

INFLUENCE OF PRESERVATION ON THE USE OF THESES IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study evaluated the influence of influence of preservation on the use of theses in university libraries in south-west, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey design with a study population of 982 staff working in the thesis unit of the main library of each university in South-West, Nigeria. The sample size for this study is 609. The multistage sampling technique was used for this study. Self-structured and adopted questionnaire was used for data collection. The data collected for this study were analysed using descriptive statistical tools, descriptive tools like mean and standard deviation. The data was entered and coded into International Business Machine Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBMSPSS) version 22 for data analysis. The findings revealed that the major purpose of use of theses in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria were: academic purposes, discovery of statistical tools that could be used in their research and to do assignments given to them by their lecturers. The study concludes that Preservation on the use of theses in university are essential for the development of libraries, librarians, and libraries users. The need to preserve libraries resources like theses is to improve the purpose and extent of use of theses of users, mostly especially for academic purposes, discovery of statistical tools, as well to complete assignments given to them by their lecturers. Prevention practices are important to protect libraries resources to increase access and use of theses.

Keywords: preservation, use of theses, university libraries and librarians

Introduction

University libraries being service delivery institutions would need the right staff and leadership to ensure adequate use of theses in their libraries. The library staff are human resources that constitute an important component of the university. The library staff are the professionals, para-professionals and non-professionals. The professionals are the librarians with first degree in library and information science while the para-professionals are the library officers or assistants with diploma, National Certificate of Education (N.C.E.) and certificate courses in librarianship. The non-professionals are library clerks, cleaners and security staff with secondary school or General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.). The two groups (para-professionals and non-professionals) provide supporting services to the librarians. The librarians among other functions are to ensure that preservation and security of students' theses are accessible for use (Aina, 2004).

“Use” according to analysis of a 200-item sample is not a monolithic concept but has multiple facets of meaning that are deployed in diverse context across the library and information science publication spectrum. Line (1974) in Fleming-May (2016) defines use as what an individual actually uses. In Line's framework, A use may be a satisfied demand or it may be the result of browsing as a need or want when received, use is heavily dependent on provision and availability of library and information service. Likewise, the use of theses refers to how users make use of theses available in the library to meet their information needs. In spite of what an individual uses, Information Utilization Capacity Theory propounded by Curras in 1986 stated that the educational background, personality, belief of users will enable the ability to read, retrieve information from formal sources for use. The indicators for use of theses are purpose of use and extent of use.

All over the world, theses contain primary research and they are original contributions to scholarship. Theses are needed to support teaching, learning and research, which is the fundamental reason for the establishment of universities. Students use theses to obtain extensive bibliographies and for the purpose of assignments given to them by their lecturers while the university lecturers use theses to acquire more information to widen the frontiers of knowledge through teaching, research and publications. Furthermore, theses contain primary research built on publications and documentary records of human endeavours from one generation to another. Students and other members of the university community may need theses to discover what others in the field are doing. Also, Uzoegbu and Okoro (2019) reported that theses could be used to improve professional practices through presentations at workshops, seminars, conferences, and public lectures. The table of content is the framework and it gives users a high level view of the content available in the thesis (Bartram, 2017). Likewise, the page numbers are points of references for users to quickly locate important information.

The roles of preserving, securing and ensuring that theses are accessible for use have become serious problems confronting university libraries today. For instance, Osunrinde and Adetunla (2017) lamented that the utilization of information materials by library users is inadequate and that deterioration of the materials have been the greatest challenge plaguing libraries because the information materials just languish in obscurity in university libraries, particularly in South-West, Nigeria. In addition, in spite of the potential usefulness of theses for updating knowledge and for professional practices, Nwezeh (2010) reported that theses lack adequate care. Likewise, Ifijeh (2014); Ilo, Idiegbeyen-Ose, Adebayo and Osinulu (2015); Ezeabasili and Nwosu (2018); Samson (2020) reported increase in the deterioration, loss, and inaccessibility of students' theses, thereby preventing adequate use of the valuable information materials in university libraries, South-West, Nigeria.

Alegbeleye (2006) in Lawal-Solarin (2019) defined preservation practices as those practices that cover managerial and financial considerations as well as storage, accommodation provisions, policies, techniques and methods involved in preserving library materials and the information contained in them. Also, Ovowoh and Iwhiwhu (2010) defined preservation practices as the actions taken to anticipate, prevent, stop, or slow down deterioration and can therefore be described as an art of preventing decay. They posited that good preservation and security practices should be able to protect and preserve information materials, such as theses for use. Deterioration and destruction of the university valuable information materials are basic challenges facing theses which are prone to wear and tear, shrinkage, cracks, brittleness, bio-infestation, discoloration, dust and dirt accumulation (Osunrinde & Adetunla, 2017). The Three Levels Programme of preservation practices (Minimal or Small Level of programme, Middling or Middle Level of programme and Optimal or Full Level of programme) developed by Forde and Rheys-Lewis in 2007 was able to address the different level of deterioration and destruction of information materials in libraries, particularly, university libraries in South-West, Nigeria. The indicators for the three levels of programme are as follows:

- 1) Minimal or Small levels of programme: Cleaning, shelving, minor repairs, careful handling, and pet management.
- 2) Middling or Middle levels of program: regular building maintenance, installation of adequate security systems, introduction to digital preservation, disaster management and adequate preservation budget.
- (3) Optimal or Full levels of programme: conservation, reformatting, full disaster management control, Integrated management, Implementation of digital preservation.

Aside the environmental factors, there are inherent chemical instability of the information materials that can cause deterioration. Also, Oyeniyi (2015) stated that preservation should include all efforts and actions taken to elongate the lifespan of information materials for use. The efforts for preservation include applying preservation strategies and practices, such as good housekeeping, minor repairs, control of environmental conditions, pest and disaster management, provision of equipment and metal shelves directed at preventing deterioration or restoring damaged materials to a usable condition. Applying preservation strategies and utilizing viable preservation practices for students' theses is to make provision for adequate preservation

budgets and ensuring that library staff receive adequate training to gain mastery of how to carry out digital preservation and security practices so as to ensure accessibility and use of the information materials. Preservation practices are hermetically linked with the security management of the information materials. In preserving students' theses for accessibility and use, considerations should be given to every indicator that promotes the protection of the information materials for adequate use. This is because when theses are properly preserved and secured accessibility are likely to promote use and an understanding of using theses would not only aid the planning of present and future services but also encourage increased patronage among library users (Olowshoke, 2018). All over the world, the collection of theses from post graduate students is a yearly event and university management should know that adequate accessibility would be needed before the valuable materials can be used. Nigeria with one hundred and seventy (170) universities that award higher degrees, generates huge number of theses. For instance, in South-West, Nigeria comprising of Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Osun and Oyo states there are twenty-nine (29) universities approved for post graduate programmes by the National University Commission (NUC, 2020).

The postgraduate students are the master and doctoral students. The thesis awarded to each student shows the author's independent piece of research and findings. Olowshoke (2018) in a study of information resources availability and accessibility and seeking behaviour of students reported that the challenges confronting students and other users during information seeking was not availability but accessibility. Accessibility to theses should be of paramount concern and relevance to library users. Without access to theses in the library, utilization may be unrealized, and the value of the available theses may be meaningless to users.

The issue of access poses numerous challenges to both library management and users because making theses accessible for use demands certain requisite skills, which when lacking reduces use of the valuable information materials. Abdulsalami (2013) asserts that natural and artificial barriers are causes of free access to information. Atanda and Adeyemi (2018) reported that access tools such as computerized library catalogs, computerized bibliographies, abstracts, indexes and metadata can be used to promote access and use of theses in libraries. Eyiolorunshe and Eluwole (2017) stated that the challenges affecting accessibility of information materials for use include: distance of the library, lack of user education, unavailability of materials, time spent in searching, and non-challant attitude of library staff. In addition, weak and inadequate indexing, poor shelving and inadequate technical services can hinder accessibility. Hence, information materials especially theses through preservation and security have become not only the academic commitment but also the moral responsibility of librarians. Vijayakumar and Vijayakumar (2007) reported that users need theses for vital information but observed the usage of theses in university libraries to have been hindered because of the absence of easily accessible bibliographical sources like abstracts, indexes and classification etc.

Theses are useful and valuable information materials, particularly in an academic environment. The use of theses among other reasons is to support teaching, learning and research, which is the fundamental reason for the establishment of universities. In spite of the usefulness of theses, Osunrinde (2016) lamented that the utilization of the information materials by library users is low, particularly in university libraries, South-West, Nigeria. Likewise, recent findings by Ezeabasili and Nwosu (2018); Samson (2020) reported increase in the deterioration, destruction, loss, and inaccessibility of students' theses, thereby preventing adequate use of the information materials in university libraries, South-West, Nigeria.

The deterioration and destruction of the useful information materials have been reported to have become a global phenomenon as a result of biological and environmental factors (Osunrinde, 2016; Ezeabasili & Nwosu, 2018; Samson, 2020). Theses are kept in dusty storage where the temperature and relative humidity were not regulated at satisfactory levels and where no measures were in place to adequately protect the scholarly works against dust, dirt, lighting and biological infestations, such as cockroaches, pests and fungus. Hence, the deterioration and destruction have been impacting negatively on the use of theses meant for students, lecturers and other university communities.

Securing students' theses for present and future use should be the responsibilities of library staff, particularly the university librarian. However, security of the useful information materials was reported to have been affected by fire outbreaks, earthquake and leaking roof (Abubakar, Abdullahi, Dewa and Barkindo, 2020). Although Security is perceived differently from one university to another but it has been observed that most university libraries in South-West, Nigeria were without installation of modern anti-theft systems such as Barcode, CCTV, RFID etc. In addition, the university libraries also lack disaster management plans to adequately safeguard the information materials against theft and destruction for continued use. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the influence of preservation on the use of theses in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of preservation on the use of theses in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- 1- find out the purpose of use of theses in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria;
- 2- find out the extent of use of theses in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria;
- 3- Ascertain the preservation practices undertaken for theses in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is survey research design. The target population for this study are the professional and para-professional staff in the federal, state and private university libraries in South-West, Nigeria, approved by the National University Commission (2021) to undergo Post-graduate programmes in Nigeria. The population of the study is 982 present and past staff working in the thesis unit of the main library of each university and some departmental libraries in South-West, Nigeria. However, the past staff were those transferred to another section of the library. The sample size for this study is six hundred and nine (609) library staff, consisting of professional, para-professional, and non professional library staff in the approved university libraries in South-West, Nigeria. Taro Yamane (1970) formula was used to determine the sample size. The multistage sampling technique was used for this study. At the second stage, the total enumeration method was used to select all the universities in Lagos, Ondo and Oyo states. The researcher's choice of total enumeration is to ensure that all elements in the population participate in the study. Hence, all universities in the three states were enlisted for the study. At the third stage, proportionate stratified sampling was used to allocate samples to each universities in the three states. A self-structured and adopted questionnaire were also used as instruments for data collection because the questionnaire permits researcher to elicit primary information. It was also useful to facilitate the large amount of data and information needed in a short period of time and it was relatively inexpensive to administer (Powell, 2007). The data collected for this study were analysed using descriptive statistical tools, descriptive tools like mean and standard deviation. The data was entered and coded into International Business Machine Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBMSPPSS) version 22 for data analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The data shown in the following Tables were collated to enable the researcher provide answers to the research questions raised in the study.

Research Question One: What is the purpose of use of theses in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria? In research question one, the researcher sought to ascertain the purpose of use of theses in university libraries. To achieve this, ten possible purposes were highlighted. The results of the analysis are reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Purpose of Theses Use in University Libraries

Purpose of Theses Use	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Users consult theses in my library to discover statistical tools that could be used in research	104 26.0%	73 18.3%	106 26.5%	117 29.3%	2.56	.88
Students use theses in my library to do assignments given to them by their lecturers	37 9.3%	129 32.3%	163 40.8%	71 17.8%	2.54	.89
Library theses are utilized to improve professional practice	40 10.0%	142 35.5%	117 29.3%	101 25.3%	2.41	1.16
Theses in my library are used to discover what others in the field are doing	114 28.5%	32 8.0%	83 20.8%	171 42.8%	2.41	1.10
Theses in my library are used to obtain extensive bibliographies	102 25.5%	55 13.8%	149 37.3%	94 23.5%	2.40	1.13
Users use theses in my library to provide insight into the early work of a particular author	57 14.2%	156 39.0%	133 33.3%	54 13.5%	2.33	.87
Theses in my library assist in literature review	106 26.5%	53 13.3%	136 34.0%	105 26.3%	2.30	.95
Users consult theses to up-date-knowledge	51 12.8%	98 24.5%	114 28.5%	137 34.3%	2.22	1.2
Theses in my library can be used effectively to form the basis of a book published by scholar	17 4.3%	116 29.0%	150 37.5%	117 29.3%	2.15	1.03
The easy access to theses in my library promotes reading for pleasure that can be used to enhance students' intellectual and emotional growth	71 17.8%	119 29.8%	174 43.5%	36 9.0%	2.08	.86
Purpose (Average Weighted Mean = 2.34)						

Decision Rule: 1.00 – 1.50 = Strongly Disagree; 1.51 - 2.00 = Disagree; 2.01 - 4.00 = Agree; 4.01 - 5.00 = Strongly Agree

Table 1 presents results on the purpose of theses use in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria. The result in Table 1 shows that respondents 'Agree' that, theses are used in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria for numerous purposes (Average Weighted Mean = 2.34). Table 1 shows that majority of users (students) 104 (26.0%) used theses to discover statistical tools that could be used in their researches (mean = 2.56). This is followed by doing assignments given to them by their lecturers (mean = 2.54), improving professional practice (mean = 2.41), discovering what others in the field are doing (mean = 2.41), obtaining extensive bibliographies (mean = 2.40), providing insight into the early work of a particular author (mean = 2.33), assisting

in literature review (mean = 2.30), and to up-date users knowledge (mean = 2.22). The results suggest that users of theses of university libraries in South-West, Nigeria used theses to accomplished several purposes in the aforementioned areas.

Research Question Two: What is the extent of use of theses in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria? Research question two sought to determine the extent or frequencies of use of theses by staff in the selected university libraries in South-West, Nigeria. Ten questions were designed to obtain the perceptions on the extent of use of theses in university libraries. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Extent of Theses Use in University Libraries

Extent of Theses Use	Very High Extent (4)	High Extent (3)	Low Extent (2)	Very Low Extent (1)	Mean	Std. Deviation
I use theses for research to a	98 24.5%	44 11.0%	174 43.5%	84 21.0%	2.42	.88
Students use theses in my library to do assignments given to them by their lecturers to a:	65 16.3%	119 29.8%	95 23.8%	121 30.3%	2.39	1.07
Theses are utilized to up-date-knowledge	56 14.0%	107 26.8%	187 46.8%	50 12.5%	2.34	.77
Theses in my library are used to discover what others in the field are doing to a:	64 16.0%	72 18.0%	182 45.5%	82 20.5%	2.32	1.07
Users consult theses in my library for writing journal articles to a:	27 6.8%	73 18.3%	231 57.8%	69 17.3%	2.29	.96
Theses in my library can be used effectively to form the basis of a book published by scholar to a:	14 3.5%	83 20.8%	227 56.8%	76 19.0%	2.28	.97
Users utilized theses for understanding issues to a:	16 4.0%	166 41.5%	159 39.8%	59 14.8%	2.15	.99
Theses in my library are used to obtain extensive bibliographies to a:	38 9.5%	118 29.5%	110 27.5%	134 33.5%	2.14	.77
Theses in my library are used for literature review to a:	74 18.5%	57 14.2%	112 28.0%	157 39.3%	2.12	1.12
Library theses are utilized to improve professional practice to a:	60 15.0%	83 20.8%	169 42.3%	88 22.0%	2.08	.72
Extent (Average Weighted Mean = 2.25)						

Decision Rule: 1.00 – 1.81 = Very Low Extent; 1.82 - 2.19 = Low Extent; 2.20 - 3.00 = High Extent; 4.01 - 5.00 = Very High Extent

The result of Table 2 indicates that extent of use of thesis in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria is 'High' (average weighted mean = 2.25), on a scale of 4. The results on Table 2 demonstrated that majority of users use thesis to a 'high extent' (mean = 2.42) in the following distinctive areas, to do assignments given to them by their lecturers (mean = 2.39), to up-date their knowledge (mean = 2.34), to discover what others in the field are doing (mean = 2.32), for writing journal articles (mean = 2.29), and as a basis of a book published by scholars (mean = 2.28) all on scale of 4. The implication of this finding is that though the average weighted mean was 2.25 indicating high use of theses, users of theses in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria downplay use of theses for understanding issues mean = 2.15), to obtain extensive bibliographies (mean = 2.14), for literature review (mean = 2.12), and to improve professional practice (mean = 2.08) which implied that they are not capable of influencing the extent of use of theses and respondents rated these purposes low of use. The general implication is that university libraries in South West need to sustain factors that determine extent of use of thesis in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria particularly assignments purpose as well as to up-date their knowledge which are factors that determine of their success.

Research Question Three: What are the preservation practices undertaken for theses in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria?

Research question three intended to establish the preservation practices undertaken for theses in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria. The results of the analysis is reported in table 3

Table 3: Preservation Activity according to Levels of Practices in University Libraries

Preservation Practices according to Levels of Activity	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Minimal Level					2.32	1.10
Good housekeeping such as regular dusting, sweeping the library and its environment are the preservation practices carried out to protect theses for use	107 26.8%	67 16.8%	59 14.8%	167 41.8%	2.57	1.25
Eating and drinking in the library is prohibited to prevent insects and pests from destroying theses for use	153 38.3%	34 8.5%	103 25.8%	110 27.5%	2.56	1.05
There is training on demonstration of proper shelving of theses in my library to prevent inadequate use of theses	74 18.5%	67 16.8%	143 35.8%	116 29.0%	2.29	1.09
There is training on proper handling of theses in my library to extend the life span of the valuable materials for adequate use	31 7.8%	59 14.8%	180 45.0%	130 32.5%	2.28	1.25
My library make use of metal shelves as preservation practice to make theses available for use	89 22.3%	130 32.5%	98 24.5%	83 20.8%	2.24	1.06
Binding and minor repairs of torn pages and spine of theses are preservation practices for keeping theses for use	78 19.5%	81 20.3%	123 30.8%	118 29.5%	1.97	.88
Middling Level					2.36	1.09
My library regularly ensures a stable environment by making use of air conditioner/fan/open windows as preservation practices to protect theses for use	60 15.0%	75 18.8%	89 22.3%	176 44.0%	2.56	1.12
My library adequately boxes all archival materials for safety	74 18.5%	56 14.0%	185 46.3%	85 21.3%	2.45	1.02
My library has storage area to improve environmental conditions	77 19.3%	112 28.0%	127 31.8%	84 21.0%	2.40	1.08
There is adequate budget for employing external conservator	117 29.3%	52 13.0%	103 25.8%	128 32.0%	2.39	1.21
My library makes use of institutional repository to keep contents of theses for both present and future use	113 28.2%	91 22.8%	105 26.3%	91 22.8%	2.29	1.00
My library carries out disaster control management plan to make theses available for use	93 23.3%	70 17.5%	141 35.3%	96 24.0%	2.04	1.10
Optimal Level					2.29	.96
Fumigating/Disinfecting my library and environment prevents deterioration of theses for adequate use	77 19.3%	97 24.3%	149 37.3%	77 19.3%	2.43	1.00
Monitoring tools such as thermometers and hygrometers are usually used to measure temperature and humidity for prolonging use of theses	54 13.5%	95 23.8%	173 43.3%	78 19.5%	2.36	.98
My library implements preservation strategy to make theses available for use	28 7.0%	83 20.8%	161 40.3%	128 32.0%	2.35	1.01
Technical expertise is available in my library to assist in carrying out digital preservation to enable present and future use of theses	61 15.3%	109 27.3%	143 35.8%	87 21.8%	2.31	.93
My library uses mass deacidification to preserve theses for use	68 17.0%	98 24.5%	141 35.3%	93 23.3%	2.02	.89
Preservation Practices (Average Weighted Mean = 2.32)						

Decision Rule: 1.00 – 1.50 = Strongly Disagree; 1.51 - 2.00 = Disagree; 2.01 - 4.00 = Agree; 4.01 - 5.00 = Strongly Agree

The results on Table 3 shows that respondents ‘Agree’ that, university libraries in South West Nigeria, preserve thesis (Average Weighted Mean = 2.32). Preservation practices were divided into three levels namely minimal level, middling level and optimal level. The mean values of the practices were also calculated.

The result revealed that respondents ‘Agreed’ with all the three levels of preservation activities such as Minimal Level Practice (average mean = 2.32), Middling Level Practice (average mean = 2.36), and Optimal Level Practice (average mean = 2.29), all on scale of 4. Out of the three levels practices, middling level practiced activities was the most while optimal level practiced activities were the least practiced activities by the university libraries in South West Nigeria. Among the middling level activities, use of air conditioner/fan/open windows as preservation practices to protect theses for use was the most practiced (mean = 2.56) followed by adequate boxes of all archival materials for safety (mean = 2.45), availability of storage area to improve environmental conditions (mean = 2.40), while disaster control management plan to make theses available for use (mean = 2.04) was the least practiced. The optimal level activities practiced by the university libraries in South West Nigeria were Fumigating/Disinfecting of library and environment prevents deterioration of theses for adequate use (mean = 2.43), monitoring tools such as thermometers and hygrometers usually used to measure temperature and humidity for prolonging use of theses (mean = 2.36) and implementing preservation strategy to make theses available for use (mean = 2.35). The least practiced activity was mass deacidification to preserve theses for use (mean = 2.02), all on a scale of 4. With regards to the minimal level activities, the respondents indicated good housekeeping such as regular dusting, sweeping the library and its environment are the preservation practices carried out to protect theses for use (mean = 2.57), prohibition of eating and drinking in the library to prevent insects and pests from destroying theses for use (mean = 2.56), training on demonstration of proper shelving of theses in my library to prevent inadequate use of theses (mean = 2.29), and proper handling of theses in my library to extend the life span of the valuable materials for adequate use (mean = 2.28) amongst others. The general implication of these findings is that university libraries in South West Nigeria need to sustain these practices on their respective levels but pay particular attention to activities under the middling level (mean 2.36) which are their major preservation practices.

Conclusion

Preservation on the use of theses in university are essential for the development of libraries, librarians, and libraries users. The need to preserve libraries resources like theses is to improve the purpose and extent of use of theses of users, mostly especially for academic purposes, discovery of statistical tools, as well to complete assignments given to them by their lecturers. Prevention practices are important to protect libraries resources to increase access and use of theses. Several strategies could be adopted by librarians to promote the use of theses in the universities which have been highlighted in the findings of the study.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby proffered:

1. There is need for serious and better theses use in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria so that there can be positive turning point in the university libraries.
2. Libraries administrators and universities management in South-West, Nigeria should give serious considerations to resolving the aforementioned challenges facing use of theses in university libraries which prevent accessibility and effective use of theses in the library.
3. Library administrators in South-West, Nigeria should pay more attention towards improving the parameters of the preservation practices especially minimal and optimal levels of preservation practices to increase use of theses in university libraries.

4. The library administration in South-West, Nigeria should place higher consideration on the purpose of use of theses as well as initiating policies to improve use of theses in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria.

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