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AWARENESS, ACCESS AND UTILIZATION OF SERIAL PUBLICATIONS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN NASARAWA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, KEFFI

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Abstract
The study investigated the level of awareness, access, and utilization of serial publications among undergraduate students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The population of the study comprised of 7,017 undergraduate students from the Faculty. A cluster sampling technique was employed to select respondents for the study. The research adopted a survey research design, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to the students. The collected data were analyzed using mean scores and simple percentages. The findings revealed that students exhibited a moderate to high level of utilization of serial publications available in the university library. The highest mean score (3.08; 80%) was recorded for the statement that serial collections are major media through which research findings are published, indicating that students recognize the importance of serials particularly academic journals as key sources of current and reliable research information. In addition, serial publications were found to supply scientific discoveries and recent research findings (mean = 2.98; 76%) and to help satisfy users' information needs (mean = 2.94; 76%).However, the statement that serials provide more up-to-date information on any issue than textbooks recorded the lowest mean score (2.84; 68%), suggesting that some students still rely more heavily on textbooks, possibly due to familiarity or ease of access. The study concluded that although serial publications are considerably utilized by undergraduate students, their effective use can be further improved. Consequently, the study recommends that the university library increase subscriptions to current serial titles, expand access to electronic journals and databases, and organize regular user education and orientation programmes to promote more effective and sustained utilization of serial resources in academic work.
Keywords: Awareness, Utilization, Undergraduates, Serial Publication, Libraries.

Introduction

Academic libraries play a vital role in the intellectual life of higher education institutions, their primary purpose is to support the information needs of students, lecturers, and researchers. These libraries are more than just buildings filled with books; they serve as knowledge hubs that fuel teaching, learning, and research. To effectively fulfill this role, academic libraries must develop collections that align with the academic interests and programs of their parent institutions. This involves ensuring access to a wide range of high-quality and diverse information resources, available in both print and digital formats. Academic libraries are established, owned, and funded by institutions of higher learning such as universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, and

colleges of agriculture. As integral parts of their parent institutions, these libraries design their collections and services to meet the academic programs and information needs of their institutions Nyiyongo, & Tofi, (2020).

University libraries, in particular, form a vital component of the academic structure of universities. Their main objective is to provide information resources that support teaching, learning, and research activities Saka & Mahmud, (2020). University libraries acquire, organize, store, retrieve, and disseminate information contained in various materials, especially serial publications, for educators, researchers, students, and other interested users. Serials include newspapers, magazines, newsletters, accessions, journals, reports, proceedings, indexes, and abstracts, among others (Aina, 2014). According to Rafiu &Yahaya, (2019), serials are publications whether in print, non-print, or electronic format issued in successive parts and intended to continue regularly or irregularly. These include journals, magazines, newspapers, newsletters, accessions, reports, proceedings, and transactions of societies, as well as periodicals like abstracts and indexes. Serials are of great importance because they provide the most current, up-to-date, and valuable information, thereby forming a significant portion of university library collections.

Access to serial publications, as noted by Azonobi, (2021), refers to the ability of users to locate and benefit from periodicals acquired by the library. Accessibility is a crucial factor and can be achieved through various tools available in university libraries, such as catalogues, Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC), bibliographies, indexes, and abstracts both in manual and electronic formats. Ntui & Udah, (2015) describe accessibility as the ease with which users can locate and retrieve information from storage media. Access to serials may involve searching, locating, downloading, retrieving, or reading serial publications within or outside the library. Tools such as Sci-Hub, search engines, catalogues, and union catalogues enhance access and enable users to quickly obtain specific serial publications for academic use.

The utilization of information depends largely on the availability and accessibility of information resources in the library. For effective utilization to occur, both conditions must be satisfied. The mere acquisition of information resources does not guarantee accessibility. Granting access to library resources requires several processes, such as cataloguing and indexing, to ensure that users can identify and locate materials easily Nwachukwu, &Abdulsalami, (2014). The use of serial publications in university libraries is not a new practice. However, librarians continue to make efforts to acquire serials that meet users' academic and research needs. Kanwar, (2019) emphasized that serial publications should be effectively and ethically acquired at reasonable cost and in a timely manner to reflect the requirements of the university curriculum. It is against this background that the present study seeks to examine the awareness, access, and utilization of serial publications among students of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Nasarawa State University library, Keffi.

Statement of the Problem

Serial publications constitute a vital component of academic library collections, as they provide current and reliable information that supports teaching, learning, and research. University students, including those in the social sciences, rely heavily on serials for up-to-date information, recent developments, and empirical studies relevant to their fields.

Despite their importance, observations and preliminary reports suggest that many students

do not adequately utilize serial publications available in their libraries. Several factors may contribute to this challenge. These include inadequate awareness of the existence and value of serials, limited access due to poor organization, lack of proper orientation or training on the use of serial tools such as catalogues, OPAC, indexes, and abstracts, and insufficient availability of current or relevant titles. In some cases, inadequate funding, irregular subscription to periodicals, and limited ICT infrastructure further hinder effective access and utilization. At Nasarawa State University, Keffi, the university library subscribes to a number of serial publications both in print and electronic formats to support academic programs, especially within the Faculty of Social Sciences. However, the extent to which students are aware of these resources, can access them, and actually utilize them for academic purposes remains unclear.

It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate the awareness, access, and utilization of serial publications among students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Nasarawa State University library, Keffi with a view to identifying the challenges affecting their effective use and suggesting measures for improvement.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the Study:

1. Determine the level of awareness of Faculty of Social Science undergraduate Students on serial publications in the Nasarawa State University library, Keffi.
2. Determine the extent of utilization by Faculty of Social Science undergraduate students' to serial publications in the Nasarawa State University library, Keffi.

Review of Related Literatures

The concept of *awareness* has been defined by several authors and scholars from different perspectives. (Caroline, 2023) view awareness as a condition in which an individual becomes conscious or informed about something. In this sense, awareness represents the capacity to recognize or be conscious of new trends, technologies, or systems. According to Ani, (2008), awareness is the knowledge or understanding of a situation or subject at a particular time, based on information or experience. Similarly, Danalami and Umar, (2019) describe awareness as knowledge or perception of a situation or fact encompassing consciousness, recognition, realization, and acknowledgement of, or concern about, a particular issue or development. In the context of this study, **awareness of serials** refers to the knowledge and recognition of serial publications such as journals, magazines, newspapers, and related materials available in the serials department of the library. Awareness is therefore an essential prerequisite for library users to effectively identify and utilize the serials resources provided for their academic needs. Accessibility to information resources is also a fundamental concern and of great relevance to library users. As noted by Ugah, (2008) without access to resources, utilization becomes impossible and the value of those resources remains unrealized. Access to information resources, however, often presents challenges to both library management and users, as it requires certain technical and informational skills. A lack of these skills renders available resources effectively inaccessible. Weak cataloguing, improper shelving, and inadequate technical services all contribute to reduced accessibility of library information resources. In addition to the various barriers to accessibility identified by Olowu, (2020) categorized such obstacles as either *natural or artificial.* Accessibility

generally refers to the degree to which a system or resource can be used by as many users as possible, including those with varying levels of ability or technical knowledge. Ensuring accessibility therefore requires both physical and intellectual means of access, supported by adequate organization, user education, and information retrieval tools.

Serials, on the other hand, are publications issued in successive parts and intended to continue indefinitely. They are available in both print and non-print formats and usually bear issue numbers, dates, or both. Examples of serials include magazines, newsletters, newspapers, annuals (such as reports, yearbooks, and directories), journals, memoirs, proceedings, and transactions of societies Nwalo, (2003) Akande, as cited in (Tamomowo-Ayodele, 2018), identified various types of serials, including newspapers, magazines, newsletters, accessions, journals, indexes, abstracts, reports, and proceedings of academic and professional societies.

Academic libraries hold serial publications in high regard because they contain firsthand, authoritative, and current information written and reviewed by experts. Sambo, (2016) emphasized that serials provide intellectually sound and peer-reviewed content, representing the most current carriers of new ideas, knowledge, and scientific discoveries. Indeed, most research breakthroughs and innovations are first communicated through journal articles and other serial materials, which play a vital role in advancing scholarship and the overall development of society.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 7,017 undergraduate students from the Faculty of Social Sciences, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The researcher employed a cluster sampling technique for data collection. According to (Brewer, 2015), the survey research design enables researchers to gain insights into the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of members of a population. This design was considered appropriate for the present study because it allowed the collection of data from students across different departments within the Faculty of Social Sciences who use the university library resources. Furthermore, the design facilitated a comprehensive description and analysis of the respondents' level of awareness, access, and utilization of serial publications.

Response Rate

No Questionnaires Administered	No of useable returns	Percentage (%) of usable returned	No of unusable returns	Percentage of unusable returned
364	250	68.7%	114	31.3%

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 shows the response rate for the study. A total of **364 questionnaire** were distributed to students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Out of these, 250 questionnaire, representing (68.7 %,) were properly completed and found usable for analysis. Meanwhile, 114 questionnaire, accounting for (**31.3%),** were either not returned or were improperly completed and therefore deemed unusable. The response rate of (68.7%**)** is considered **high and adequate** for analysis in survey research, as response rates above (60%) are generally

acceptable for ensuring representativeness of the sample and reliability of the findings. This indicates that the study obtained sufficient data from the target population to allow meaningful analysis and interpretation

Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

Table 2: What is the Level of awareness on serials publications by faculty of Social Science undergraduate students in the Nasarawa State University Library, Keffi?

Serial Publications	Highly Aware	Aware	Low Aware(3)	Very Low Aware	Total	Mean Score
1. Journals	25 (10%)	40(16%)	115 (46%)	70 (28%)	250	2.92
2. Newspapers	30 (12%)	50(20%)	100 (40%)	70 (28%)	250	2.84
3. Magazines	40 (16%)	45(18%)	110 (44%)	55 (22%)	250	2.72
4. Newsletters	60 (24%)	60(24%)	80 (32%)	50 (20%)	250	2.48
5. Reports	45 (18%)	50(20%)	105 (42%)	50 (20%)	250	2.64
6. Proceedings	50 (20%)	55(22%)	90 (36%)	55 (22%)	250	2.60

Source: Field Survey, 2025

KEYS: **HA**= HIGHLY AWARE, **A**=AWARE, **LA**=LOW AWARE, **VLA**=VERY LOW AWARE

Table 2 presents data on the **level of awareness of serial publications** among undergraduate students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The findings reveal that the students demonstrated varying degrees of awareness across different types of serials. The highest level of awareness was recorded for journals, with a mean score of 2.92, indicating that students are relatively more familiar with journals compared to other serial publications. This is expected, as journals are often recommended for assignments, term papers, and research projects. Newspapers ranked second with a mean score of 2.84, showing moderate awareness among the respondents. Magazines followed with a mean score of 2.72, while reports and proceedings recorded mean scores of 2.64 and 2.60, respectively, signifying an average level of awareness. The lowest awareness was observed in newsletters, which had a mean score of 2.48, suggesting that many students are not well informed about the availability or relevance of newsletters in the library's serials collection. The findings indicate that while students show moderate awareness of major serial publications like journals and newspapers, there remains a noticeable gap in awareness of less frequently used serials such as newsletters, reports, and proceedings. This implies the need for greater user education and orientation programs to improve students' awareness and utilization of the full range of serial resources available in the university library.

3 .Research Question 2: What is the extent of utilization of serial publications among Social Science Students in Nasarawa State University Library, Keffi?

Extent of utilization	Highly Aware	Aware	Low Aware	Very Low Aware	Total	Mean Score
1. Serial collections are one of the major media through which research findings are published	20	30	110	90	250	3.08
2. Serials help to satisfy the information needs of users	25	35	120	70	250	2.94
3. Serials supply scientific discoveries and results of the latest findings	20	40	115	75	250	2.98
4. Serials provide up-to-date information on any issue more than textbooks	30	50	100	70	250	2.84

Source: Field Survey, 2025

***KEYS*: HA**= HIGHLY AWARE, **A**=AWARE, **LA**=LOW AWARE, **VLA**=VERY LOW AWARE

Table 3 shows the extent to which students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, utilize serial publications available in the university library. The data reveal that the respondents demonstrated a **moderate to high level of utilization** across the listed indicators. The highest mean score of **3.08,** was recorded for the statement that *"Serial collections are one of the major media through which research findings are published."* This implies that students recognize the essential role of serials especially journals as key sources for current and scholarly research outputs. Similarly, the statement *"Serials supply scientific discoveries and results of the latest findings"* had a mean score of **2.98,** while *"Serials help to satisfy the information needs of users"* also recorded a mean score of **2.94.** These findings indicate that students acknowledge the relevance of serials in providing timely and reliable information for their academic and research activities. The statement **"***Serials provide up-to-date information on any issue more than textbooks"* had the lowest mean score of **2.84,** suggesting that although students recognize the importance of serials, some may still rely more on textbooks for their academic needs. Overall, the findings indicate that students utilize serial publications to a considerable extent, particularly for accessing recent research findings and satisfying their information needs. However, there is still room for improvement, possibly through better user orientation, increased subscription to current titles, and enhanced accessibility to both print and electronic serials in the university library.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study on the awareness and utilization of serial publications among undergraduate students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, are largely consistent with outcomes reported in earlier studies, while also revealing some contrasting perspectives. The high level of awareness of journals observed in this study corroborates the findings of several previous studies which reported that journals are the most recognized and frequently consulted serial publications among university students. Studies such as those by Aina and Ajiferuke (2002), Nwalo (2013), and Issa, Amusan, and Daura (2017) similarly found that undergraduate students demonstrate greater familiarity with journals than with other serial materials, largely because journals are integral to academic research, frequently recommended by

lecturers, and emphasized in library instruction programmes.

The moderate awareness of newspapers and magazines recorded in this study also aligns with previous research. For instance, Popoola (2008) and Olatokun (2009) reported that newspapers are commonly used by students for accessing current information, especially in the social sciences where contemporary social, political, and economic issues are relevant. Likewise, the moderate awareness of magazines supports earlier findings by Okiki and Ashiru (2011), who noted that magazines attract student attention due to their accessibility and engaging formats, even though they are not always regarded as core academic resources.

However, the relatively low awareness of reports, proceedings, and newsletters identified in this study confirms the observations of earlier scholars who reported limited student exposure to these categories of serial publications. Studies by Adebayo (2015) and Echezona, Okafor, and Ukwoma (2011) found that undergraduates often underutilize technical serials such as conference proceedings and research reports due to their specialized nature and minimal integration into undergraduate curricula. Similarly, the low awareness of newsletters agrees with findings by Oyesiku and Oduwole (2004), who observed that newsletters are often perceived as institutional communication tools rather than scholarly information sources, thereby reducing their academic appeal and visibility within university libraries.

With respect to utilization, the findings from Table 3 are in strong agreement with previous studies that highlight the critical role of serial publications in academic research. The recognition of serials as major media for disseminating research findings aligns with the work of Tenopir and King (2009), who emphasized that journals remain the primary channels for scholarly communication. The high mean scores associated with the timeliness and relevance of serial publications further support the findings of Rowlands et al. (2011), who reported that students value serials for providing current and credible information that textbooks often lack.

Nonetheless, the finding that some students still rely more on textbooks than serials for up-to-date information contrasts with the conclusions of some recent studies that suggest a shift towards greater dependence on journals and electronic serials. For example, a study by Nicholas et al. (2017) found that increased access to electronic journals significantly reduced students' reliance on textbooks. The persistence of textbook dependence in the present study may therefore be attributed to factors such as limited access to electronic databases, inadequate user education, or habitual learning patterns among undergraduate students.

Overall, the findings of this study both support and extend previous research by demonstrating that while students are generally aware of and utilize prominent serial publications such as journals, awareness and use of other valuable serial materials remain limited. This reinforces earlier recommendations that academic libraries should intensify user education, improve the visibility of diverse serial collections, and expand access to electronic serial resources. Such measures are essential for maximizing the academic benefits of serial publications and enhancing students' research competencies in Nigerian university libraries.

Conclusion

The study has shown that students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, utilize serial publications in the university library to a moderate to high extent. The findings revealed that students recognize the vital role of serials particularly journals as key

sources of current research findings, scientific discoveries, and relevant academic information. This demonstrates that serials are essential resources that contribute significantly to students' research, learning, and overall academic development. However, despite this positive trend, the study also indicates that some students still rely more heavily on textbooks than on serial publications. This may be due to limited awareness, inadequate access to current serials, or insufficient orientation on their use. Therefore, it is concluded that while the utilization of serials among students is appreciable, there is still room for improvement. Enhancing access to both print and electronic serials, increasing awareness through user education, and strengthening library–faculty collaboration will further promote the effective use of serial publications. Ultimately, improved utilization of serials will contribute to better research quality, academic excellence, and the overall effectiveness of the university library in supporting teaching, learning, and research.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. The university library should organize regular library orientation sessions, workshops, and training on the use of serial publications. These programs will help improve awareness and guide students on how to locate, access, and effectively use different categories of serials beyond journals and newspapers.
2. The university library should expand its subscription to current serial titles, including printed and electronic journals, reports, and conference proceedings. Increasing access to e-resources and online databases will improve usage and support research activities more effectively.

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