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Information Seeking Behaviour Of Researchers In Oyo State Public Universities During Strike Action.

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Abstract
This study examines how researchers in public universities in Oyo State, Nigeria, seek out information during times of strike. Utilizing a survey research methodology, 280 respondents from different faculties at two public universities completed structured questionnaires that were used to gather data. The research reveals a range of preferences and opinions about the value of various information sources during strikes. Traditional sources like print materials and conference proceedings are regarded less favourably than online resources like social media and the internet/search engines. Additionally, problems with digital literacy, copyright, inadequate infrastructure, access control, internet connectivity, and doubts regarding the reliability and relevance of sources present challenges for researchers seeking information. These results highlight how critical it is to address these issues in order to guarantee that people have access to trustworthy information during times of disruption. The study advances our knowledge of how researchers seek out information and provides guidance for improving information access in learning environments during work stoppages
Key Words: *Information seeking Behaviour, Researchers, Strike Action, Public Universities, Oyo State*

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I. Background To The Study

The major purpose of tertiary institutions, especially universities is research. Hence, both students and teaching staff engage in research from time to time in order to bridge knowledge gaps that might have existed over a period of time. Universities engage in research periodically as part of their charge around learning and discovery, which successively contributes straightforwardly and by implication to their essential mission of educating. Universities and many colleges (excluding those dedicated exclusively to undergraduate teaching) include the pursuit of scholarship as part of their mission statements (Rosowki, 2022). This could be in form of rudimentary or applied research (both are most common in the STEM fields, broadly defined), research-based scholarship or what often is called "scholarly activity" (most common in the social sciences and humanities), or creative activity (most common in the arts).

In order to carry out effective and practicable research, there is need for reliable and timely information. This is why researchers search for information from different sources, ranging from libraries to other information sources like electronic databases. This process or activity of attempting to obtain information in both human and technological settings is referred to as Information Seeking (Brown and Ortega, 2007). However, while seeking information, individuals employ diverse methods and exhibit different kind of behaviour, depending on personality and the purpose of the information needed. Thus, the term information seeking behaviour was coined by scholars after the first half of the twentieth century. Wilson (1981) defined information seeking behaviour as the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information-seeking, and information use. He also suggests that information seeking behaviour is purposive seeking of information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. During the time of seeking, the individual may consult with formal and informal information sources.

In other words, researchers can obtain the needed information for their studies from different sources, depending on the nature of research. Scholars have investigated the preference information sources for various types of user groups and tasks. Although academic users rely on both electronic and printed resources, they depend more on electronic resources (Xie and Joo, 2009). This is because the emergence of the Internet has

made access to electronic information sources easier for end users. In the digital age, electronic resources, human resources and printed resources are the common information sources selected by users; electronic resources, in particular, have become more and more prevalent as major information sources for users to fulfil different types of search tasks (Dilevko and Gottlieb, 2002). Kim and Sin (2007) also noted that researchers in tertiary institutions obtain research information from variety of sources which include: web search engines, websites, books, online databases and journals, OPACs, friends/family members, printed journals, reference materials and librarians, in no particular order.

Due to the importance attached to academic libraries, especially university libraries in learning and research, it has become necessary for researchers to involve academic libraries and librarians in their information seeking process. This is evident in the fact that a large number of the variety of sources aforementioned can be obtained in the library and with the aid of a librarian. For instance, electronic journals can be accessed using the library's subscription to electronic databases, as well as the library's internet services. Likewise, resources in print format such as books, printed journals and reference materials such as dictionaries, encyclopaedia, handbooks and almanacs, etc. can be accessed in the library's physical collection. It therefore follows that for scholars to have unhindered access to quality information for research purpose; academic libraries must open their doors wide both day and night and allow the use of their facilities by researchers. However, this can only be achieved when the gates of the parent institutions are opened in the first instance. In other words, environmental factors and occurrences such as insecurity, riots, protests and strike actions can prevent the library from opening its doors, which prevents researchers from gaining access to the library resources for the purpose of obtaining information.

Strike actions are increasingly gaining recognition in the educational sector of this country; and this phenomenon has attracted the attention of well-meaning Nigerians and stakeholders (Adavbiele, 2015). The term 'strike' has been described in different forms. According to Hornby (2001), strike is a period of time when an organized group of employees of a company stops working because of a disagreement over payment or certain conditions. Nigerian educational system in recent times has been characterized by incessant strike actions across the tiers of the educational system. The first notable strike in Nigeria was held in 1945 and ever since, different groups and unions have been embarking on strike actions across the sectors of the economy. From observations, the educational sector has received the greatest hit among all sectors (Olakunle, 2011). There have been series of strike actions in the nation's educational sector and especially tertiary institutions. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) embarked on strike in 2013 and the Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU) strike in 2014 are examples of strike actions which have led to school disruption and stress among all concerned stakeholders. This often cause a big setback in educational industry in Nigeria and calls for necessary drastic action to be taken by the nation. In some cases, union leaders have been attacked and some of them have sustained serious injuries; and some have paid with their lives due to its prolonged nature. These developments have in no small measure, negative impact and also affected tertiary education and research in Nigeria.

When universities and their libraries are closed, it becomes difficult for researchers and even students to obtain useful information needed for research. As a result, researchers are often forced to explore other options to avoid stagnation in their research. However, not much has been done to understand or investigate how researchers seek for information when academic institutions and their staff members are on strike.

Statement of the Problem

The menace of strike has been a source of worry and concern to every stakeholder in the education sector in Nigeria, especially as it has become a sort of annual festival since the 2012 strike embarked upon by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) (Adavbiele, 2015). This has hindered advancement in teaching, learning and research in government owned tertiary institutions as the time meant for learning and research is spent on other activities that may be unscholarly in nature. In spite of this, researchers, whether academic or scientific strive to continue their pending research in order to meet up with deadlines issued by editorial boards of various journals in their discipline or to be able to present findings of their studies in conferences of reputable associations.

Consequently, there is a necessity to explore other sources of information in order to proceed with on-going research. In doing this, researchers often exhibit different kinds of behaviour just to have their information needs met at all reasonable cost. This may include switching to electronic means such as websites and search engines or liaising with private tertiary institutions not affected by the strike. However, there seems to be a dearth of studies investigating the information seeking behaviour of researchers during strike actions in Nigeria. For instance, where else do researchers turn to for information when academic libraries appear to be inaccessible due to strike? How do they prevent the incessant strikes from hindering their research progress? These questions beg for answers; hence, this study investigates the information seeking behaviour of researchers during strike actions in public universities in Oyo state.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

1. investigate the sources of information consulted by researchers in Oyo state public universities during strike actions;
2. evaluate the satisfaction of researchers in Oyo state public universities with the information sources available to them during strike actions; and
3. highlight the various challenges encountered by researchers in Oyo state public universities in obtaining information during strike actions.

Research Questions

1. what are the sources of information used by researchers in Oyo state public universities during strike actions?
2. do researchers in Oyo state public universities get easily satisfied with the information gotten from the available sources during strike actions?
3. what are the various challenges encountered by researchers in Oyo state public universities in obtaining information during strike actions?

II. Literature Review

The quality of information gathered during research determines to a large extent the credibility of the outcome of such study. Hence, the process of seeking information by researchers is often a thorough and sometimes tedious one. As a result of this, researchers often consult different sources of information. Studies have revealed that researchers consult various types of information materials, depending on the nature of research and the discipline under study. For instance, Dilevko and Gottlieb (2002) submitted that researchers usually commenced their information search process by using electronic resources; however, printed resources were essential resources for their tasks. About one third of the respondents also preferred to use print journals to e-journals. Thompson (2007) also conducted a study that investigated the use of information resources by distance education students. The findings of the study showed that library Web pages and Google were the most important information resources preferred by distance education students when conducting research.

In their own study, Hemminger, Lu, Vaughan and Adams (2007) reported that journals, Web pages, databases, and personal communications are the most frequently used information resources for academic scientists. Vibert, Rouet, Ros, Ramond and Deshoullieres (2007) identified PubMed and Google as the key resources for neuroscientists for their research. Not all academic users depend mainly on electronic sources. According to Baruchson-Arbib and Bronstein (2007), researchers in the humanities used books and journals as their main information channels. Moreover, they tracked citations of these sources to other documents even though they started to adopt electronic information sources. Danlami and Ahmed (2019) also noted that when conducting research, senior administrative staff of polytechnics utilize information resources identified by Popoola and Haliso (2009) as those information bearing materials that are in both printed and electronic formats such as textbooks, journals, indexes, abstracts, newspapers and magazines, reports, CDROM databases, Internet/E-mail, videotapes/cassettes, diskettes, magnetic disk, computers, microforms, etc.

In addition, Xie and Joo (2009) conducted a study on the selection of information sources by researchers, using accessibility, familiarity and type of task as moderating factors. Findings of the study revealed that 83% of the respondents preferred to use electronic sources, of which web pages and search engines were found to be the most dominant types. More specifically, the "Web page" included commercial, individual or organizational websites. Approximately 50% of the Web pages were organizational sites including governmental, association, or institutional Web pages. For example, a participant who needed information about the Congo searched the information provided by a Congo government website. It seems that the credibility and reliability of the information sources were major concerns for participants while they used Web page sources. The study also showed that "search engine" was the second prevalent source used by participants. Amongst search engines, about 81% used Google and 7% used Yahoo. We can infer that Google plays an important role as an information source, in particular at the beginning stage of information seeking.

Similarly, in a study carried out by Makinde, Jiyane and Mugwisi (2019) on information resource format inclination of science and technology researchers in a South African university, it was found that the internet was the most favoured source of information among science and technology researchers as they begin their information search. However, the study further revealed that apart from electronic resources, a good number of the respondents favoured the combination of print and non-print versions of reference resources and journals in contrast to only print and only non-print formats. This affirms the submission of Chimah and Nwokocha (2013) that researchers can obtain useful information from intangible sources. According to the authors, these sources include research techniques and methods employed by other researchers such as questioning, explanation, experimentation, exemplifying, sampling, modelling, designing, construction, field

trips, illustration, characterization, measurement, analysis of data, monitoring, installation, computation, systems optimization, metallization, fabrication, testing, blending, additive property studying, distillation, dissemination demonstration and exhibition.

These studies infer that the most preferred source of information among researchers is electronic resources. To access this type of resources, researchers are not always required to be physically present in the library; hence, industrial actions by academic or non-academic staff of tertiary institutions are less likely to affect the use of these resources. However, whether or not the information gotten electronically through the internet or electronic journals, as well as the process of obtaining this information, satisfies the information needs of the researchers, especially during strike periods, is another factor entirely.

Furthermore, Arogia and Balasubramanian (2019) conducted a survey to determine the effectiveness of electronic information sources and services by users of university libraries in Tamil Nadu, India. Findings of the study showed that respondents were more satisfied with internet and electronic journals than other electronic sources of information. Respondents further indicated that they were either somewhat or not satisfied with other electronic sources such as e-books, subscribed databases, e-catalogues, and CD-ROM databases accessed outside the library premises. This lends credence to the findings of Rani and Chinnnasamy (2014) who also found that the level of satisfaction of researchers in colleges affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University, India, with different electronic resources differ. The study revealed that the respondents were satisfied with internet sources, digital libraries, e-learning services and virtual classrooms. However, the respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with other electronic resources such as audio-visual materials, educational television and open software services. Dhanavandan, Esmail, and Nagarajan (2012) also found that technology and engineering researchers using electronic resources in Krishnasamy College of Engineering and Technology, India had a moderate level of satisfaction with the use of electronic information resources outside the library. The study also found that majority of the researchers derived satisfaction from internet sources but had little or no satisfaction from other electronic sources.

Singh and Satija (2007) conducted a research to investigate the information seeking behaviour of teachers and research scientists who were employees of India Council of Agricultural Research Institutes of Delhi and Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana. Findings of the study showed that the agricultural science researchers in the institutes preferred and depended largely on library collection for accessing information, followed by their personal collection, a collection of their supervisor and colleagues. The study further revealed that having access to electronic resources within the library premises encourages research productivity of the researchers. This was affirmed by the study of Singh and Bebi (2012) who opined that agriculturists in India visited the library to use electronic resources such as e-journals and articles for research work, teaching and for arming themselves with current information in the field. However, Ezeala and Yusuf (2011) through their study argued that research officers in research institutes were not satisfied with the electronic resources provided by research libraries and had to supplement it with other forms of electronic resources that could be accessed outside the library premises.

Wagwu and Obuezie (2018) also conducted a study to examine the satisfaction of researchers with utilization of electronic information resources in Rivers State University in Nigeria. The study revealed that the level of satisfaction of the respondents with the use of electronic resources to obtain research information was low. Respondents of the study indicated that they were not satisfied with surfing the internet for information or searching for electronic documents all by themselves. However, a fair level of satisfaction was recorded with the search and use of electronic journals by the researchers. This is in line with the findings of Satija (2008) who noted that most researchers in a Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI) library preferred to utilize the ICT available within the library services to search for information for their research, rather than try to do it remotely outside the library premises.

Most of these studies infer that researchers derive a high level of satisfaction from the use of internet when seeking information for research purpose but lower satisfaction level from other electronic sources. However, there seems to be a form of contradiction as to whether the level of satisfaction gotten when these electronic resources are accessed within the library premises is the same as when they are accessed outside the library premises without the assistance of library staff, especially during strike actions.

To obtain relevant information that will guarantee maximum satisfaction by researchers, information-seeking has to be in-depth and direct. Therefore, information seeking by researchers during strike periods can be challenging and difficult. This has made scholars to undergo various studies that investigate the challenge encountered by researchers in information seeking during strike periods. For instance, the study conducted by Oyewusi and Oyeboade (2011) revealed that the inflation rate affected the prices of books and journals, which makes it difficult for researchers to have access to hard copies of books and journals outside library collections. As a result of this, they are sometimes pushed towards obtaining information from other sources such as e-books and e-journals. This is in consonance with the submission of Oppenheim (2008) who noted that although researchers can sometimes receive required information by contacting the source of the information

(government agencies, individuals, etc.) directly, some sources are usually inaccessible due to funding issues or restrictions from the publisher.

Ahmad and Nishat (2012) also found that 46.31% of research scholars in the University of Delhi indicated that low bandwidth reduces computer speed which makes it difficult to have access to electronic databases. The study also revealed that 44.21% of research scholars face difficulty in accessing full-text, 32.63% of the research scholars indicated slow internet connectivity as well as lack of sufficient electronic journals, 21.10% of research scholars responded that limited access terminal is the problem and 16.84% respondents implied that they face difficulty in finding the relevant information, 20% respondents that they face retrieval problems, 15.79% respondents indicated that they faced insufficient time and training. Some respondents also complained of loading (retrieval problem) followed by poorly designed internet site (13.68%). 5.26% of the respondents also showed that they face problem of reading the journal from the computer while only 2.1% respondents encountered other types of challenges. This conforms to the submission of Korobili, Malliari and Zapounidou (2011) who opined that the internet has been adopted as a primary source of information by many researchers and that the challenges encountered by researchers while seeking information from the internet include accessibility and convenience of access, loading or retrieval time, and constraints or level of difficulty.

Makinde, Jiyane and Mugwisi (2019) also conducted a research factors and challenges affecting information-seeking behaviour of science and technology researchers at the Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi, Nigeria. The study sampled 165 researchers out of which only 114 responses were considered fit for analysis. The study found that the challenges encountered by the respondents in obtaining information from electronic sources outside the library premises include low level of awareness of relevant databases, rising cost of internet connection charges, subscription requirements and information explosion. Fasola and Olabode (2013) in a study that investigated the information seeking behaviour of students in Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Nigeria also opined that lack of internet connectivity, lack of awareness of availability and dispersion of information across many sources are some of the factors that researchers encounter when seeking information from electronic sources as a result of the closure or unavailability of the physical library. This is accordance with the findings of Rani and Chinnasamy (2014) that researchers in Madurai Kamaraj University in India face challenges such as lack of motivation, inadequate internet proficiency, low awareness level, problem of downloading articles and problem of over searching when attempting to seek information via electronic sources.

The reviewed literature has established that researchers seek information from a variety of sources in a bid to satisfy their information needs, especially in the course of conducting a research. Studies established that these sources can be accessed either within the premises of academic libraries or from any remote location at the researchers' convenience. However, the literature also revealed that when unable to access library materials, collections and staff, researchers turn to electronic information sources such as the internet and electronic databases for information. Be that as it may, there seems to be a gap in knowledge as to the peculiarity of strike actions to the preference of researchers for electronic sources of information as well as their satisfaction of the information obtained from other sources when university libraries are closed as a result of strike actions. This is the gap this study intends to fill.

III. Methodology

The survey research method was adopted for this study. A questionnaire was prepared in accordance with the research objectives with properly structured questions which identifies the important variables. Respondents were randomly selected across different faculties from the two public universities in Oyo State, Nigeria using the random sampling technique to allow a fair representation of various disciplines. A total of 300 copies of questionnaire were administered to the researchers, out of which 280 duly completed copies were retrieved and analysed using the SPSS software. The findings of the study were presented in frequency counts and simple percentage tables.

IV. Results And Discussion Of Findings

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	174	62.1
Female	106	37.9
Total	**280**	**100**
Age		
21-30 years	62	22.1

31-40 years	109	38.9
41-50 years	71	25.4
51-60 years	29	10.4
60 and above	9	3.2
Total	**280**	**100**
Educational Qualification		
Bachelor's Degree	77	27.5
Master's Degree	116	41.4
Doctorate Degree	87	31.1
Total	**280**	**100**
Category		
Postgraduate Student	123	44
Academic Staff	102	36.4
Independent Researcher	55	19.6
Total	**280**	**100**

Demographic characteristics of the respondents (Table 1) include gender, age, educational qualifications and research category. Among the respondents, 62.1% were male while 37.9% were female. In terms of age, 22.1% were between the ages of 21 and 30, 38.9% were between ages 31-40, 25.4% were between 41-50 years old, 10.4% were between 51-60 years, while 3.2% were aged 60 years and above. Based on educational qualification, 27.5% of the respondents had bachelor's degree, 41.4% had master's degree, while 31.1% had doctorate degree. The table also shows that 44% of the respondents were postgraduate students, 36.4% were members of academic staff, while 19.6% were independent researchers.

The data presented in table 2 collectively indicate a wide range of preferences and views about the value of various information sources during strike times. While print materials and conference proceedings seem to have lower levels of perceived usefulness, other sources, like reference materials, informal sources, the internet and social media platforms, are widely used and seen favourably. The results highlight how crucial it is to comprehend people's varied information-seeking inclinations and behaviours during disruptive events like strikes. This finding agrees with the submission of Hemminger, Lu, Vaughan and Adams (2007) that academic scientists most commonly use journals, Web pages, databases, and personal communications as information resources for research. It also supports the findings of Makinde, Jiyane and Mugwisi (2019) that scientists and technologists who are just starting out in their information search most often turn to the internet and that a substantial number of the researchers preferred a mix of print and non-print reference materials and journals, rather than solely relying on non-print formats, aside from electronic resources.

The data in table 3 above reveals the level of satisfaction derived from the various information sources by researchers. Based on the data, it is evident that there is a preference for online sources like social media and internet/search engines, while traditional sources like print materials and conference proceedings are met with greater scepticism or discontent. This emphasizes how crucial digital resources are becoming for getting information during outages like strikes. This lends credence to the findings of Arogia and Balasubramanian (2019) that researchers in Tamil Nadu, India were more satisfied with internet and electronic journals than other electronic sources of information. It however slightly differs from the submission of Rani and Chinnnasamy (2014) who found that researchers were expressed dissatisfaction with other electronic resources like audio-visual materials, instructional television, and open software services, but were content with internet sources, digital libraries, e-learning services, and virtual classrooms.

Table 3 above reveals the various challenges encountered by researchers in public universities in Oyo state in seeking information during strike periods. According to the data, digital literacy, copyright, infrastructure, access control, internet connectivity, information relevance, and source credibility are among the major challenges that respondents encountered when trying to obtain information during strike periods. It is imperative to tackle these obstacles in order to enhance the availability of trustworthy information during periods of disruption. This is in tandem with the submission of Fasola and Olabode (2013) that when searching for information from electronic sources due to the closure or unavailability of the physical library, researchers at Ajayi Crowther University in Oyo, Nigeria face a number of challenges, including lack of internet connectivity, a lack of awareness of availability, and the dispersion of information across many sources. It also confirms the findings of Korobili, Malliari, and Zapounidou (2011), who found that many researchers have turned to the internet as their primary source of information and that the difficulties they face when searching for information online include difficulty levels and constraints, loading and retrieval times, and accessibility and convenience of access.

V. Conclusion

Conclusively, this study clarifies the crucial role that researchers' information-seeking behavior plays during strikes in Nigerian public universities. The results highlight the importance of timely and accurate information for successful research projects and emphasize the preference for online resources during disruptions such as strikes. In order to lessen research setbacks during strike actions, researchers show flexibility in looking for alternate information sources despite obstacles like digital literacy, copyright concerns, and infrastructure limitations. Academic libraries and librarians continue to play a crucial role in enabling access to information; they emphasize the need for ongoing assistance and accessibility even in the face of environmental disruptions. In order to maintain research productivity and academic advancement in postsecondary institutions, it is critical to address the challenges that have been identified and guarantee continuous access to high-quality information. Policymakers, educational stakeholders, and library administrators can use the insights from this study to improve information access strategies and lessen disruptions to research during unstable times.

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