**INFLUENCE OF USE OF ACADEMIC SOCIAL MEDIA ON RESEARCH INFORMATION GATHERING ACTIVITIES OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATORS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES.**

**By**

**Rita Otibhor Salami (Mrs), CLN, Katamba A, Saka, Ph.D., CLN, Mohammed Abubakar Bitagi, Ph.D., CLN & Samuel J, Udoudoh, Ph.D., CLN**

[**r.otibhor@futminna.edu.ng**](mailto:r.otibhor@futminna.edu.ng)[**s.katamba@futminna.edu.ng**](mailto:s.katamba@futminna.edu.ng)**,**

**bitagi2006@yahoo. com** [**Samuel.udoudoh@futminna.edu.ng**](mailto:Samuel.udoudoh@futminna.edu.ng)

**Abstract**

The study investigated the influence of the use of Academic Social Media on research information-gathering activities of Library and Information Science (LIS) Educators in Nigerian Universities. This study was guided by three objectives and corresponding research questions and includes the type of ASM used for research information-gathering activities, frequency of use, and extent of the use of ASM for research information gathering activities among LIS educators. A descriptive survey research design was used and the target population consisted of 348 LISE in 37 University-based Library Schools in Nigeria. A sample size of 258 LISE was drawn from the population using the multistage sampling technique. A structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale was designed in line with the research questions. 30 copies of the validated, corrected and returned questionnaire was pretested using the Cornbrash alpha method, and the following reliability coefficients were obtained: in the 3 sections of the questionnaire: 0.836,0.917 and 0.885 respectively A total of 258 copies of the questionnaire were administered on respondents (online) through their respective e-mails. The response rate showed that 190 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved. Percentage, frequency counts, and mean scores were used in the analysis of data. Results showed that Google scholar was the most utilised ASM and that the frequency of use of ASM was low and Research gate was the most frequently used platform which they visited weekly. Reviewing research literature was the major information activity to a very high extent. The study concluded that the low frequency of use of ASM may be a result of work overload among LISE The study recommended that management of university-based Library Schools in Nigeria should encourage LISE to patronise other ASM for enhancement of research activities.

**Introduction**

Library and information science education play a significant role in the production of high-quality manpower to take charge in the provision of acquisition, processing maintenance, and dissemination of information resources and services for national development. To provide the needed library education in Nigeria, library schools are established in various educational institutions namely: universities, polytechnics, and colleges of technology respectively. Library and information science educators (LISE) and academic librarians in the library of higher education are in charge of training students in the necessary skills in the various library schools in Nigeria. Abioye (2013) maintained that LISE has continued to play a significant role in the production of high-quality library and information professionals who occupy a unique position in national development. They perform these indispensable functions by engaging in teaching, research, and community development.

The information age posed various challenges in library and information science education such as advancement in Information and Communication Technology, government policies, curriculum development, and change in library users’ expectations. As a result of these challenges, LISE must engage in vibrant research activities to equip its students with the needed knowledge and skills to compete in the changing/growing digital environment. Ononogho (2014) maintained that most LIS professionals in Nigeria do not adequately embark on research activities that are often well thought out to address contemporary events in society and the profession. In these ways, LIS issues are not prominent and noticeable. In other to improve their research activities, LISE is expected to gather enough information on the research problems they want to solve. This was corroborated by Ifejeh *et al* (2018) who maintained that for meaningful research to take place, researchers must be aware of the state of the existing knowledge and how to have ready access to information that will help them to build up their theories and findings. The major channels of information gathering are print and online resources. These information channels are not interactive and sometimes not easily accessible as a result of information explosion. A key way to enhance access to information for research by LISE is to utilise other digital channels like academic social media platforms.

Academic social media targets the academic community to create profiles, access information, share research publications and interact with colleagues to enhance scholarly work especially in the area of research. Academic social media platforms such as Researchgate, Academia.edu, Mendeley, Linkedin, Methodspace, Impactstory, Google Scholar, ORCID can be utilised to gather information during the research process. This was corroborated by Ward *et al* (2015) who opined that academic social media perform literature–related functions; in searching for academic literature, tracking relevant articles to read, for it gives access to publication lists and database entries of members, bibliographies; open-access archive; various attention direction services like notifications “Have read” buttons, commenting or rating, “share this” function, among others. Onuahia *et al.* (2021) also carried out a study on the use of social media in enhancing collaborative activities in the library and information science education and found out that library professionals have a positive perception of the use of social media in enhancing collaborative activities. However, it remains unclear if library and information science educators in Nigerian universities utilise academic social media to enhance their research information-gathering activities. It is against the background that the researcher is investigating the influence of academic social media in research information-gathering activities of library and information science educators in Nigerian universities.

**Statement of the Problem**

One of the major ingredients in improving the quality of research in any field information is accessibility and utilisation of information is indispensable. A researcher is expected to have adequate information on the state of the arts of the subject matter to proffer a good solution to the research problem. However, there has been insufficient access to information like result of factors such as information explosion, lack of awareness, and inaccessibility. Academic social media when utilised will assist LIS educators to enhance information-gathering activities. There seems to be no empirical evidence about how academic social media influences research information-gathering activities of library and information science educators in Nigerian universities. The study, therefore, seeks to find out the influence of academic social media on research activities of library and information science educators in Nigerian universities.

**Objectives of the study**

1. Highlight the types of ASM used by LIS educators for research information gathering activities in Nigerian universities.
2. Determine the frequency of use of ASM by LIS educators in Nigerian universities.
3. Ascertain the extent of use of ASM in research information-gathering activities of LISE in Nigerian universities.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the types of ASM used by LIS educators in Nigerian universities for research information-gathering activities?
2. How frequently is the use of ASM by LIS educators in Nigerian universities?
3. What is the extent of use of ASM by LIS educators in Nigerian universities fo research information-gathering activities of LISE in Nigeria?

**Literature Review**

Several studies have been carried out by various authors on the use of ACM in gathering information for research. Findings from the study of Simisaye (2014) on the utilisation of academic social media for research among faculty members in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ogun State Nigeria found out that respondents utilised social media for research-related activities such as communicating research findings, uploading research output, downloading research papers. Other purposes include advertising conference seminars, and to collaborate with colleagues all over the world. In a related study, Sheikh (2016) investigated the awareness of ACM by faculty of COMSATS Institute of Information and Technology (CIIT) Islamabad. The findings revealed that faculty members in CIIT were aware of academic social media but were not active users of the platforms. The findings also revealed that lecturers in CIIT used academic social media sites mostly for interacting with experts, promotion and/sharing of their research output, participation in discussion to get ideas about the latest research trends, and to get help in solving research problems.

In a related study, Tai and Pieterse (2017) conducted a study on why academic institutions in Israel use academic social media platforms. The findings of the study revealed that participants mostly engage in information consumption and Information sharing activities on academic social media platforms. Collins *et al.,* (2016) studied how scientists used social media in their workplace in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. Based on the findings, it was observed that social media usage was yet to be widely adopted by scientists in these countries. Furthermore, they used these tools to exchange scientific knowledge and the widely used platform was Linkedin. In a related study, Alabi S*et al.* (2014) investigated whether agricultural researchers in the agricultural industry in six research institutes and a university of agriculture in South West Nigeria use social media for research. The findings were that Facebook was the most actively used social media followed by Linkedin. The findings further revealed that social media in agricultural research workflows is mainly used in identifying research opportunities and finding potential collaborators for research tasks.

Similarly, in a related study, Boudry and Durand- Barthez (2017) conducted a study on the use of Author Identifier Services (ORCID) Researcher ID, Academia.edu, and Researchgate by researchers of the University of Caen Normandy. The findings revealed that Research Gate was the most used ACM platform by respondents. In yet another study, Oh and Colon-Aguirre (2019) investigated the perception and use of Google Scholar and academic libraries in information acquisition by scholars in 20 public research universities in the United States of America. The findings revealed that scholars in these institutions found Google Scholar and academic libraries useful and accessible in discovering scholarly information.

**Research Methodology**

A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The design was considered appropriate for the study for it enabled the researchers to use a sample to represent the entire population. The population of the study consists of 348 educators in 37 university-based library schools in Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 258 library and information science educators from 28 Federal, State, and Private universities offering library and information science in Nigeria. as of June 2020. In the first stage, cluster sampling was used to group the university-based library schools in Nigeria into 6 groups based on the geo-political zones they were situated in. The geo-political zones include North-central, North-east, North-west, South-east, South-south, and South-west. In the second stage, the researchers adopted a random sampling technique through the lottery method to select 80% of university-based library schools situated in each geo-political zone summing up to 28 library schools. The third stage was a total enumeration of LISE educators working in the selected universities amounting to a total of 258 LISE. An online questionnaire (Google form) was used to collect data. The data gathered for the study were scored and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and mean.

The questionnaire was pre-tested using a sample of 43 LISE drawn from the Federal University of Technology Minna, Babcock University, Illisan Remo, and Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma. However, 30 copies of the questionnaire were returned and correctly filled. The scores obtained from the pilot test of the instrument were subjected to reliability analysis using Cronbach Alpha and had the following alpha scores: types of ASM used for research information gathering activities=.0.84, frequency of use of ASM= 0.92, and extent of using ASM in research information gathering activities =0.89. Data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages and mean score.

**TABLE 1: POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Geo-Political Zone** | **Universities** | **Total Number of LIS Educators** | **Sample** |
| 1 | North Central | Benue State University, Makurdi | 7 | 7 |
| 2 | North Central | Federal University, Lafia, Nassarawa State | 6 | 6 |
| 3 | North Central | Federal University of Technology, Minna, | 21 |  |
| 4 | North Central | University of Abuja, Gwagwalada, Abuja | 2 | 2 |
| 5 | North Central | University of Ilorin, Ilorin, | 13 | 13 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 6 | North East | AbubakarTafawaBalewa University, Bauchi | 8 | 8 |
| 7 | North East | Modibbo Adamawa University of Technology, Yola, Adamawa State | 10 | 10 |
| 8 | North East | University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri Borno State | 10 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 9 | North West | Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State | 19 | 19 |
| 10 | North West | Bayero University, Kano, Kano State | 21 | 21 |
| 11 | North West | Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero | 8 | 8 |
| 12 | North West | Umaru Musa Yaradua University, Katsina, Katsina State | 12 | 12 |
| 13 | North West | Yusuf MaitamaSule University, Kano, Kano State | 3 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 14 | South East | Abia State University, Uturu | 12 | 12 |
| 15 | South East | ChukwumemekaOdumeigu University, Igbariam, Anambra State | 3 |  |
| 16 | South East | Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki | 3 | 3 |
| 17 | South East | Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu | 4 | 4 |
| 18 | South East | Imo State University, Owerri | 9 |  |
| 19 | South East | Madonna University, Okija Anambra State | 2 | 2 |
| 20 | South East | The Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State | 10 | 10 |
| 21 | South East | Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State | 11 |  |
| 22 | South East | University of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu State | 16 | 16 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 23 | South-South | Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State | 10 |  |
| 24 | South-South | Benson Idahosa University, Benin City | 1 | 1 |
| 25 | South-South | Delta State University, Abraka | 13 | 13 |
| 26 | South-South | Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Portharcourt, Rivers State | 5 | 5 |
| 27 | South-South | Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Yenogua, Bayelsa State | 8 | 8 |
| 28 | South-South | Rivers State University, Port Harcourt | 10 |  |
| 29 | South-South | The University of Benin, Benin, Edo State | 6 | 6 |
| 30 | South-South | University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State | 28 | 28 |
| 31 | South-South | University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Rivers State | 7 | 7 |
| 32 | South South | University of Uyo, Uyo, AkwaIbom State | 7 | 7 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 33 | South West | Adeleke University, Ede, Osun State | 7 | 7 |
| 34 | South West | Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo State | 3 | 3 |
| 35 | South West | Babcock University, Illisan Remo, Ogun State | 13 |  |
| 36 | South West | The Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State | 4 | 4 |
| 37 | South West | University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State | 16 | 16 |
|  | **Total 37** |  | **348** | **268** |

**NALISE: Directory 2020**

**Findings and Discussion**

The questionnaire was distributed among 258 respondents. However, 190 copies of the questionnaire were received and correctly filled.

**Table 2: Types of Academic social media Used for Research Information Gathering Activities**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S/N | TYPES of Academic social media | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| 1 | Google Scholar | 144 | 76 |
| 2 | Research gate | 140 | 74 |
| 3 | Academia.edu | 121 | 64 |
| 4 | Linkedin | 70 | 37 |
| 5 | Mendeley | 50 | 26 |
| 6 | ORCIDS | 22 | 12 |
| 7 | Impact story | 19 | 10 |
| 8 | Method space | 15 | 8 |

Table 3 reveals that Google scholar 144(76%) was the most utilised academic social media by respondents for their research information-gathering activities. Google Scholar may have been respondents’ preference in gathering information for their research because it offers free access to various information resources such as books, journals, conference proceedings, and grey literature. Also, Google scholar’s interface is user-friendly and users have the advantage to have access to full-text collections of some libraries. The findings further revealed that the majority of the respondents do not utilise impact story 19(10%) This may be because respondents are not familiar with the platform. These findings are in agreement with the findings of Oh and Colon-Aguirre (2019) who reported that scholars in 20 public research universities found Google Scholar highly accessible and useful in accessing information for research-related activities.

**Table 4: Frequency of the Use of Academic social media**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Academic Social Media Platform** | **Daily** | **Weekly** | **Bi-weekly** | **Monthly** | **Once in a while** |
| 1 | Google Scholar | 22(12%) | 56(29%) | 36(19%) | 12(6%) | 18(9%) |
| 2 | Researchgate | 19(10%) | 79(42%) | 22(12%) | 13(7%) | 7(4%) |
| 3 | Academia.edu | 9(5%) | 70(37%) | 21(11%) | 12(6%) | 9(5%) |
| 4 | Linkedin | 11(6%) | 50(26%) | 24(13%) | 10(5%) | 15(9%) |
| 5 | ORCID | 6(3%) | 27(14%) | 18(9%) | 4(2%) | 11(6%) |
| 6 | Mendeley | 8(4%) | 22(12%) | 12(6%) | 10(5%) | 7(4%) |
| 7 | Impact Story | 2(1%) | 9(5%) | 5(3%) | 1(1%) | 4(2%) |
| 8 | Methodspace | 2(1%) | 7(4%) | 5(3%) | 1(1%) | 3(2%) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Table 4. shows that the frequency of use of academic social media platforms was low The results further revealed that Research gate was the most frequently visited platform and it was utilised weekly 79(42%). The low level of the use of academic social media might be a result of a lack of time due to a heavy workload. As lecturers, they also engage in other academic activities other than research such as teaching, community services, faculty responsibilities, and other social and family engagements. These findings align with the findings of Nandex and Borrego (2013) who reported that the frequency of use of social media for academic purposes is low among users in twelve Catalina universities.

**Table 5 Extent of Use of Academic Social Media in Research Information Gathering Activities**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Research Information Gathering Activities** | **Very High**  **5** | **High**  **4** | **Moderate**  **3** | **Low**  **2** | **Very Low**  **1** | **Mean** | **FX** | **Ranking** |
| 1 | Reviewing research literature | 85 | 55 | 36 | 9 | 5 | 4.08 | 776 | 1 |
| 2 | Identifying research opportunities | 54 | 80 | 40 | 13 | 3 | 3.89 | 736 | 2 |
| 3 | Keeping up with fellow users’ research interest | 37 | 98 | 30 | 20 | 5 | 3.75 | 712 | 3 |
| 4 | Identifying experts in my field | 40 | 84 | 41 | 17 | 8 | 3.69 | 701 | 4 |
| 5 | Following topics the community is paying attention to | 30 | 87 | 47 | 21 | 5 | 3.61 | 686 | 5 |
| 6 | Keeping up to date on new research trends | 53 | 49 | 43 | 42 | 3 | 3.56 | 677 | 6 |
| 7 | Identifying upcoming seminars, conferences, workshops, and webinars | 28 | 80 | 50 | 24 | 8 | 3.51 | 666 | 7 |
| 8 | Identifying grant opportunities | 40 | 45 | 54 | 33 | 18 | 3.29 | 626 | 8 |
| 9 | Find collaborators for research projects and groups | 21 | 69 | 51 | 31 | 18 | 3.23 | 596 | 9 |
| 10 | Identifying potential publication outlets | 26 | 29 | 76 | 54 | 5 | 3.09 | 587 | 10 |
| 11 | Collecting primary data such as administration of the questionnaire, interview schedule, and observation | 13 | 42 | 40 | 76 | 19 | 2.76 | 524 | 11 |
| 12 | Identifying yet unpublished works | 10 | 40 | 47 | 74 | 19 | 2.73 |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Table 5 shows that reviewing research literature (mean=4.08) was the major research information gathering activity utilised by respondents in the use of academic social media platforms. Review research literature may have obtained the highest mean rating because respondents may likely during this process obtain first-hand information on the research item they are about or embarking on. Furthermore, data in Table 6 indicated that respondents do not use academic social media in identifying yet unpublished works (mean=2.73). It is commendable that library and information science educators in Nigerian universities have seized the opportunity to access various information resources provided by academic social media platforms. According to Academia.edu (2020) 22, million papers have been deposited by users to their platform. Most Academic social media platforms provide free access to various types of research information resources. This is particularly important to library and information science educators who may not have access to current information resources as a result of a lack of accessibility to various databases. The findings of the study disagreed with the findings of Chisenga (2016) who maintained that agricultural researchers in Ghana and Kenya use social media in identifying research opportunities and finding potential collaborators for research.

**Conclusion**

ASM is a vital tool in research information gathering activities among LISE in Nigerian universities. LISE identified Google scholar as one of the ASM platforms they majorly utilised in their research information-gathering activities. The study found out that the frequency of use of ASM was low among LISE in Nigerian universities. Findings from the study revealed that literature search was the major activity LISE educators undergo in ASM platforms.

**Recommendations**

The study recommends the following:

1. Management of university-based library schools in Nigeria should encourage LISE to patronise various ASM platforms to have access to mass information available in various ASM platforms.
2. LISE educators should improve the frequency of use of ASM to get recent updates on research-related information uploaded on various ASM platforms.

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