



Awareness and Availability of Open Educational Resources in South-West Nigerian University Libraries

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Abstract

Keywords:

Open Educational Resources, OER awareness, OER availability, Library personnel

Introduction: This study investigates the level of awareness of open educational resources (OER) among library staff in academic libraries within South-West Nigerian universities. Additionally, it assesses the availability of OER materials within these libraries.

Method: A descriptive survey design utilizing a structured questionnaire in Google Forms was employed to gather information from 737 academic librarians and library officers using a total sampling technique. The questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp groups affiliated with the Nigeria Library Association and through personal accounts and email addresses. Despite repeated postings, only 135 respondents completed and submitted the form. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results/Findings: The findings reveal that library personnel in South-West Nigerian universities possess a comprehensive awareness of the fundamental concepts of OER, including its benefits, different forms, distinctions from other electronic information resources, and understanding of UNESCO guidelines. However, the study also identifies shortcomings within library collections, noting that existing OERs do not cover all courses, lack regular updates, and primarily consist of textbooks and course materials.

Conclusion: The study concludes that while there is a high level of awareness of OER among library staff, there are significant gaps in the coverage and updating of OER materials within the libraries.

Recommendations: The library should develop a strategy to enhance the updating of OERs, select materials that cater to all academic programs, expand the collection to include diverse forms of OERs, and integrate OERs more effectively into existing library systems.



Introduction

The Open Educational Resources (OER) started a couple of years back with the sole objective of bridging the gap that existed in access to quality educational materials for the benefit of the students especially in tertiary institutions. Some scholars have proclaimed that the movement started in 2001 (Brown et al. 2020). The movement however became a globally accepted initiative with the intervention of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2002 which convened a forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education in Developing Countries (UNESCO, 2002). Globally, the turn of the economy has made the need to rearrange spending and cut costs unavoidable in academia. The OER had its notable breakthrough in 2017 as an essential teaching tool (Silagadze 2017). Daily, the costs of instructional materials keep soaring out of the reach of an average student, especially in a struggling economy such as we have in Nigeria. This initiative therefore portends a lot of benefits for the students as well as the staff of these institutions. This discourse is therefore a focus of attention by librarians whose major interest is the provision of access to information resources. The availability of these resources is crucial for academic libraries to sustain the patronage of the users and as well fulfil the core functions of librarianship as outlined in the laws of library science by Ranganathan. Therefore, every library considers collection development and acquisition of relevant resources as a primary function and core of its mandate. Without adequate awareness of the users about the availability of the resources, its provision might not achieve its targeted goal. Worst still, a library is equipped enough to make OER materials when library personnel are well-informed about the concept of OER. However, there have been concerns about the low level of use by the intended users. This low

patronage of OER for teaching, learning and research purposes has been attributed partially to a low level of awareness among potential users of the materials (Mishra et al, 2022). This low awareness among the users cannot be divorced from the level of awareness of OER by the librarians; the acclaimed custodians of the materials. Therefore, the availability of OERs in any academic library is intricately tied to the level of awareness among the librarians. Their awareness would impact on their ability to source, acquire and collect relevant OERs for the library users.

Statement of Problem

For quite some time now, discussion on OERs has engaged the attention of students, faculty, librarians and academic institutions globally. Nigeria has had its fair share of participation in this discourse. However, a closer look suggests that the literature has only addressed promotion (Ogunbodede & Cocodia, 2023), awareness among the faculty and students (Ogunbodede et al, 2021; Wiche & Ogunbodede, 2021), management (Ailakhu & Ibrahim, 2024), the inadequacy of infrastructure (Idowu et al, 2023) among other focuses. The awareness of the OER materials by the librarians and their availability in Nigerian academic libraries seem to have been taken for granted. A cursory look at literature from other third-world countries shows that librarians in some of these nations are not adequately informed about the OER materials to be able to play a crucial role in its procurement. Thus, some of these OERs are scanty in academic libraries of such nations. This study therefore intends to examine the level of awareness of the academic librarians in the South-West Nigerian university system and the availability of OERs in such libraries. The focus of the study is to examine in detail the depth of awareness of South-West Nigerian university library personnel about the concept of OERs and the availability of these materials in academic libraries. Also, the



quantum of publications by Nigerian librarians on the subject of OERs does not suggest deep familiarity of the library professionals with the subject. The study will therefore further populate the little-growing literature on this new area in librarianship.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to serve as a guide to the study:

1. What is the depth of awareness of open educational resources by library personnel in the South-West Nigerian university system?
2. What is the level of availability of open educational resources in South-West Nigerian university libraries?

Literature Review

There is a high degree of awareness and utilization of OER among academic staff (faculty) in Nigerian universities (Ogunbodede et al, 2021). Similarly, Okwu et al. (2023) argued that the faculty had a favourable view of the OER in those institutions in Bayelsa and Rivers states in Nigeria where he conducted his study. This awareness among the faculty, Larson (2020) and Fischer et al (2020) observed has witnessed an increase over the years even outside Nigeria. Also, Manju and Bhatt (2021) agreed that both staff and students in Delhi, India are aware of OER and make adequate use of these resources for their learning and teaching activities. The materials he further stated are readily available and easy to use making the students and staff have a positive disposition toward them. This was also the view of Wiche and Ogunbodede (2021) who claimed that LIS students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State, Nigeria are equally aware and make use of OER for academic activities. Contrary to this assertion, Al Abri and Dabbagh (2018) in a review of the literature noted that the OER movement is yet to fully expand to the

education sector proper. The level of awareness of these resources by faculty and staff is low while the adoption rate of OER among higher institutions of learning remains minimal. Mwinyimbegu (2018) corroborated this view when he noted that the custodians of the repository of knowledge (the librarians) in some Tanzanian public universities are sometimes unaware of the existing OER in the academia even when they understand the importance of the information resources. Though, Prasad et al. (2016) acknowledged that the faculty at the University of South Pacific claimed to be aware of OER, even then, not all were practically using the resources.

Several factors have collectively slowed down the rate of awareness and use of OER in academic communities. Mwinyimbegu (2018) reiterated that though librarians are fully aware of the concept and importance of OER for educational promotion and even participate in its promotion on library websites and university repositories, their efforts are limited by the absence of clear policy guidelines on how OER could be used as well as limited awareness of the existing OER. Ogunbodede and Cocodia (2023) aligned with this position while researching into promotion of OERs in university libraries when they noted that librarians were discovered to have a high level of awareness about OER. The majority of these librarians were actively involved in advocating for the use of OER in their academic institutions. They however acknowledged that challenges against the use of OERs include poor Internet connectivity, epileptic power supply, inadequate sensitization by the library and absence of institutional support.

Though Young (2016) alluded to the fact that librarians have been at the forefront of advocacy for the adoption for decades, other scholars argued that the level of awareness of the OER by librarians is still low. According



to Calilung (2020) in a recent study, findings show that librarians are rarely aware of OERs. Similarly, the majority of academic librarians in private institutions of higher learning were not aware of open access (OA) in Gaborone, Botswana. The few who were aware did not actively use the resources to support their reference services (Kassahun, 2017; Buende-la-Fuente et al., 2012). Open access sometimes incorporates OER materials. Huynh, Le and Le (2022) noted that the inadequate awareness of librarians about the concept of OER and all that this entails in practical librarianship can be traced to inadequacy in knowledge about such resources right from the library schools. Thus, students of library science graduate with limited knowledge of OER.

The availability of electronic resources as well as accessibility to these materials in the libraries are important to their use by students and staff in the universities. One prominent group of these electronic resources is OER (Adenariwo & Sulyman, 2022). Patel and Darbar (2017) confirmed the availability of electronic resources at the C. K. Shah Vijapurwala Institute of Management (CKSVIM) Library, Vadodara. Even though Andrew and Ibraheem (2022) affirmed the availability of electronic information resources (EIRs) in academic libraries in Northern Nigeria, it was obvious from their analysis that the intended EIRs did not include OER materials. Although accessibility to EIRs is challenged by several factors in academic and special libraries in Abia State, the availability of these resources was noted (Nnadozie et al., 2017). This observation was corroborated by an earlier study conducted by Isiakpona and Ifijeh (2012) on the availability of electronic resources in university libraries in Ogun State and another one on its availability in Francis Sulemanu Idachaba Library, University of Agriculture, Makurdi (Ternenge & Kashimana, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic which rendered it impossible for tutors to make use of traditional textbooks already pencilled down for use in physical class environment made the involvement of libraries and librarians unavoidable in providing alternative materials in free OER online to the faculty (Dill & Cullen, 2020). However, there is a noticeable shortfall in the coverage of OER available in the library. Ordinarily, not all areas are catered for by electronic resources in third-world countries. Electronic resources are absent in some subjects and disciplines as noted in research on the availability of e-resources in Babcock and Redeemer universities (Quadri et al., 2014). Though OER materials include other information resources besides textbooks and modules (Crozier, 2018), Calilung (2020) concluded that course materials, open textbooks and digitized library collections are the only types of OERs commonly available and patronized by library clients while other types of OER are rarely used. In Tanzanian public universities, however, the libraries host OER to ensure its availability to the users on demand.

Methodology

This study was conducted among library personnel working in university libraries located in South-West of Nigeria. The region was specifically chosen since it boasts seventy-one universities the highest number hosted in any geo-political zone of the country. Academic librarians and library officers were included in the study because of their roles in the provision of information resources especially the digital ones to library clients. The total population of study is made of 365 academic librarians and 372 library officers totaling 737 being the aggregate of library personnel in the seventy-one (71) universities in South-West Nigeria. Due to the small number of personnel, a total sampling technique was employed. A descriptive survey design based on a structured questionnaire was



used to elicit information on the level of awareness of OER by the library personnel and the degree of availability of OER materials in university libraries of South-West Nigeria. The questionnaire packaged in Google form was administered to the respondents via the WhatsApp platforms of the Nigeria Library Association in the six states of

South-West Nigeria. Similarly, links were sent to personal e-mail addresses and WhatsApp of individual members. After repeated posting of the link to the questionnaire, only 135 respondents filled out and submitted the form. The data provided was later analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Table 1. Awareness of OER by Library Personnel

	Awareness of OER	SD	D	A	SA
1	I am aware of the concept that underlines open educational resources (OER) in the academic library	7 (5.18%)	12 (8.88%)	56 (41.48%)	60 (44.4%)
2	I am aware of the benefits that the students and faculty can derive from the use of OER	20 (14.81%)	11 (8.14%)	35 (25.92%)	69 (51.11%)
3	I am aware of the various types of resources that are included in OER materials	8 (5.92%)	9 (6.66%)	71 (52.59%)	47 (34.81%)
4	I can identify the differences between OERs and other digital library resources	9 (6.66%)	15 (11.11%)	80 (59.25%)	31 (22.96%)
5	I am conversant with the UNESCO guidelines on the use of OER materials	12 (8.88%)	42 (31.11%)	71 (52.59%)	10 (7.40%)

The table above gives a precise description of the responses of the respondents on the depth of awareness of the library personnel concerning the concept of OER and the details of acquaintances they should have with the resources. The vast majority of the respondents supported the view that the library personnel are aware of the concept that underlines OER in the library. The majority 60 (44.4%) and 56 (41.48%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively with this view representing 85.9% of the entire respondents. Similarly, 69 (51.11%) strongly agreed that they are aware of the benefits the students and faculty can derive from the use of OER. 35 (25.92%) of

the respondents agreed with the opinion. With this, 77.03% of the entire respondents shared the view. With regards to various types of resources that are included in OER materials, 71 (52.59%) and 47 (34.81%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they are aware. Also, 80 (59.25%) and 31 (22.96%) of the library personnel agreed and strongly agreed respectively that they can distinguish other digital resources in the library from open educational resources. Those who accepted this view in totality represent 82.22% of the entire respondents. Yet again, the majority of respondents acknowledged that they are aware of the UNESCO guidelines on the use of OER materials. Out of the entire



respondents, 71 (52.59%) agreed with this while 42 (31.11%) disagreed.

Table 2. Availability of OERs in University Libraries

	Availability of OER	SD	D	A	SA
1	There are OER materials in the university library for the use of the patrons	23 (17.03%)	13 (9.62%)	78 (57.77%)	21 (15.55%)
2	Available OERs in the library cover all the programmes that the university runs	44 (32.59%)	56 (41.48%)	19 (14.07%)	16 (11.85%)
3	The OERs in the university are regularly updated to meet the information needs of the students	35 (25.92%)	64 (47.40%)	29 (21.48%)	7 (5.18%)
4	The OERs in the library are creations of the faculty in the various departments of the university	25 (18.51%)	67 (49.62%)	27 (20%)	16 (11.85%)
5	There are other types of OER materials in the library besides course materials, textbooks and modules	36 (26.66%)	62 (45.92%)	14 (10.37%)	23 (17.03%)

In the table above, data analysis of the responses on the level of availability of OERs in the academic libraries of South-West Nigerian universities is presented. More than half of the total respondents, 78 (57.77%), agreed that OER materials are readily available in the library for the use of the library clients. Other respondents, 23 (17.03%), 21 (15.55%), and 13 (9.62%), strongly disagreed, strongly agreed and disagreed respectively. On the subject coverage of the available OERs, 56 (41.48%) and 44 (32.59%) disagreed and strongly disagreed that OERs in libraries cater for all courses offered by their respective universities. Only a few respondents, 19 (14.07%) and 16 (11.85%) agreed and strongly agreed with the proposition. The majority of the library personnel, 64 (47.40%) and 35 (25.92%)

disagreed and strongly disagreed that there are regular updates to the OERs to meet the information needs of the students. Out of the whole library personnel, 67 (49.62%) and 27 (20%) respondents disagreed and agreed accordingly that the OERs available in the universities were created by the faculty of the various institutions. Finally, the majority, 62 (45.92%) and 36 (26.66%) respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that the libraries possess other forms of OERs besides course materials, textbooks and modules.

Discussion

The study found that the library personnel in South-West Nigerian universities are fully aware of the fundamental concept of open educational resources. They equally know the benefits that await the faculty and their students when the use of OER is fully



operationalized. Also, they are aware of the various forms of materials classified under open educational resources and the differences between these materials and other digital resources available in the library. Above all, the library personnel are acquainted with the guidelines set by UNESCO for the use of OERs. These findings perfectly affirm earlier studies; Prasad (2016), Mwinyimbegu (2018) and Ogunbodede and Cocodia (2023), that stated that library personnel are aware of the concept and operations of OER as a form of open access, South Pacific, Tanzania and Nigeria. The library personnel are therefore not ignorant of the intricacies surrounding reference services connected to open educational resources and the expectations of the library users in that regard. The situation of lack of awareness reported by Calilung (2020), Kassahun, 2017, and Huynh, Le and Le (2022) in their research studies is therefore not the state of library personnel in South-West Nigeria.

Also, the study found that there are OER materials in the libraries of universities in South-West Nigeria. This finding aligns with the discovery made by Adenariwo and Sulyman (2022), Andrew and Ibraheem (2022), Ternenge and Kashimana (2019), Patel and Darbar (2017), and Nnadozie, Aniebo and Chukwueke (2017) all proclaimed the availability of open access materials such as OER in the university libraries. However, the findings in this study indicate that the available OERs do not cover all courses offered in the universities in South-West Nigeria. Similarly, the OERs are only in the form of textbooks, modules and course materials. In the same vein, these materials are neither created by the faculty in the respective university nor are they regularly updated to serve the periodic changes to the information needs of the students. These findings are in agreement with what had been reported in the literature by Quadri, Adetimirin & Idowu (2014) that electronic resources in the library

do not cover all programmes offered by the university. Calilung (2020) also noted that OERs in the library are only restricted to course materials and textbooks leaving others unattended.

Conclusion

This study underlines the critical role played by the library personnel in creating accessibility to open educational resources in the university libraries of South-West Nigeria. Though it is expected that OERs will bridge the gap in information service delivery given the high cost of textbooks most of which are imported, only adequate intervention by the library and its personnel can guarantee the attainment of this task. This study has further affirmed a critical factor that makes the library qualified to embark on the task; the awareness of the library personnel about the intricacies around the meaning, concept, and distinct characteristics of the OERs. This awareness makes both content sourcing and service provision easier for the staff and guarantees quality services to the patrons. Though there are OERs in the libraries, they are restricted to coursework, modules and textbooks. They equally do not cover all the courses offered in the institutions and are not regularly updated especially when they are free OERs sourced elsewhere.

The absence of regular updates to the OERs because they are not created by the faculty in the university or probably due to the negligence of the library in creating a work schedule that makes OER online sourcing a regular function is a setback to OER availability in the library. The library should proactively provide a work plan to ameliorate this gap and attend to all courses offered by the university so that no section of the community is shortchanged in the process. The library personnel should equally go beyond the course materials by enlisting other types of OERs such as streaming videos, software,



images and Test/Quiz Banks that can help to complement the available print materials. All these resources can be packed into the OER server or integrated into the institutional repository of the university library. This will not only guarantee visibility and accessibility to OERs, it will also lessen the reference queries concerning open educational resources.

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