

**AWARENESS OF ONLINE PUBLIC ACCESS CATALOGUE AND UTILIZATION OF LIBRARY RESOURCES BY UNDERGRADUATES IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH- SOUTH ZONE OF NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study investigated the influence of knowledge on the use of online public access catalogue and utilization of library resources by undergraduate students in federal universities in South-South Zone of Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 952 registered library users from three selected universities in the study area during 2017/2018 academic session. Questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection. The data collected was analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation. The hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression and multiple regression analyses respectively. The regression model produced a regression coefficient of  $R=.431$ , which revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between knowledge on the use of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) and utilization of library resources. The findings further revealed that knowledge on the use of OPAC is relatively low in the universities studied. It was recommended that library program currently being taught in Nigerian universities should be reviewed and taken into cognizance the important of information literacy skills required by students to enhance them access print/digital content of the library.*

**KEYWORDS:** OPAC, library resources, utilization, undergraduates, Nigeria.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

There are tremendous changes experience today in the quality and variety of information resources available to users, as well as great changes in technology and ways information is stored and accessed. Today, due to the development in information and communication technologies (ICTs), several thousand of published information both in print and electronic forms are available in the environment for human consumption. It has become difficult or not impossible to keep tracks with the available published works, and to access them. Thus knowledge of online public access catalogues (OPACs) as well as the knowledge of evaluation of information resources is very essential prerequisite skills for every user. Today, federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria have automated their operations and services using OPAC to fulfill their users' needs. Apparently, information literacy skills are increasingly becoming important in the contemporary environment of rapid technological evolution which resulted in proliferation of information resources. Anafo and Filson (2014) observed that because of the growing complexity of new

information environment, individuals are faced with diverse abundant information choices in their personal and academic lives. Also Nna-Etuk and Afebende (2019) underscore the importance of OPAC as one of the current information access tools used in academic environment by students and other researchers, that's liable to locate materials from the libraries online. American Library Association (2006) and Etim (2007) support the view that a person with information literacy skills will be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information effectively. Today's information users require new set of skills. The questions that arise are: (1) how do undergraduate students acquire information literacy skills (ILS)? (2) To what extent can they rely on their ILS to exploit or effectively use their library resources? (3) Has the knowledge of ILS enhanced the utilization of library resources? Or what is the level of their ILS competencies? The crux of ILS lies in the understanding of the knowledge of information access tools such as online public access catalogue which is retrieval devices and utilization of information resources.

Underutilization of library resources has been a matter of great concern to librarians in the Nigerian university libraries. The underutilization of library resources in the universities will no doubt assume a worrisome dimension, given that libraries have a responsibility of ensuring that their resources and services are effectively utilized. This justified reason for embarking on this study in order to find out the undergraduate students knowledge of OPAC as information retrieval tool and utilization of library resources in three federal universities in the South - South zone of Nigeria.

### **Statement of problem**

The underutilization of library resources in the three federal universities by users' particularly undergraduate students sometimes leaves one wondering and pondering on the effort put to establish them. It is expected that students make maximum use of information resources provided by the library in their institutions to excel in their fields of study. However, Okon (2007) observed poor use of libraries by students and resultant poor academic performance. It is not clear whether the apparent non-use or apathy in the use of libraries is connected with the knowledge on the use of OPAC. From the literature, an understanding and competence in searching and locating materials in the library is a factor in library utilization. This study therefore emanates from the above problems to investigate the undergraduates' knowledge on the use of the OPAC and utilization of library resources in three federal universities in South - South zone, Nigeria.

### **The purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of knowledge on the use of OPAC and utilization of library resources by undergraduate students in federal Universities in South - South Nigeria. Specifically, the study was designed to determine undergraduate students' knowledge on the use of OPAC and utilization of library.

### **The research question**

To what extent does undergraduates knowledge on the use of OPAC influence utilization of library resources in federal universities in South – South, Nigeria?

**Hypothesis**

Undergraduates Knowledge on the use of OPAC has no significance influence on utilization of library resources in federal universities in South – South, Nigeria.

**LITERATURE OF REVIEW**

Online public access catalogue is computer based retrieval tool which contains all the bibliographic information of an information center or library. It serves as an electronic catalogue as well as access tool and a database which contains bibliographic records of a particular library. An Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) has revolutionized traditional accessibility to resources of libraries, particularly in academic libraries. It is interface of libraries using several access points. Traditionally, it is concerned with searching for and retrieval of bibliographic records of materials in the libraries.

It is accessible via terminal, so that library users may directly and effectively search and retrieve bibliographic records without the assistance of a human intermediary. It is noteworthy that this definition specifically states that searchers use OPAC without human assistant thus suggest that information searchers should possess information skills and be computer literates. OPAC is an online database of materials held by a library or group of libraries which provides a platform for users to search and to locate books and other materials physically available in the library. Kusum and Arvind (2013), describe OPAC as the newest and sophisticated catalogue format. OPAC is an online bibliography of a library collection that is available to the public. It is a computer based catalogue and can be accessed through computer terminals in library.

Ansari (2008), study on awareness and use of OPACs in five Delhi libraries revealed that a high percentage of library users in five academic libraries in New Delhi used OPAC as a search tool for retrieving documents. The findings also revealed that most of the users have adequate knowledge of how to handle the OPAC themselves. In a related work, Mulla and Chandrashekara (2009), in their study on effectiveness of online public access catalogue at the libraries of engineering colleges in Karnataka (India) noted that 81.61% of 1,338 of the respondents use OPAC to search for library resources while 40.02% of library users at Devi Ahilya University consult library staff to access materials they need in the library; while 20.60% consult card catalogue and 24.91% consult their peers. Also, Yusuf and Iwu (2010), in their study indicated that 61.9% of students use OPAC to access library materials. They attribute this positive development to the result of compulsory orientation programmes organized by the library for the first year students of Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria. The findings also revealed lack of awareness of OPAC service or skill to use it

Shorunke, Eluwole and Gbenu (2014) carried out a study of users' satisfaction with online public access catalogue of Landmark University, Nigeria. The findings revealed that users of online public access catalogue at Landmark University were highly satisfied with the performance and functions of the OPAC. They further revealed that use of library study skills and information communication technology course created the necessary awareness on the use of OPAC. Another

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study by Ademodi and Akintomide (2012) focused on the awareness and use of Online Public Access Catalogue at Adekunle Ajasin University Library by undergraduate students. Three hundred undergraduates were interviewed using questionnaire to find out their awareness of OPAC, its use, library service and key constraints encountered in the use of library OPAC. The findings of the study revealed that awareness and use of OPAC facility in the library by undergraduate students at various levels was low, hence recommended that users' awareness and utilization of OPAC should be improved in the library. Oduwole, Oyesiku and Labu (2002), investigated on-line public access catalogue use in Nigerian academic libraries. The study was carried out through a questionnaire based survey and found out that OPAC was used mostly for self-search rather than search with author (59%) as major access point followed by subject (30.8%). Majority found OPAC use very satisfactory. Furthermore, Campbell and Fast (2004), did an exploratory study of university students' perceptions of searching OPACs and Web search engines and revealed that students express a distinct preference for search engines over library catalogues, finding the catalogue baffling and difficult to use effectively.

The study further revealed that while the respondents were generally happy with their understanding of search engines, they frequently expressed a low opinion of their inability to search the catalogue. The respondents stressed that searching information through OPACs sometime create problems. Villen-Reuda (2007), reaffirmed that Subject searching had been identified as the type of search presenting most problems for users and went further to stressed that many are culprit; the query software, the interface, the system and policy behind indexing and lack of knowledge on the part of users regarding the list of subject of headings as the shortcomings of the OPAC. Schneider (2006), reacting on the users' gross dissatisfaction with OPACs opined that library OPACs fail to meet users need and expectation. According to Sridher (2004), OPAC is an intrinsically rich tool which not only incorporates online circulation and new arrivals information of the library but also capable of providing quick, enhanced and easy access from the work place of the user with several additional search features compared to card catalogue and hence substantially saves the time of user.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The ex-post facto design was used because the researchers cannot control the independent variables since it already manifested. The study was carried out in three federal university libraries in the South- South, Nigeria. This is a geographical zone known as Niger Delta which has about 90% of oil mineral resources available in the area. Federal institutions used for the study University of Uyo, University of Calabar and University of Port-Harcourt respectively. The population of the study was 9506 using 2016-2017 academic was generated. That is 346 (10%) from 3,456, University of Uyo, 302 (10%) from 3016, University of Calabar and 304 (10%) from 3035, University of Port-Harcourt. The instrument for data collection was "Awareness of Online Public Access Catalogue and Utilization of Library Resources by Undergraduate Questionnaire" (AOPAULRUQ). The questionnaire covered various aspects of information literacy skills and utilization of library resources. The instrument was validated using Cronbach Alpha reliability test. The reliability coefficient obtained for the 8 items in the study variables was .78 which shows that

the instrument was reliable enough to be used. The data collected was analyzed by using mean (X) and standard deviation (S.D) while simple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

### **PRESENTATION OF DATA, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

There are two main variables in this study – awareness of online public access catalogue (independent variable) and utilization of library resources (dependent variable) by undergraduates in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. The descriptive analysis of the mean and standard deviation is presented in table 1. The interpretation of the descriptive analysis of the mean and standard deviation can be inferred by comparing the calculated means with population of the instrument. The knowledge of awareness of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) in using library resources has a mean of 14.92 and 45.55 respectively. If the value is compared with the expected mean of 15, the means of the variables are respectively lower than the expected mean. Thus, it can be inferred from this result that the undergraduates' knowledge of OPAC is relatively low.

The hypotheses: Knowledge of OPAC has no significant influence on utilization of library resources by undergraduate students in the Federal Universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria. This variable expressed in a null hypothesis was tested using data from 952 respondents. Simple regression analysis was used in the data analysis and the result is given in Table 2. The regression model produced regression coefficient  $R = .43$  which indicates that there is a strong positive relationship between knowledge of OPAC and utilization library resources. This implies that, the more knowledge of the OPAC a student has, the more the student is likely to use library resources. An  $R^2$  value of .186 indicates the knowledge of OPAC may account for 18.6% of the awareness on the use of library resources in the study area. This finding is a critical indication that, the knowledge of OPAC has high tendency to influence the utilization of library resources by students in the study area.

The F-value of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was  $F=216.8$  to 2 decimal places and the significant value of .000 (or  $P<.05$ ) at the degree of 1 and 949. The implication of this result is that the null hypothesis is rejected. It can inferred or conclude that, the knowledge of OPAC has significant influence on utilization of library resources by undergraduate students in Federal Universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria.

**Table 1:** Descriptive analysis of means and standard deviation of the variables

S/N	Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1.	Knowledge of OPAC	14.92	3.63	950

Table 2: Simple regression analysis of the influence of knowledge of OPAC on utilization of library resources by undergraduate students in federal universities in South-South Zone, Nigeria.

R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate		
.431 <sup>a</sup>	.186	.185		9.468		
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-ratio	p-level	
Regression	19434.191	1	19434.191	216.777	.000 <sup>b</sup>	
Residual	84988.781	948	89.651			
Total	104422.973	949				

a. Dependent variable: utilization of library resources

b. Predictors: (Constant) knowledge of OPAC

4.

The findings in this study are in agreement with the works of Ademodi and Akintomide (2012) whose studies revealed that awareness and use of OPAC facilities in the University libraries by undergraduate students at various levels is low. The analysis of means and standard deviation on the knowledge of OPAC has a mean of 14.92 and 45.55 respectively, revealing that calculated means are lower than the expected mean of 15, meaning that the undergraduate students' knowledge on the use of OPAC is relatively low, hence, underutilization of library resources by students in the study area. However, an R<sup>2</sup> value of .186 indicating that OPAC accounted for 18.6% of utilization of library resources by undergraduate students. This calls for greater attention by librarians to be critical in information literacy skills in their user –education in order to create awareness on the use of OPAC. This study is in consonant with the works of Ajiboye, Oyedipo and Alawoye (2013) who decried that library based retrieval tools for accessing library resources were rarely used by undergraduate students in Nigerian Universities. From these findings it can be deduced that user – education in Nigerian Universities is not properly captured and tailored towards information literacy skills to enhance students utilize abundance resources in the library. This study has underscored the importance of online public access catalogue in facilitating utilization of library resources by undergraduate students. The implication of the study is that more attention should be given to not only making students aware of these tools but attention should also be given to adequately instruct and equip students with skills on how to use these tools.

## CONCLUSION

Information literacy skills is panacea for today's information society particularly in higher education. The OPAC is one of the information access tools created for easily retrieval of the needed information resources available online. The level of awareness determine how one is able to obtain or utilize the needed information in the library today caused by e-environment. It can be deduced from this study that knowledge of OPAC can be used to significantly predict undergraduate students' utilization of library resources in Federal Universities in South-South

Zone, Nigeria. From the foregoing, it is clear from the findings that poor knowledge of OPAC as information access tools by undergraduate students is the cause of underutilization of library resources. Thus, if the users are properly educated on available access tools in the library they can maximize the library resources effectively.

### Recommendations

- The librarians should tailor their use of library education programmes on information access tools to help students retrieve both print and online information resources.
- The university library should make drastic efforts through library bulletin and newsletters to ensure maximum publicity on services available in the library and provide effective education on how to use OPAC.
- The use of library skills programme should be made more of practical than theory to enable students to have full grip of information search strategies.
- User education programme in the universities should be reviewed and broadened taking cognizance of e-environment today.

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