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# Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Engineering Lecturers in Nigerian Universities: The Case of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State.

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**INFORMATION NEEDS AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF ENGINEERING  
LECTURERS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: THE CASE OF CHUKWUEMEKA  
ODUMEGWU OJUKWU UNIVERSITY, ANAMBRA STATE.**

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**Abstract**

*This research work studies the information needs and seeking behavior of Engineering lecturers in Nigerian Universities. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The area of the study was Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Anambra State. A total of 40 engineering lecturers from the Faculty of Engineering Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University formed the population. The researcher used the whole population for the study since the population was small. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed using simple frequency counts and mean. The bench mark of the results of the mean was 2.50. The result indicated that the major information needs of engineering lecturers are education, research and personal development; Conference participation, workshops and correspondence with fellow professionals are the most accepted means of seeking information; challenges encountered by the lecturers while seeking information is inaccessibility of library information resources. The researcher recommended that, the management of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Library should strengthen and enrich the library collections with current and relevant resources among others.*

**Keywords:** Information, Information seeking behavior, Information needs, engineering lecturers

**Introduction**

Information is conceived as an important resource that contributes immensely towards the development of a nation. The term Information explosion describes the rapidly increasing amount of published information and the effects of this abundance of data. As the amount of

available data grows, the problem of managing the information becomes more difficult, which can lead to information overload. This information explosion and information overload gave birth to the concept of studying the information needs and seeking behaviors of different groups of library users.

Information means different things to different people at different times and circumstances. According to Bhatti as cited in Igbokwe (2010), information is defined as recorded experience that is used in decision – making. This means that any piece of information obtained must add something new to the existing knowledge of the user. Information is data that have been processed and organized for retrieval in whatever format it may be (Alhassan & Saka, 2008). Ideally, information brings about knowledge, and a knowledgeable individual is also an informed individual. This means that an individual cannot develop without knowledge, and a person can only become knowledgeable if he recognizes and uses information as a means for development (Kamba 2009). Access to the right information by engineering lecturers can help them to acquire the skills, knowledge and confidence to participate fully in academic affairs.

Information need is an individual's or a group's desire to locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious or unconscious need. Therefore, information need stems from a vague awareness of something missing and as culminating in locating information that contributes to understanding and meaning. Information is needed because it affects people's lives. People need information to obtain answers to specific questions. Information needs arise when a person recognizes a gap in his/her state of knowledge and wishes to resolve that anomaly- an anomalous state of knowledge, as one commentator puts it. Information represents an ordered reality about the nature of the world people live in. An information need is inherently subjective and occurs only in the mind of seeker, making all the approaches problematic (Mostofa, 2013).

The term information seeking behaviour has been used in the research literature since the 1950's. Thereafter it took several decades for the subject to be presented as a major field of study. Information seeking behaviour can be described as an individual's manner of gathering and sourcing information for personal use, knowledge updating and development. According to Kakai, Ikoja-Odongo and Kigongo-Bukenya (2004), information seeking behaviour is the way people go about searching for information. They further stressed that a person's information seeking behaviour involves purposeful information seeking as a result of the need to complete course assignments, prepare for class discussions, seminars, workshops, and write final-year research papers. The kind of information required by the user, methods adopted in searching information, environment affected, time spent, problem faced and solution made, the satisfaction/dissatisfaction arising from the information gathered and the relationship of the user with the system- summed up the information seeking behaviour of the user

Like their counterparts in other professions, engineers require sound information for effective performance in their field. An engineer is a person who designs and builds engines, machines, roads, houses and so on (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 2006). Engineering lecturers in the universities need information to carry out their assignment. Igbeka and Atinmo as cited by Alhassan, & Saka, (2008) stated that information seeking is a fundamental human process closely related to learning and problem solving. The task to be accomplished by an individual dictates the kind of information they seek. The demand of the institution in which an individual works usually determines the information seeking behavior of such a person.

The lecturers in the various engineering departments of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State have to keep pace in the development in their specific areas of engineering. Hence, they require information to move forward. It is against this background that this study sets to investigate the information needs and information seeking behavior of engineering lecturers in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to describe the information needs and seeking behavior of engineering lecturers of COOU. Specifically, this study was designed to:

- i. Find out the information needs of engineering lecturers
- ii. Identify the different information searching strategies employed by these lecturers
- iii. Ascertain the challenges faced by the engineering lecturers when seeking for information?

### **Literature Review**

Chinnasamy, K. (2016). Carried out a research on Information need and information seeking behaviour of engineering college students in Madurai Islam. Only 300 students were used for the study. He discovered that the students need information for education, personal development and research. Islam (2010), in his doctoral study, identified the information needs of rural dwellers in Bangladesh. This research was conducted in ten rural communities in the northern part of Bangladesh. He indicated that rural library users required information about education and so on. Islam concluded that the information needs of rural communities may vary from region to region depending on the socio-economic conditions of their residents.

Nwegbu & Obijiofor, (2010), studied the information behavior of lecturers in the faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences in University of Nigeria Nsukka. It was a survey research design studying a population of 48 lecturers in the faculty. It was discovered that lecturers in the faculty of Pharmaceutical Studies use mostly electronic journals for seeking and gathering information. They use printed journals for disseminating their research finding. They recommended that universities and other research institutions should equip academics with the needed knowledge and tools.

Alhassan, & Saka, (2008). Carried out a research on the Information needs and seeking behavior of engineering lecturers in Nigerian Universities: The case of Federal University of Technology, Mina. They studied 165 lecturers using a survey design. The study revealed that information on the job is the most sought information, while interaction with colleagues is most used means of seeking information. The study recommends that university libraries should should strengthen their collections both print and non-print sources.

Mostofa, (2013) in a survey research design studied the information needs and seeking behavior of faculty members of Darul Ihsan University in Bangladesh. The statistical population is all members of faculty of Darul Ihsan University, Dhanmondi Dhaka. Teachers and various faculty members were interviewed about their use of electronic information resources for research purposes, their perception of electronic and print materials and the problems faced by the faculty members during information search. The findings showed that main information needs of faculty members are related to their teaching and research activities, the telephone and email are the main channels for obtaining the latest information, the faculty members use the library

infrequently as their place of study. Mostofa recommended that; faculty members of each department can cooperatively work with each other, librarians should provide specific information seeking skill instruction for each department related to their careers and professional activities.

Shokeen and Kushik (2002) report on a study about information seeking behaviour of social scientists in the universities of Haryana. The study showed that most of the social scientists visit the library daily. The preferred search tools were indexing and abstracting periodicals and citations in articles. Current journals and books were preferred sources of information.

Kehinde, Obi, Akinade, and Anyim, (2016). Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Masters' Students in the Faculty of Communication and Information Sciences, University of Ilorin, Kwara State. The study examined the Information needs and seeking behaviour of master's student at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. The population of the study was 125 master's students selected from the three departments in the faculty of Communication and Information Sciences. The area of the study was University of Ilorin, Nigeria. The study revealed that the major information needs of master's students at the faculty of Communication and Information Sciences, University of Ilorin, Nigeria is for academic purpose and their reading activities.

Basu and Dasgupta (2004) conducted a study on users and nonusers of information in rural areas in India. In this study, they identified the information needs of the rural communities. The needs identified included income generation, community leadership, environmental issues like

pollution, climatic change, disasters, etc., community health, literacy support, educational opportunities, employment, bank loans, government policies, transportation, communication and sanitation.

## Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The area of the study was Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Anambra State. The total population is 40 engineering lecturers. The whole population was used because it is small. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire titled, Information Needs and Seeking behavior of Engineering Lecturers Questionnaire (INSELQ). The constructed questionnaire was validated by experts in the field. The construction of the questionnaire was guided by the views and findings from the review of related literature. It was a 4-point scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The questionnaire was administered through personal contact by the researchers. The data collection exercise lasted for two weeks. All of the 40 instruments administered to the respondents, were completed and returned. Data collected were analyzed using simple frequency counts and mean. The bench mark of the results of the mean was 2.50. In taking a decision on each of the research questions, a mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted, while any response that is below 2.50 was not accepted

## Results

**Table 1:** Information needs of engineering lecturers

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	N	MEAN	DECISION
<b>A</b>	<b>Information needs of engineering lecturers</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>40</b>		
1.	Information on education	30	5	0	5	40	3.50	Accepted
2.	Information on employment	8	12	2	18	40	2.25	Rejected
3.	Entertainment information	8	12	4	16	40	2.30	Rejected
4.	Information for personal	28	7	0	5	40	3.45	Accepted



	development							
5.	Information on politics	10	10	6	14	40	2.40	Rejected
6.	Information for research publication	35	5	0	0	40	3.88	Accepted
7.	Professional information	29	5	5	1	40	3.55	Accepted

The result in Table 1 shows that 4 items (1,4,6,7) were accepted while 3 items (2,3,5) were rejected by the respondents. Item 6 (Information for research publication) has the highest acceptance with the mean score of 3.88. Item 4 (Information for personal development) has the lowest acceptance with the mean score of 3.45. Items 2, information on employment has the highest rejection with the mean score of 2.25 while item 5, information on politics has the lowest rejection with the mean scores 2.40.

**Table 2:** Information seeking behavior of engineering lecturers of COOU

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	N	MEAN	DECISION
<b>B</b>	<b>Information seeking behaviour of engineering lecturers of COOU</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>40</b>		
8.	Correspondence with my fellow professional colleagues	25	10	5	0	40	3.50	Accepted
9.	I always make use of the library	21	9	6	4	40	3.20	Accepted
10.	I participate in conferences	40	0	0	0	40	4.00	Accepted
11.	I use Online bibliographic sources	22	11	5	2	40	3.32	Accepted
12.	Information discussion with colleagues	15	15	10	0	40	3.13	Accepted
13.	My personal journal subscription	10	15	6	9	40	2.65	Accepted
14.	I always attend Seminars and workshops	34	6	0	0	40	3.85	Accepted

In Table 2, all the identified information seeking behaviour were accepted by the respondents. Item number 10, I participate in conferences, has the most acceptance with the mean score of

4.00. Item 13, My personal journal subscription, has the lowest acceptance with the mean score of 2.65.

**Table 3:** Information seeking challenges faced by the engineering lecturers

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	N	MEAN	DECISION
<b>C</b>	<b>Information seeking challenges faced by the engineering lecturers</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>40</b>		
15	Sources in the library are stale and obsolete	10	17	8	5	40	2.80	Accepted
16.	Lack of time	24	14	2	0	40	3.55	Accepted
17.	Library staff are unwilling to help	15	15	5	5	40	3.00	Accepted
18.	Colleagues are not willing to help	27	8	3	2	40	3.50	Accepted
19.	No access to internet	31	2	2	5	40	3.48	Accepted
20.	Psychological factor	0	15	15	10	40	2.13	Rejected
21.	High cost of books	20	13	7	0	40	3.33	Accepted
22.	Inaccessibility of library materials	30	8	2	0	40	3.70	Accepted

From Table 3, all the itemized challenges of information seeking were accepted besides item 20, Psychological factor which was rejected with the mean score of 2.13. Item number 22, Inaccessibility of library materials, has the highest acceptance with mean of 3.70. Item 15, Sources in the library are stale and obsolete, has the lowest acceptance with mean score of 2.80.

### Discussion of findings

Table 1 reveals that the engineering lecturers mostly need information on education, information for personal development, information for research publication and professional information. This collaborates with the finding of Mostofa, (2013) who reiterated that main information needs of faculty members are related to their teaching and research activities. However, most of the

respondent rejected entertainment information, Information on politics and employment information as their information needs.

Table 2 shows that the most preferred means of seeking information among the engineering lecturers is conference participation, workshops, using the library, and correspondence with fellow professionals. However, all the items of information seeking behavior were accepted by the respondents. This finding is in line with the work of Alhassan, & Saka, (2008) who revealed that correspondence with colleagues, seminars/ workshops and conference attendance are the most information seeking behavior of engineering lecturers.

The findings in Table 3 shows that among many problems encountered by the respondents, inaccessibility of library materials is identified as the major problem encountered by the engineering lecturers when seeking for information. This finding is similar to the findings of Kehinde, Obi, Akinade, and Anyim, (2016) who revealed that incompleteness of library materials and inaccessibility of library materials are the major challenges the Information seekers face while seeking information. The respondents however rejected psychological factor as one of the challenges of seeking information.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The results indicated that major information needs of engineering lecturers at the faculty of Engineering, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria is for education, research and personal development. Conference participation, workshops and correspondence with fellow professionals are the most accepted means of seeking information.

The major problem encountered by the lecturers while seeking information is inaccessibility of library information resources. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

- The management of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Library should strengthen and enrich the library collections with current and relevant resources.
- The librarian should ensure adequate processing of library resources so as to ensure accessibility.
- The librarian can organize a training session for the engineering lecturers on library use.

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