

Awareness and Use of Serial Publications by Undergraduates of Federal University, Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Serial publications contain current, expert-reviewed information essential for students and researchers. This study was carried out to examine awareness as a determinant of use of serial publication by undergraduates of Federal University, Lokoja. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of 3,500 undergraduates. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the participants. A sample of 346 undergraduates was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Table of sample size determination. The participants were drawn from three departments from each of the five faculties at the Federal University, Lokoja. Data was collected with an adapted questionnaire. The validated questionnaire had Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.861. A total of 301 valid copies of the questionnaire were retrieved from 346 copies administered to the respondents representing an 86.9% response rate. Descriptive statistics and simple regression were used to analyse the quantitative data. The findings revealed that "personal findings" were the most agreed-upon source of awareness. Students at Federal University, Lokoja, demonstrated a high level of knowledge about serial publications. Furthermore, awareness positively influenced the use of serials. The study recommends establishing departmental libraries to improve access to library resources, enhance engagement with serials, and promote a stronger research capacity and learning culture among students.

KEYWORDS

- Awareness,
- Serial publications
- Undergraduates
- Lokoja
- Nigeria

Introduction

University libraries serve as vital information hubs, providing a variety of print and non-print resources to academics, non-teaching staff, and students. They play a crucial role in supporting the teaching, learning, and research missions of their parent institutions. A well-stocked library is essential for the effective operation of educational institutions and remains a source of pride for the community. Among the vast array of information resources, serial publications stand out as fundamental to fostering scholarship and research, which are core functions of these institutions. Moustapha (2022) and Akinbode and Nwalo (2017) describe serials as publications issued in print, non-print, or electronic formats in successive instalments with no set end date. Nyiyongo et. al. (2020) also defined a serial as any publication released under the same title in various media, consisting of distinct sections that are numbered or dated and published at regular or irregular intervals. Therefore, academic and research libraries are expected to include serials in their collections because they represent the latest advancements in various disciplines.

Serials are crucial for providing current information on research discoveries, supporting research initiatives, and enhancing the curriculum, making them a vital resource in academic settings (Nwofor et al., 2019). These resources enable researchers to stay updated on trends and developments across various fields, offering a continuous platform for discussion and reporting that contrasts with the lengthy publication cycles of books. Serials can be issued by academic institutions, learned organizations, or professional associations, with publication frequencies ranging from daily to annually.

In spite of the benefits associated with the use of serials, studies by Nwanapayi (2021), Miyanda (2015), and Komolafe, Gbotosho, and Odewole (2020) reveal that these publications are often underutilised by undergraduate students, despite being easily accessible. Furthermore, throughout the course of the researcher's five years of employment at the Adekunle Alalade Library, it was noted through observations and examinations of records that the serial area saw limited use, raising questions about whether this lack of patronage is due to insufficient awareness. Consequently, this study examined the influence of awareness on the utilisation of serial publications by undergraduates at the Federal University of Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study was to examine awareness as a determinant of serial publication's use by undergraduates of Federal University, Lokoja. The specific objectives are to:

1. identify the sources of undergraduates' awareness of serial publications in Federal University, Lokoja;
2. examine the level of awareness of serial publications by undergraduates in Federal University, Lokoja;
3. determine the purpose of use of serial publications by undergraduates in Federal University, Lokoja;
4. ascertain the frequency of use of serial publications by undergraduates in Federal University, Lokoja;
5. establish the influence of awareness on the use of serial publications by undergraduates in Federal University, Lokoja;

Literature Review

Awareness within the context of this study refers to the knowledge and understanding users have regarding the library's resources, particularly its collections, which significantly impacts their usage. The link between awareness and the utilisation of serial publications has been explored in several studies. Kiku and Otiike (2016) assert that a lack of awareness is one of the primary reasons behind the infrequent use of library resources. When users are unaware of the available materials or do not fully understand their relevance, their engagement with these resources remains limited. This underscores the crucial role of awareness in promoting the effective use of library collections.

Olubiyo et al. (2020) conducted a study on the awareness, accessibility, and use of serial publications among undergraduates at Adeyemi College of Education in Ondo, Nigeria. Their findings revealed that students exhibited limited awareness of the serial publications available in the library, which in turn led to low usage levels of these resources. This suggests that increasing awareness could significantly enhance student engagement with these materials, thereby improving their overall academic experience.

Similarly, Nutsupkui and Owusu-Ansah (2017) conducted research at the University of Education, Winneba, in southern Ghana, focusing on faculty members and graduate students. The study aimed to assess the use and awareness of print serials, specifically examining how important these materials were perceived for teaching and learning. Despite reasonable awareness of the print serials collection among both groups, the frequency of use remained low. Nevertheless, both faculty and students held a positive view of print serials' value in academic work, recognising their importance for teaching, learning, and research. Based on these findings, the study recommended improving awareness, updating the collection regularly, and showcasing the practical benefits of print serials to increase their use and strengthen users' positive perceptions.

In the same vein, a study titled "A Survey of Undergraduate Students Awareness and Utilization of Serial Materials of Federal University of Technology Owerri Library," Ogueri et al (2020) investigated undergraduate students' awareness and use of serial materials at the Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO) Library. The study revealed that most undergraduate students visited the library without being aware of the serials unit. To address this issue, the authors recommended that the library conduct intensive orientation programs and library tours for new students to familiarize them with the library's resources. They also suggested the effective use of embedded librarians to bring library services closer to students and faculty members. Additionally, the authors advised that embedded librarians should create awareness of current serial materials acquired by the library and that the library should endeavour to acquire a variety of serial materials to cover all courses offered at the university. They also recommended that the university management provide adequate funding for acquiring the needed serial materials and that faculty members encourage undergraduate students to make effective use of serial materials by assigning tasks that require consulting these resources.

In the current digital age, awareness of electronic information resources is critical for students and researchers. Mubofu (2019) explored the awareness, accessibility, and barriers related to e-journal use at the Institute of Finance Management. Through a study involving 141 participants (100 students and 41 faculty), data was gathered through interviews and the questionnaire. The study reveals that most users, including students and faculty, primarily accessed e-journals through popular search engines like Google, Yahoo, and Mamma, rather than utilizing library-specific databases. This suggests a significant gap in user awareness and promotion of library resources. The findings indicate that awareness plays a critical role in the effective use of e-journals, as limited knowledge of library databases may lead users to rely on less specialized search tools. While the study does not detail the exact frequency of use, it implies that both students and faculty use e-journals for academic purposes, such as research, coursework, or teaching preparation.

Methodology

The study employed the survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 3,500 undergraduates. The sample was 346 300-400-level undergraduates drawn from three departments of each of the five faculties at the Federal University, Lokoja. The sample size was based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Table of sample size determination. The instrument used was a validated, adapted questionnaire. The questionnaire had Cronbach's alpha reliability Coefficient of 0.861. A total of 301 valid copies of the questionnaire were retrieved from 346 copies administered to the respondents representing an 86.9% response rate. These were

subjected to data analysis. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics and simple regression.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the data gathered and analyzed for this study, along with a discussion of the results in relation to the five objectives. Data were collected from 300- and 400-level students at Federal University, Lokoja. This section is further divided into two parts: Section one provides the demographic data of the respondents, while section two addresses the research questions.

Table 1: Demographic Data of the Respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Categories	Frequencies (N=301)	Percentage (%)
i. Gender	Male	139	46.2
	Female	162	53.8
ii. Age	16-20 years	59	19.6
	21-25 years	188	62.5
	26-30 years	46	15.3
	31 years and above	8	2.7
iii. Faculty	Faculty of Arts	32	10.6
	Faculty of Education	123	40.9
	Faculty of Management Sciences	52	17.3
	Faculty of Science	48	15.9
	Faculty of Social Sciences	46	15.3
iv. Level	300 Level	156	51.8
	400 Level	145	48.2
v. Departments	Archaeology and Museum Studies	8	2.7
	Christian Religious Studies	4	1.3
	English and Literary Studies	20	6.6
	Art and Social Science Education	49	16.3
	Library and Information Science	19	6.3
	Science Education	56	18.6
	Accounting	18	6.0
	Banking and Finance	17	5.7
	Business Administration	17	5.7
	Biochemistry	17	5.7
	Biology	16	5.3
	Biotechnology	14	4.5
	Economics	25	8.3
	Geography	9	3.0
	Mass Communication	12	4.0
	Single	289	96.0
	Married	11	3.7
	Divorced	1	0.3

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents' demographic information. On gender distribution, females had higher representation with 162 respondents (53.8%), while males had 139 respondents (46.2%). In terms of age, the highest number of respondents fall between the ages of 21 and 25 years, with 188 respondents (62.5%), whereas the least number are aged 31 and above, with only 8 respondents (2.7%). For faculty, the Faculty of Education has the highest number of respondents, with 123 participants (40.9%), while the Faculty of Arts has the least, with 32 respondents (10.6%). Regarding academic level, the 300 level has the largest group, with 156 respondents (51.8%), while the 400 level has the smallest, with 145 respondents (48.2%). The Department of Art and Social Science Education has the highest number of respondents, with 49 participants (16.3%), while the Department of Christian Religious Studies has the least, with only 4 respondents (1.3%). Lastly, in terms of marital status, the majority of respondents are single, with 289 respondents (96.0%), while the least represented are divorced respondents, with just 1 participant (0.3%).

Research Question 1: What are the sources of awareness on the use of serial publications by undergraduates of the Federal University Lokoja?

Table 2 Sources of awareness on the use of serial publications by undergraduates of the Federal University, Lokoja

S/N	Items	S A (%)	A (%)	D (%)	S D (%)	Mean	S. D
1	Friends.	130 (43.2%)	125 (41.5%)	25 (8.3%)	21 (7.0%)	3.21	0.868
2	Coursemates.	135 (44.9%)	122 (40.5%)	19 (6.3%)	25 (8.3%)	3.22	0.894
3	Ask-A-Librarian.	97 (32.2%)	116 (38.5%)	43 (14.3%)	45 (15.0%)	2.88	1.026
4	Personal findings.	156 (51.8%)	94 (31.2%)	23 (7.6%)	28 (9.3%)	3.26	0.951
5	News from other university libraries.	74 (24.6%)	96 (31.9%)	80 (26.6%)	51 (16.9%)	2.64	1.032
6	Online sources.	137 (45.5%)	82 (27.2%)	42 (14.0%)	40 (13.3%)	3.05	1.062

Key: Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 2 presents the respondents' opinions on the sources of awareness regarding the use of serial publications among undergraduates at the Federal University, Lokoja. The survey covered six prominent sources of awareness: friends, coursemates, Ask-A-Librarian, personal findings, news from other university libraries, and online sources. The source of awareness most strongly agreed upon by respondents was "personal findings," which ranked first with 156 respondents (51.80%) and a mean score of 3.26.

Research Question 2: What is the level of awareness by undergraduates of the Federal University Lokoja?

Table 3 Level of awareness of serial publications by undergraduates of the Federal University, Lokoja

S/N	Items	H A (%)	A (%)	U (%)	H U (%)	Mean	S. D
1	Journals	135 (44.9%)	118 (39.2%)	25 (8.3%)	23 (7.6%)	3.21	.891
2	Magazines	127 (42.2%)	124 (41.2%)	31 (10.3%)	19 (6.3%)	3.19	.862
3	Newspapers	119 (39.5%)	120 (39.9%)	40 (13.3%)	22 (7.3%)	3.12	.900
4	Newsletters/bulletins	85 (28.2%)	130 (43.2%)	57 (18.9%)	29 (9.6%)	2.90	.922
5	Conference Proceedings	60 (19.9%)	140 (46.5%)	68 (22.6%)	33 (11.0%)	2.75	.898
6	Inaugural lecture series	97 (32.2%)	124 (41.2%)	51 (16.9%)	29 (9.6%)	2.96	.937
7	Reports	86 (28.6%)	146 (48.5%)	42 (14.0%)	27 (9.0%)	2.97	.886
8	Indexes	63 (20.9%)	104 (34.6%)	95 (31.6%)	39 (13.0%)	2.63	.955
9	Accessions	67 (22.3%)	96 (31.9%)	98 (32.6%)	40 (13.3%)	2.63	.973
10	Annuals	71 (23.6%)	106 (35.2%)	79 (26.2%)	45 (15.0%)	2.67	.997
11	Online Journals	101 (33.6%)	119 (39.5%)	46 (15.3%)	35 (11.6%)	2.95	.977

Key: Highly Aware (HA); Aware (A); Unaware (U); Highly Unaware (HU)

The results presented in Table 3 reveal the level of awareness of serial publications among undergraduate students at Federal University, Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria. The findings indicate that the students exhibited a high degree of awareness. This is evidenced by the fact that the frequency counts and percentages of students who were aware of serial publications surpassed those who were not. Furthermore, the mean values for all items were higher than the 2.50 cut-off point, with a weighted mean of 2.90. This suggests that the students at Federal University, Lokoja, have a reasonably high level of knowledge regarding serial publications.

Research Question 3: What are the purposes of the use of serial publications by undergraduates of Federal University, Lokoja?

Table 4: Purposes of serial publications use by undergraduates of Federal University, Lokoja

S/N	Items	VT (%)	T (%)	ST (%)	NT (%)	Mean	S. D
1	Researching for current information on project writing.	184 (61.1%)	81 (26.9%)	23 (7.6%)	13 (4.3%)	3.45	.813
2	Preparation for examination and test.	178 (59.1%)	83 (27.6%)	26 (8.6%)	14 (4.7%)	3.41	.834
3	For information on minor coursework assignments.	125 (41.5%)	111 (36.9%)	50 (16.6%)	15 (5.0%)	3.15	.872
4	Researching to update lecture notes.	126 (41.9%)	100 (33.2%)	44 (14.6%)	31 (10.3%)	3.07	.988
5	To seek information for writing seminars and term papers.	123 (40.9%)	123 (40.9%)	35 (11.6%)	20 (6.6%)	3.16	.876
6	Researching for recreation and pleasure.	88 (29.2%)	90 (29.9%)	62 (20.6%)	61 (20.3%)	2.68	1.101

Key: Very True (VT); True (T); Seldomly True (ST); Not True (NT)

The results in Table 4. present the findings on the purpose of serial publications used by undergraduates at the Federal University, Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria. The analysis shows that large percentage of the students with a cut of mean of (3.45) use serial publications for their research on current information on project writing, followed by seeking information for writing seminar and term papers (3.16), while the least purpose is for researching for recreation and pleasure (2.68).

Research Question 4: How often do undergraduates of Federal University, Lokoja use serial publications?

Table 5: Frequency of use of serial publications by undergraduates in Federal University, Lokoja

S/N	Items	Daily (%)	Weekly (%)	Monthly (%)	Occasionally (%)	Never (%)	Mean	S. D
1	Journals	75 (24.9%)	65 (21.6%)	29 (9.6%)	75 (24.9%)	57 (18.9%)	3.09	1.490
2	Magazines	74 (24.6%)	72 (23.9%)	41 (13.6%)	60 (19.9%)	54 (17.9%)	3.17	1.455
3	Newspapers	124 (41.2%)	49 (16.3%)	23 (7.6%)	50 (16.6%)	55 (18.3%)	3.46	1.584
4	Newsletters/bulletins	54 (17.9%)	69 (22.9%)	45 (15.0%)	56 (18.6%)	77 (25.6%)	2.89	1.467
5	Conference Proceedings	36 (12.0%)	42 (14.0%)	53 (17.6%)	83 (27.6%)	87 (28.9%)	2.52	1.353
6	Inaugural lecture series	48 (15.9%)	44 (14.6%)	38 (12.6%)	98 (32.6%)	73 (24.3%)	2.65	1.402
7	Reports	67 (22.3%)	44 (14.6%)	54 (17.9%)	72 (23.9%)	64 (21.3%)	2.93	1.459
8	Indexes	54 (17.9%)	46 (15.3%)	31 (10.3%)	70 (23.3%)	100 (33.2%)	2.61	1.514
9	Accessions	47 (15.6%)	46 (15.3%)	34 (11.3%)	68 (22.6%)	106 (35.2%)	2.53	1.484
10	Annuals	48 (15.9%)	31 (10.3%)	38 (12.6%)	91 (30.2%)	93 (30.9%)	2.50	1.427
11	Online journals	88 (29.2%)	53 (17.6%)	36 (12.0%)	48 (15.9%)	76 (25.2%)	3.10	1.586

The results in table 5 showed the frequency of use of serial publications by undergraduates at the Federal University, Lokoja. This frequency measure according to the study is represented by daily, weekly, monthly, occasionally and never. The value on each item regarding the frequency and percentage showed that the value of newspapers was significantly the highest whose frequency and percentage was 124 (41.2%). The results implied that majority of students use newspapers daily

Table 6: Influence of awareness on serial publications use by undergraduates in Federal University, Lokoja

Variables	Beta (β)	T	Sig.	R ²	Adj. R ²	F	P
(Constant)	-18.488	-16.190	.000				
Awareness	1.511	48.165	.000	.886	.941 ^a	2319.839	.000 ^b
Dependent Variable: Serial Publications Use							
Predictor: Awareness							
DF (F-Statistics) = 299							
DF (T-Statistics) = 299							

Table 6 showed that awareness had a positive significant influence on the use of serial publications. This was demonstrated in the outcome, where the P-value was 0.000, below the significance level of 0.05, and the degree of freedom was 299, with an R-value of 0.886. This demonstrated that undergraduates at Federal University, Lokoja used serial publications, and that awareness and these publications had a positive linear correlation. The results demonstrated that undergraduates at Federal University of Lokoja were significantly influenced by awareness when it came to serial publications. As a result, it is thought that raising awareness of serial publications within the university will increase their active usage in the library.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings revealed that undergraduates utilised newspapers more frequently than other listed serial publications. This outcome is consistent with the research done by Folorunso and Njoku (2016) on the use of serial resources in the libraries of particular Nigerian postsecondary institutions. The results showed that newspapers were the most frequently consulted serial resources in the libraries because they promoted early awareness of social events on a daily basis. The study further showed that respondents had positive opinions regarding the uses of serial publications. These findings are consistent with the research of Nwanapayi (2021), which found that the value of information as a developmental resource depends on how well individuals can use information from a variety of sources. They went on to say that students looked for serial publications for a variety of reasons, including to enhance their coursework, research projects, writing assignments, find specific information, expand their knowledge, stay up to date on current research trends, grasp important ideas, and develop their writing and reading abilities.

Additionally, the results of this study revealed that undergraduate students at Federal University, Lokoja, were aware of the serial publications available in the library. This contrasts with findings by Olubiyo et al. (2020), which identified a correlation between low awareness of serial materials and poor usage of such resources in the Adeyemi College of Education Library. These results suggest that the level of awareness significantly influences the use of serial publications. A low awareness level among students could lead to reduced patronage of these resources. Therefore, raising awareness is crucial for ensuring that library patrons fully utilize the materials available to them.

Conclusion

The study highlights the significance of serial publications as vital resources for academic and personal study, offering current and expertly reviewed information. At the Federal University, Lokoja, undergraduates demonstrate a high level of awareness regarding the availability of these resources in the library. However, despite this awareness, daily usage of serial publications remains low, with most students engaging with them only sporadically or when needed. This discrepancy suggests that while students recognise the existence of these resources, their regular utilisation is limited. To address this, strategies such as orientation programs or initiatives emphasizing the academic value of serial publications could help promote more consistent usage. The study therefore revealed that awareness had a positive significant influence on the use of serial publications.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Since personal findings emerged as the main source of awareness of serials, librarians should prioritize enabling individuals to independently discover and engage with relevant information. This can be achieved by diversifying and consistently updating the institution's serial publications to address the evolving information needs of students and faculty. At Federal University, Lokoja, such diversification and regular updates to serial publications are essential for ensuring that the library's resources remain relevant and valuable to the academic community.
2. The findings of the study indicate that students at Federal University, Lokoja, possess a relatively high level of knowledge regarding serial publications. To sustain and further enhance their awareness and accessibility to these resources, establishing departmental libraries is crucial. This approach would not only bring library resources closer to students but also significantly improve their engagement with and usage of serials. By situating libraries within individual departments, students would have easier access to both serials and other academic materials, thereby strengthening research capacity and learning culture.
3. Based on the findings, it is strongly recommended to prioritize newspapers as a key information source for students, given their substantial daily engagement. With 41.2% of students consistently interacting with newspapers, this medium represents a valuable and widely accessible tool for disseminating important information. By leveraging newspapers, educators and policymakers can ensure that students are well-informed and can easily incorporate relevant content into their learning routines.

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