**Awareness and Use of Institutional Repository by Postgraduates of Library and Information Technology in Federal University of Technology Minna, Niger State**

Fati Abba

Federal University of Technology, Minna

[fatiabba@futminna.edu.ng](mailto:fatiabba@futminna.edu.ng)

Hajara Jibriil,

Federal University of Technology, Minna

[hajo.jibril@futminna.edu.ng](mailto:hajo.jibril@futminna.edu.ng)

Chuks-Ibe, Prisca Oluchi

Federal University of Technology, Minna

[pochuksibe@futminna.edu.ng](mailto:pochuksibe@futminna.edu.ng)

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**Abstract**

The research study investigated the perception of postgraduate students of Library and Information Technology on the university domiciled repository. This research study adopted the cross-sectional survey research and used a self-developed questionnaire to collect quantitative data from forty-two (42) 2018/2019 postgraduate students in the department of Library and Information Technology of Federal University of Technology, Minna, which was descriptively analysed using frequencies and mode. The findings from the study indicated that LIT postgraduate students were aware of the IR. The result also showed that the main source of awareness of the IR for the students was through the use of the Internet, followed by the library website/social media pages. Challenges on the acquiring institutional repository highlighted showed that inadequate skills for using institutional repository was the most perceived challenge hindering the use of the IR. The study recommended that the university library staff should liaise with the School of postgraduate studies to create awareness and advocate for the use of the IR. It also recommended that the School of Postgraduate studies should come up with the self-archiving policy of postgraduate theses similar to what the faculty members do. This will increase the interaction of students with the IR interface and by extension increase its use.

**1.0 Introduction**

The development, design and implementation of Institutional repositories (IR) in academic libraries have since 2002 been growing at a steady pace when Clifford Lynch declared them as pertinent facilities for scholarly publishing in the digital times (Ramirez and Hanlon, 2011). Open access repositories are digital information resource libraries that provide access to information resources, research findings, theses and dissertations, which have been deposited with the consent of the authors. They were initiated by Massachusetts Institute of Technology, United States of America in the year 2000. Eighteen years after, academic libraries all over the world have tapped and are still tapping into the institutional repository project. Since then, libraries have leveraged on the advantages repositories offer to have an archive of information resources for their institutions. This is not surprising as the basic elements of repositories tally with the traditional role libraries play which is to acquire, organise, preserve and disseminate information resources, thus making it a viable technological tool that represents physical libraries in the digital environment.

According to Kleinman (2011), new research typically depends on earlier research, which supports the necessity for open access to research through institutional repositories. How then would these "previous research" be discovered if Christian (2008) and Ezema (2011) emphasised that research produced over the years are buried in various libraries in Africa, making it challenging for academics and students to access. According to Ezema (2011), this dynamic has made African researchers heavily reliant on data produced in nations like Europe and the USA, which may not entirely reflect the structure and context of African problems. Furthermore, emphasis has continuously been laid on the dearth of research information for postgraduate researchers in developing countries like Nigeria. The Database of African Theses and Dissertations (DATAD) initiative indicated that African research results are rarely indexed in major international databases; a situation which they stated is further exacerbated by the inaccessibility of theses and dissertations completed in the region, that contain local empirical data not available in international literature.

This information gap has been a challenge for most postgraduate students in Nigeria. If graduate students have to improve the caliber of their study, access to intellectual and scientific knowledge is absolutely essential. This avoids duplication of effort and guarantees that the results of study are looked into further to yield more reliable conclusions. (Ibrahim, et. al. 2020). To tackle this challenge, university libraries deployed institution repositories to provide access to information resources.

FUT Minna Institutional Repository was initially deployed in 2014 and has since been redeployed and redesigned to meet up with latest updates and trends. The repository contains over 15,000 information resources including journal articles, conference papers, books and theses. With the amount of information resources on the repository, the researchers observed that the usage of the repository by postgraduate students was low. However, the usage of an information system is dependent on awareness of the system; thus the research study was carried out to investigate the level of awareness and use of the institutional repository.

**2.0 Research Questions**

1. To what extent are LIT postgraduate students aware of FUT MINNA institutional repository?
2. What are the sources of awareness of FUT MINNA institutional repository?
3. To what extent are LIT postgraduate students utilising FUT MINNA institutional repository?
4. What are the perceived challenges hindering the effective utilisation of FUT MINNA institutional repository?

**3.0 Review of Related Literature**

Advocacy and awareness are major challenges facing repository administrators especially in this part of this world. Despite these challenges, an understanding of the awareness of institutional repositories by the different users is important in order to optimally utilise the repositories. In developed countries of the world, the awareness of IRs had been discussed earlier after the deployment of repositories with evidence revealing very high level of awareness (Halder and Chandra, 2013). The issue of awareness of repositories in developing countries only came up over a decade ago. The focus however has been on faculty members (Christain, 2008; Akintunde & Anjo (2012); Bamigbola, 2014; Hinmikaiye, 2014). There is a dearth of literature about postgraduate students which are also one of the targeted users of repositories because of the research nature of their studies and also because electronic theses and dissertations are one of the contents of repositories which postgraduates need.However, in recent years, researchers have started investigating the utilization of repositories by postgraduate students. The study of Ahmad (2017) on the awareness and utilisation of the ABU IR by faculty of science postgraduate students revealed low awareness of the IR by the postgraduate students. Similarly, Ibrahim et. al (2020) examined the perception of graduate students in the use of the institutional repositories particularly in relation to the institutional repository of the University for Development Studies (UDS), Tamale, Ghana. Their study found revealed that 67% of the respondents were aware of the IR but utilization was only occasional among them.

The evidence of utilisation of contents from IRs in many cases in the literature varied. Though, institutional repository can be used by virtually anybody with required tools and skills, it is usually used by academic staff, students and researchers that have flair for research (Hinmikaiye, 2015). In most cases, extent of utilisation was not necessarily uploading or downloading directly via the IRs. Carr (2011) study revealed that 64% of the users of the institutional repository of Southampton University were those linked to the repository via the internet search engines. The study of Ahmad (2017) revealed that over half of the postgraduate students in the faculty of science did not use the IR of ABU Zaria.

**4.0 Methodology**

This research study adopted the cross-sectional survey research and used a self-developed questionnaire to collect quantitative data that was descriptively analysed. Some of the questions were adapted from Hinmikaiye (2014). The population of the study was forty-two (42) 2018/2019 postgraduate students in the department of Library and Information Technology of Federal University of Technology, Minna Nigeria. The questionnaires were distributed to the students at their various classes except the PhD students that were contacted individually. The administration of the questionnaire lasted approximately one week and 40 of the questionnaire were filled and returned. Frequency, Percentages and Mode were used to analyse the ordinal and nominal data collected.

**5.0 Research Findings and Discussion**

The findings and discussions of findings are stated below:

**Table 1: Extent of Awareness**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Extent of Awareness** | **Frequency** | **Percentage [%]** | **Mode** |
| 1 | Not Aware | 4 | 9.8 | 3.00  Somewhat Aware |
| 2 | Slightly Aware | 8 | 19.5 |
| 3 | Somewhat Aware | 16 | 39.0 |
| 4 | Highly Aware | 13 | 31.7 |
|  |  |  |  |

The results on Table 1 above showed the extent of awareness of institutional repository by postgraduate students of federal university of Technology, Minna. The result showed that 39.0% of students are somewhat aware of the existence of institutional repository while 31.7% are highly aware of the institutional repository. 19.5% of the students are slightly aware and 9.8% are not aware. The finding from Table 1 indicated that there was the LIT postgraduate students were aware of the IR. This finding is similar to the findings of Ibrahim et. al (2020) and Nunda & Elia (2019). Their studies found similar high level of awareness of IR among postgraduate students in University for Development Studies (UDS), Tamale and University of Dar es Salaam respectively. Although awareness is usually the first step in the utilisation process of information systems, it is pertinent to note that a high level of awareness of an information system in the library does not translate to utlisation of the system. In addition, the perception of awareness differs for individual students. Institutional repository and its functions remains a new phenomenon which majority of postgraduate students do not understand (Nunda & Elia, 2019).

**Table 2: SOURCE OF AWARENESS**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Source of Awareness** | **Frequency** | **Percentage [%]** |
| 1 | Internet | 11 | 26.2 |
| 2 | Library Website/Social media pages | 9 | 21.4 |
| 3 | Workshop/Conference/Seminar | 7 | 16.7 |
| 4 | Class Lectures | 16 | 38.1 |
| 5 | Colleagues | 12 | 28.6 |
| 6 | Brochures/Posters | 2 | 4.8 |
| .7 | Library staff | 13 | 31.0 |

The table above shows the source of awareness of institutional repository by postgraduate student of Federal University of Technology, Minna. The result showed that the source of awareness of the IR for 26.2% of the students was through the use of the Internet, 21.4% of the students are aware through the use of Library Website/Social pages.16.7% are aware through Workshop/Conference/Seminar. 38.1% student were aware through Workshop/Conference and Seminar. 38.1% of the students were aware of institutional repository through their Class Lectures. 28.6% are of the student are aware of institutional repository while 28.6% of the student were aware of the institutional repository through the use of the Brochures/Posters. This finding is similar to the findings of Ibrahim et al (2020) but negates the findings of Nunda & Elia, (2019). Nunda & Elia, (2019) study indicated that the library staff were the main source of awareness of IR for their postgraduate students which is quite commendable.

Overall, it can be inferred that the Internet remains the major source of awareness of IR for students and even faculty members in institutions were the library staff are not aggressively advocating and creating awareness of IRs for postgraduate students. Most times, postgraduate students stumble upon articles or theses downloaded from IRs while searching for information resource. This explains the level of awareness indicated in Table 1. Postgraduate students are aware that resources can be retrieved from repositories but may not fully understand how to search and retrieve the resources directly from the resources. The reason for this can also be attributed to the fact that in Nigeria and FUT Minna specifically, students are not required to upload their theses into the IR after the completion of their studies.

**Table 3: EXTENT OF UTILISATION**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S/N | Extent of Utilisation | Frequency | Percentage [%] | Mode |
| 1 | Never | 5 | 12.8 | 3.00  Sometimes |
| 2 | Rarely | 16 | 41.0 |
| 3 | Sometimes | 12 | 30.8 |
| 4 | Always | 6 | 15.4 |

The table above showed the extent of utilisation of the IR by LIT postgraduate students. 41.0% rarely utilise the institutional repository, 30.8% students a sometimes utilise the institutional repository. Only 15.4% always use the institutional repository while 12.8% have never used the institutional repository. This finding further reiterates that a high level of awareness of a system does not necessarily equate to utilisation of the system. Also, the reason for this can also be attributed to the fact that in Nigeria and FUT Minna specifically, students are not required to upload their theses into the IR after the completion of their studies. If the system was in place, students would have interacted with the IR and become familiar with its functions and by extention, this will have increased the use of the IR.

**Table 4: TYPE OF RESOURCES USED**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Types of Resources** | **Frequency** | **Percentage [%]** |
| 1 | Research Reports | 13 | 31.0 |
| 2 | Journal Publications | 16 | 38.1 |
| 3 | Conference Publication | 16 | 38.1 |
| 4 | Seminar/workshop papers | 10 | 23.8 |
| 5 | Theses/Dissertations | 9 | 21.4 |

From Table 4 above, the type of resources that were highly used by the postgraduate students of Library and Information Technology was indicated. The vast majority of the resources (38.1%) used from the repository was found to be journal publications. 38.1% used conference publications followed by research report with 31.0%. seminar/workshop23.8%, and theses/dissertations 21.4%.

**Table 5: PERCEIVED CHALLLENGES**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Perceived Challenges** | **Frequency** | **Percentage [%]** |
| 1 | Inadequate skills for using IR | 22 | 52.4 |
| 2 | Frequent inaccessibility of the IR | 20 | 47.6 |
| 3 | Inadequate updated resources | 6 | 14.7 |
| 4 | IR interface is not user friendly | 1 | 2.4 |

Challenges on the acquiring institutional repository highlighted in Table 5 showed that inadequate skills for using institutional repository (52.4%) was the most perceived challenge hindering the use of the IR. This finding is similar to the findings from the study of Nunda & Elia, (2019) which stated that lack of adequate knowledge tends to influence student's persuasion to search for information. Surprising, LIT postgraduate students are expected to have taken courses on information search and retrieval and Digital libraries at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Thus the inadequate skills should not be a challenge. This result indicates that there is a need for more practical session for these courses for LIT students. Also, the students indicted the frequent inaccessibility of the IR as a perceived challenge.

**6.0 Conclusion**

The research study provided empirical data on LIT postgraduate students' perceptions of the FUT Minna Institutional Repository. The study concluded that the perception of FUT Minna institutional repository by LIT postgraduate students was not encouraging. Although, there was a considerable level of awareness, the students rarely used the IR to source for resources for their studies. This is not commendable considering the fact that the postgraduate students are been trained to be information professionals.

**7.0 Recommendations**

Based on the findings and discussions above the study recommended the following:

1. The university library staff should liaise with the School of postgraduate studies to create awareness and advocate for the use of the IR. The advocacy sessions should include practical sessions where the use of the IR and benefits for postgraduate students will be demonstrated. It is envisaged that when the students are aware of the benefits of IR, they will use it.
2. The School of Postgraduate studies should come up with the self-archiving policy of postgraduate theses similar to what the faculty members do. This will increase the interaction of students with the IR interface and by extension increase its use.
3. The ICT unit of the university should ensure that the availability of adequate manpower for the maintenance of the IR.

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