain very current information which is very useful for study, learning, teaching and research purposes. Tamomowo-Ayodele and Ayobami (2018) posited that there are many kinds of serials which include: newspaper, magazines, newsletters, accessions, journals, indexes, abstract, reports, proceedings and transactions of businesses in societies. Serial publications form the backbone of research and a crux to the success of any academic library.

Academic activities outline a pattern of commitment and create avenue for individual lecturer, student and teachers to engage in teaching and learning for knowledge acquisition. Academic activities involve a classified routine within a timeframe for the achievement of educational goals. In academic activities, every action and interaction is based on teaching or learning for which rewards are given. The rewards for academic activities are measured in grades and award of certificate. Every academic activity is associated with grade for every level of performance. In order words, every failure or success associated with academic activities is dully rewarded as specified in curriculum of education or as outlined in educational code of conduct or academic rules and regulations.

According to University of Southern Queensland (USQ) (2021), academic activity usually results in the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings. From the perspective of this definition, academic activity could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it leads to new and creative outcomes. The perspective of this definition centrally pinpoint to a thorough use of documented sources of idea upon which a new idea could be built, or by extension, expanding on already documented ideas for more or better understanding. Law Insider (2021) described academic activities as a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalisable knowledge. This includes, but not limited to, designing research, directing research, performing experiments, enrolling research subjects, making decisions regarding eligibility to participate in research, participating in observational registry programmes, analysing or reporting research data, or submitting manuscripts concerning research for publication.

The primary function of tertiary institutions is to provide full range of information resources which constitutes serial publications and other services necessary to carry out the goals and duties of the institution which the library was established to serve. Doraswamy (2018) posited that users approach the library with needs which they hope to satisfy. The author



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categorised library users into four groups namely: general readers, creative readers, adult students and researchers with special interests. According to the researcher, all these people utilise library resources for one purpose or the other. The purpose also informs the choice of resources to be consulted. The researcher further observed that the last category, that is researchers; concentrate on the utilisation of textbooks, journals and other relevant resources for research as demanded by their different professions. Similarly, Ugbagir (2016) is of the view that the motives and purpose of the users for approaching the library determine the serial publications that users are likely to consult. They claimed that most educators and other faculty staffs need information for the purpose of research and teaching and as such, they are desirous of serial publications such as: journals, theses and dissertations, government publications, conference proceedings and reference materials, online and electronic journals.

University libraries by providing these resources adequately would go a long way in satisfying the information needs of their users and promoting academic activity educators. It is only when are aware of serial publications that they can develop a positive attitude towards the use of library in pursuit of their academic activities. LIS educators in federal universities utilise serial publications in order to carry out their functions of effective teaching and research including research outputs. Kumah (2015) observed that students rely heavily on journals (print and online) theses and dissertations as well as periodical literature for their research productivity. Similarly, Olanlokun (2015) confirmed that journal articles, textbooks, theses and dissertations, monographs, treatises and government documents were considered very important to the job performance of the Nigerian academics.

The utilisation of serial publications especially in the developing countries has not been without some problems. Kisiedu (2018) identified like information literacy, Information overload, poor library organisation, lack of user skills; poor funding of libraries, lack of current information resources; lack of adequate/relevant materials; poor IT infrastructure; unconducive reading environment; poor power supply; lack of technical support; and lack of user education. The above problems no doubt will be more pronounced in countries such as Nigeria where issues concerning education are many a time relegated to the background in policy implementations. Komolafe *et al.* (2020) in their studies commented on the declining budgetary allocations in most tertiary institutions in Africa which have great negative impact on the availability and adequacy of serial publications in libraries. Consequently, African scholars depend heavily on gifts and donated materials from foreign countries for information for their research even on local issues. This scenario seriously affects academic activities of LISE in developing countries, including Nigeria, as much time, fund and energy are wasted trying to track down foreign information resources.

On the other hand, Adeoye *et al.* (2019) observed that irregular power supplies as well as lack of new ICTs pose serious challenges to provision and currency of serial publications. Similarly, Eiriemiokhale and Ibeun (2017) also maintained that poor power supply and information overload have become a major hindrance to influence of serial publications on research output of lecturers and researchers in Nigeria. Other problems affecting effective use of serial publications



as identified by Ndanwu (2016) include: lack of awareness on the availability of certain library resources, bibliographic obstacles and inadequate user education.

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Some of the problems affecting the utilisation of e-databases, as identified by Ibrahim (2016) include lack of user skills, lack of technical support and insufficient spare parts are some of the major constraints to effective use and adequacy of e-database in many institutions in the developing countries, including Nigeria. As a result, many of the e-resources in these institutions are under-utilised or not utilised at all.

The literature highlights the critical role of serial publications in academic research, particularly for faculty and students who rely on journals, theses, and conference proceedings. However, studies mainly focus on challenges like poor funding, limited infrastructure, inadequate technical support, and lack of user skills, especially in developing countries, like Nigeria. Despite identifying these issues, current research lacks data on the direct impact of these barriers on academic productivity and does not account for regional disparities in access within Nigeria. A gap also exists in exploring practical solutions to these challenges, such as promoting open-access resources, improving digital literacy, or creating alternative access methods. Future studies should investigate interventions that can improve access and utilisation of serial publications in low-resource environments, helping maximize their impact on academic outcomes.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was employed in this study, chosen for its broad applicability in collecting data from large populations. The study's population and sample consisted of 136 LISE in federal universities located in North-central Nigeria. Respondents were selected using a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a questionnaire, with 136 questionnaires distributed. Of these, 121 were completed and returned, and 15 were found usable for analysis. The questionnaire instrument was validated by experts from the Department of Library and Information Science at the Federal University of Technology, Minna. A pilot study was conducted in the Department of Library and Information Science at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, where 40 copies of the questionnaire were administered to LISE for initial testing. Descriptive statistics, including frequency tables, percentages, and means, were used to analyse the collected data. Table 1 shows extent of use of serial publications among LISE for academic activities in studied areas.



Data Analysis

Table 1: Extent of Use of Serial Publications the Respondents

S/N	Statements	VHE 4	HE 3	LE 2	VLE 1	N	FX	\bar{X}	St D	Decision
1.	I use serials publication for teaching	51	30	28	12	121	362	2.99	0.49	High extent
2.	I use serials publication for conducting research(es)	49	38	20	14	121	364	3.01	0.51	Very high extent
3.	I use serials publication for setting tests and examinations for my students	47	38	21	15	121	359	2.97	0.47	High extent
4.	I use serials publication for writing of my thesis/dissertation	53	22	34	12	121	358	2.96	0.46	High extent
5.	I use serials publication for writing of seminar papers	41	31	28	21	121	334	2.76	0.26	Low extent
6.	I use serials publication for writing of conference papers	48	33	22	18	121	353	2.92	0.42	Low extent
7.	I use serials publication for virtual presentations	52	28	21	20	121	354	2.93	0.43	High extent
Weighted mean								2.93		

Key: Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), Very Low Extent (VLE)

Table 1 shows that seven items were listed for the respondents to indicate the extent of use of serial publications for their academic activities. All the seven items produced high mean scores which were above the average benchmark mean of 2.93 on a 4-point Likert scale. These items include item 2: using serials for conducting researches (\bar{x} =3.01; SD=0.51); item 1: using serials for teaching (\bar{x} =2.99; SD=0.49); item 3: using serials for setting tests and examinations for students (\bar{x} =2.97; SD=0.47); item 4: using serials for writing of my thesis/dissertation (\bar{x} =2.96; SD=0.46) and item 7: using serials publication for virtual presentations (\bar{x} =2.93; SD=0.43). Two items produced low mean scores, which include item 6: using serials for writing of conference papers (\bar{x} =2.92; SD=0.42) and item 5: using serials for writing of seminar papers (\bar{x} =2.76; SD=0.26). Above all, the highest mean score is discovered from item 2 on the use of serial publications for conducting researches.

Table 2 shows the factors hindering accessibility and use of serial publications among LISE for academic activities in studied areas.

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Table 2: Factors Hindering Accessibility and Use of Serial Publications among the Respondents

S/N	Statements	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	N	FX	\bar{X}	StD	Decision
1.	Lack of current serials relevant for my academic work	54	28	22	17	121	361	2.98	0.48	Agreed
2	Inadequate staff in serial section to provide effective services	45	22	37	17	121	337	2.79	0.29	Agreed
3.	Lack of Internet services	39	34	25	23	121	331	2.74	0.24	Agreed
4.	Inadequate storage facilities	28	37	25	31	121	304	2.51	0.01	Disagreed
5.	Lack of access tools	34	30	28	29	121	311	2.57	0.07	Disagreed
6.	Inadequate power supply	41	38	20	22	121	340	2.81	0.31	Agreed
7.	Inadequate budgetary allocation and foreign exchange rate for serials acquisition	40	35	25	21	121	336	2.78	0.28	Agreed
8.	Organisation of serials in the library	23	28	33	37	121	279	2.31	0.19	Disagreed
Weighted mean									2.69	

Key: SA = Strongly Agreed, A = Agreed, D = Disagreed, SD = Strongly Disagreed

Table 2 shows that eight items were listed for the respondents to indicate the factors hindering their accessibility and use of serial publications. Seven items produced high mean scores, which were above the average benchmark mean of 2.69 on a 4-point Likert scale. These items include item 1: Lack of current serials relevant to academic work (\bar{x} =2.98; SD=0.48), item 6: Inadequate power supply (\bar{x} =2.81; SD=0.31), item 2: Inadequate staff in serial section to provide effective services (\bar{x} =2.79; SD=0.29), item 7: Inadequate budgetary allocation and foreign exchange rate for serials acquisition (\bar{x} =2.78; SD=0.28) and item 3: Lack of Internet services (\bar{x} =2.74; SD=0.24). Three items produced low mean scores, which include item 5: Lack of access tools (\bar{x} =2.57; SD=0.07) and item 4: Inadequate storage facilities (\bar{x} =2.51; SD=0.01) and item 8: Organisation of serials in the library (\bar{x} =2.31; SD=0.19). The five items with high mean scores show that these factors are mainly hindering the accessibility and use of serial publications among the respondents.

Discussion of the Findings

The study's findings provide insight into both how LISE access serial publications and the ways these resources support their academic activities within federal universities. Educators access serials through a variety of tools, including card catalogues, the Online Public Access



Catalogue (OPAC), bibliographies, indexes, abstracts, search engines, union catalogues, and online platforms like Library Genesis. These access methods ensure that educators have the

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resources needed for effective teaching and research. Consistent with Azonobi's (2021) findings, these tools whether in physical or electronic formats are essential for connecting educators to the wealth of periodical literature housed within university libraries.

In terms of application, serial publications serve multiple academic purposes, such as teaching, conducting research, setting tests and examinations, preparing theses and dissertations, writing seminar and conference papers, and creating virtual presentations. These activities are integral to academic work, as they contribute to both knowledge development and dissemination. This finding aligns with previous studies, including Kumah (2015) and Olanlokun (2015), which emphasize that Nigerian academics rely heavily on journals, theses, dissertations, and other forms of scholarly publications to enhance both their research productivity and job performance. These findings highlight a dual role for serial publications: they are both essential access points and indispensable resources that underpin a range of academic activities. The accessibility of these publications enables educators to build foundational knowledge, while their use contributes to effective teaching and robust research output. For universities, this underscores the importance of maintaining and expanding accessible systems for serials, as they are vital not only to individual educator success but also to the overall quality of academic and research programmes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that access to, and utilisation of serial publications by LISE are essential for achieving high-quality academic outcomes; as they provide invaluable resources that support various academic functions, ensuring educators are well-equipped to deliver effective teaching and conduct impactful research. These resources not only contribute to the educators' professional development but also enrich the learning experiences they offer to students. The use of serial publications allows educators to stay informed of the latest developments and methodologies within their field, which enhances their research quality and teaching effectiveness. By leveraging these publications, LISE can foster a dynamic academic environment that promotes continuous knowledge growth, contributing to the broader objectives of the university and academic excellence in the field of Library and Information Science.

Recommendations

1. The management of federal universities in North-central, Nigeria should ensure that LISE are well trained on continuous basis by organising training sessions on how to access and use serial publications for their academic activities. This is because serial publications contain current information and latest discoveries which can assist them in their effective teaching and carrying out of researches.
2. The management of federal universities in North-central, Nigeria where the university libraries are established should ensure the provision of current and up-to-date serial



publications, adequate storage facilities for serial publications as well as provide alternative source(s) of power supply. In addition, serial publications should be well organised in the library as it will enable easy accessibility and use among LISE for their academic activities.

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