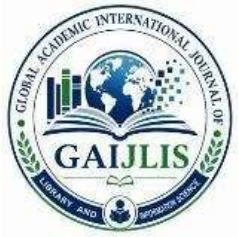
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THE IMPACT OF OPEN ACCESS POLICY IMPLEMENTATION ON THE ACQUISITION OF ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES BY LIBRARY STAFF IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN BENUE STATE

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Abstract

Context: Open Access (OA) policies are vital for advancing scholarly communication and equitable knowledge dissemination within higher education. This study evaluates the impact of open access policies on acquisition of electronic information resources in university libraries in Benue State, examining awareness levels, execution efforts, institutional impacts, and key operational barriers.

Methodology: Adopting a descriptive survey design, data was collected from 225 library staff members across three public universities in Benue State using purposive enumeration to study every member of the population since the size is manageable. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse data.

Findings: Results demonstrate strong levels of awareness, implementation and improved acquisition of scholarly journals as a result of Open Access Policy. However, critical barriers continue to impede seamless adoption, particularly concerning copyright and licensing ambiguities, infrastructural limitations, and digital literacy deficits.

Conclusion: While public universities in Benue State demonstrate a solid foundation for Open Access adoption, realizing its full institutional potential requires targeted policy and operational enhancements. Institutional priorities must focus on establishing clear intellectual property and licensing frameworks, strengthening digital repository infrastructure, and providing continuous digital literacy training for academic and library staff.

Keywords: Open Access, Policy Implementation, Public Universities, Digital Literacy, Scholarly Communication, Academic Libraries

INTRODUCTION

Access to scholarly information has undergone a paradigm shift in the last two decades, driven largely by the global Open Access (OA) movement. Open access refers to the free, immediate, and unrestricted online availability of scholarly research outputs, coupled with rights that allow users to read, download, copy, distribute, and use such content without financial, legal, or technical barriers (Suber, 2012). The movement emerged as a response to the "serials crisis," where escalating subscription costs made scholarly journals increasingly unaffordable for libraries, especially in developing countries (Björk, 2017). Consequently, governments, funding agencies, and higher education institutions across the globe began adopting OA policies to democratize access to knowledge, enhance research visibility, and promote global equity in information dissemination (Pinfield, Wakeling, Bawden & Robinson, 2020).

Globally, Open Access has reshaped scholarly communication and collection development in academic libraries. Studies show that OA repositories and journals have reduced financial pressure on libraries while simultaneously expanding access to diverse research materials (Solomon & Björk, 2016). Libraries in North America and Europe, for instance, have transitioned from being primary subscription gateways to becoming facilitators of open repositories, digital curation, and metadata management (Cox & Pinfield, 2014). Similarly, international initiatives such as Plan S, spearheaded by cOAlition S in 2018, mandated that publicly funded research must be made openly accessible, further solidifying OA's role in knowledge acquisition (Schiltz, 2018). These shifts have direct implications for libraries' acquisition strategies, as they now must balance investments in traditional subscription-based resources with the integration of OA content into their collections (Horn, Kurylo, O'Leary & Laird, 2025).

In the context of developing countries, open access is especially significant. Many academic institutions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America face persistent challenges of inadequate funding for library resources, high subscription costs, and limited access to international journals (Ocholla, 2011). Open access policies and repositories have emerged as critical tools for bridging this gap. For example, African Journals Online (AJOL) and institutional repositories in South Africa and Kenya have increased visibility and accessibility of African scholarship (Ezema, 2011). According to Musoke (2019), OA policies have also fostered collaborative networks among African academic libraries, enabling resource sharing and reducing duplication in acquisitions. However, challenges remain, including infrastructural deficits, low awareness among researchers, and limited policy enforcement, which sometimes hinder the full integration of OA resources into

academic library collections (Igwesi & Agbo, 2021).

Nigeria, being Africa's most populous nation with a rapidly expanding higher education sector, has not been exempted from these trends. Nigerian academic libraries have historically grappled with inadequate funding, making it difficult to sustain subscriptions to essential journals and databases (Ani & Edem, 2013). In response, librarians and scholars have increasingly advocated for open access as a viable solution to mitigate resource acquisition challenges. Institutional repositories such as the University of Nigeria Nsukka's repository and Covenant University's repository have been established to provide wider access to locally generated research (Ezema, 2011). The Nigerian government, through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), has also recognized the importance of OA in strengthening research capacity and has invested in digital infrastructure and e-library projects (Aina, 2020). Nonetheless, the adoption and implementation of OA policies across Nigerian universities remain uneven, with issues such as lack of institutional mandates, copyright concerns, and insufficient awareness slowing progress (Okpala & Ozioko, 2022).

Coming to Benue State, located in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, academic libraries play a critical role in supporting teaching, learning, and research across institutions such as Benue State University (now Rev. Fr Moses Orshio Adasu University), University of Agriculture Makurdi (now Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University), and several colleges of education and polytechnics. These institutions, like many others in Nigeria, face significant budgetary constraints that limit their ability to acquire scholarly resources through traditional subscription models (Igbashal, 2019). Consequently, the integration of open access resources into library acquisitions presents a potential strategy for addressing information scarcity. However, the extent to which OA policies are shaping acquisition practices in academic libraries within Benue State remains underexplored.

Existing literature highlights both opportunities and challenges in this regard. On one hand, OA resources could significantly improve access to up-to-date scholarly materials, thereby enhancing the quality of research and academic output in the region (Ifijeh & Yusuf, 2020). On the other hand, gaps in ICT infrastructure, limited technical skills among library staff, and the absence of robust institutional OA mandates may impede the effective adoption and integration of OA into acquisition policies (Igwesi & Agbo, 2021). This explains the need for empirical investigation into how OA policies are influencing acquisition practices in academic libraries within Benue State, particularly in the context of Nigeria's broader higher education challenges.

Therefore, this research seeks to examine the impact of open access

policies on the acquisition of information resources in academic libraries in Benue State. By situating the study within global, regional, and local contexts, it aims to provide information into how OA policies can be harnessed to strengthen resource acquisition strategies in Nigerian academic libraries. The study will contribute to the ongoing discourse on open access in Africa, inform policy directions for academic institutions, and support library administrators in optimizing resource acquisition for improved teaching and research.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Academic libraries serve as the backbone of teaching, learning, and research by providing access to scholarly information resources. However, in many parts of the world, escalating subscription costs for journals and databases have created significant financial strain, often referred to as the "serials crisis" (Björk, 2017). In developing countries like Nigeria, these economic challenges are further compounded by inadequate government funding, fluctuating exchange rates, and infrastructural deficits, which collectively limit libraries' ability to acquire and sustain subscriptions to essential information resources (Ani & Edem, 2013; Igwesi & Agbo, 2021). As a result, many academic institutions are increasingly turning to open access (OA) initiatives as an alternative pathway for enhancing access to scholarly materials.

While open access policies hold promise for expanding the availability of scholarly content, their actual impact on library acquisitions in Nigeria remains underexplored. Evidence suggests that many Nigerian universities have established institutional repositories and have begun integrating OA resources into their collections (Ezema, 2011). Yet, the absence of comprehensive national or institutional OA policies, coupled with limited technical expertise among librarians, has slowed widespread adoption (Okpala & Ozioko, 2022). Furthermore, OA resources alone may not fully meet the information needs of academic communities, especially in specialized fields where subscription-based journals remain dominant. These gaps raise important questions about how OA policies influence acquisition strategies and whether they genuinely address the longstanding information scarcity in Nigerian academic libraries.

In Benue State, where institutions such as Rev. Fr Moses Orshio Adasu University and Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University serve thousands of students and researchers, these challenges are particularly acute. Studies have highlighted the chronic underfunding of academic libraries in the State, with acquisition budgets unable to keep pace with the information demands of modern scholarship. While OA resources could potentially mitigate these challenges, there is limited empirical evidence on how libraries in Benue State are integrating OA policies into their acquisition practices,

the extent of policy awareness among stakeholders, and the barriers to effective implementation. Therefore, this study is justified as it seeks to fill a critical research gap by investigating the impact of OA policies on the acquisition of information resources in academic libraries within Benue State.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of Open Access (OA) policies on the acquisition of information resources in academic libraries in Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

i. Assess the level of awareness of open access policies in public university libraries in Benue State.

ii. Examine the level of implementation of Open Access policies in public university libraries in Benue State.

iii. Evaluate the extent to which Open Access policies have improved the acquisition of scholarly information resources for students, and staff of public university libraries in Benue State.

iv. Identify the challenges academic libraries face in adopting and implementing open access policies for resource acquisition and how sever are the challenges.

RESEARCH QUESTION

i. How aware of Open Access policies are the library staff in public university libraries in Benue State?

ii. What is the level of implementation of Open Access policies in public university libraries in Benue State?

iii. To what extent has Open Access policies improved the acquisition of scholarly information resources for students, and staff of public university libraries in Benue State?

iv. What are the challenges academic libraries face in adopting and implementing Open Access policies for resource acquisition and how severe are they?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

Open Access (OA): Open Access refers to the free, immediate, and unrestricted online availability of scholarly literature, permitting users to read, download, copy, distribute, and use content with proper attribution (Suber, 2012). The concept emerged as a response to escalating journal subscription costs and the consequent “serials crisis,” which restricted access to scholarly publications, particularly in developing countries (Björk, 2017). Globally, OA is framed around two main models: Green OA, where authors deposit versions of their work in repositories, and Gold OA, where publishers make content openly available, often through article processing charges (Pinfield et al., 2017). The significance of OA lies in its potential to democratize knowledge, bridging global research inequalities.

Open Access Policies: Open access policies are formal Statements, often institutional or governmental, mandating or encouraging researchers to make their publications freely accessible (Shieber, 2012). Such policies can include national directives, funder requirements, or institutional mandates. In Africa, OA policy adoption remains uneven, though initiatives such as the African Open Science Platform have promoted awareness and engagement (Chiware & Skelly, 2016). In Nigeria, OA policies are still nascent, with most initiatives being institutional rather than national (Okpala & Ozioko, 2022).

Acquisition of Information Resources: Acquisition refers to the processes by which libraries select, evaluate, and obtain information resources whether purchased, licensed, or freely accessed to meet the needs of their users (Johnson, 2018). Traditionally, this involved budgets for print and electronic materials, but OA has transformed acquisition models by offering no-cost alternatives that libraries can incorporate into their collections (Ifijeh & Yusuf, 2020). This redefines acquisition beyond procurement to include curation, integration, and advocacy for OA resources.

Academic Libraries: Academic libraries are integral to higher education institutions, providing access to scholarly information resources that support teaching, learning, and research (Kaur & Verma, 2018). In developing regions, however, chronic underfunding has weakened acquisition capacities, leaving gaps in access to current resources (Igbashal, 2019). The integration of OA resources into academic library services therefore presents an opportunity to mitigate resource scarcity, though challenges remain in terms of awareness, infrastructure, and policy adoption.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003).

Diffusion of Innovations Theory: Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory explains how new ideas, technologies, or practices spread within a social system over time. Rogers (2003) identifies five stages in the adoption process: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. The theory highlights categories of adopters: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. In the context of Open Access in academic libraries, DOI theory is useful in analyzing how awareness of OA policies translates into adoption and integration into library acquisition practices. For instance, librarians and university administrators may act as early adopters, experimenting with institutional repositories and OA databases, while others may resist adoption due to perceived risks or infrastructural limitations (Dulle & Minishi-Majanja, 2011). Factors such as relative advantage, compatibility with existing practices, complexity, trialability, and observability shape the

pace and extent of adoption. In Benue State, DOI helps explain variations in the uptake of OA policies across different institutions.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area: This research is situated in Benue State, located in the North-Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Benue State, often referred to as the "Food Basket of the Nation," is one of Nigeria's most agriculturally significant States. It is bounded by Nasarawa State to the north, Taraba State to the east, Cross River and Ebonyi States to the south, and Kogi State to the west. Administratively, Benue comprises 23 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and hosts several tertiary institutions. The focus of this study is on the three public universities in the State: Federal University of Health Sciences, Otukpo (FUHSO), a specialized federal university established to advance medical and health sciences education and research. Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi (formerly Benue State University, BSU), a State-owned university with a broad spectrum of programmes across the humanities, sciences, and other professional disciplines. Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi (JSTUM, formerly University of Agriculture, Makurdi), a federal institution focusing primarily on agriculture, science, and technology. These universities collectively represent the diversity of tertiary education in Benue State (federal and State) and provide the most appropriate context for evaluating the contributions of open access policies to academic libraries resourcing.

Study Population: The target population for this study comprises Library Staff (both academic and non-academic) of the three universities listed above. The population was chosen because these groups are the direct stakeholders in the acquisition and management of electronic information resources in academic libraries. Staff members including teaching and research personnel are both producers and consumers of scholarly knowledge.

Table 1: **Population**

S/N	Institution	Population of Library staff
1.	Federal University of Health Sciences, Otukpo (FUHSO)	18 *
2.	Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi	123
3.	Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi	84
	Total	**225**

Field Survey, 2025

*** FUHSO is a relatively new university compare to others**

Sample Size Determination: The sample size for the study was 225

respondents. The study adopted purposive enumeration to study every member of the population since the size is manageable.

Study Design: This study adopts a descriptive survey design. The descriptive survey was used to assess levels of awareness, implementation, and the extent to which Open Access Policies has improved acquisition, and challenges associated with OA policies in academic libraries

Instrument of Data Collection: The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed to align with the research objectives. It was divided into five sections: Section A: Demographic information (e.g., age, gender, university, role as staff, years of service). Section B: Awareness of open access policies (e.g., knowledge of institutional/funder mandates, understanding of OA repositories). Section C: Level of implementation of OA policies in university libraries (e.g., institutional repositories, subscription cancellations, integration of OA resources). Section D: Impact of OA policies on acquisition of scholarly resources (e.g., staff use of OA journals and their visibly significant research outputs). Section E: Challenges and recommendations (e.g., infrastructural limitations, inadequate funding, copyright concerns, and strategies for improved adoption and implementation).

Method of Data Analysis: Data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize respondents' awareness, implementation levels, challenges, and perceptions of OA policy contribution to acquisition of electronic information resources.

Ethical Considerations: The study adhered strictly to ethical guidelines governing social science research. Ethical clearance was sought from the Research Ethics Committees of the participating universities. Respondents were fully informed of the purpose of the research and their right to voluntary participation. Informed consent was obtained before administering the questionnaire. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by not recording any personally identifiable information. Data collected was used strictly for academic purposes.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 20	0	0.0
	20–29	0	0.0
	30–39	8	3.6
	40–49	111	49.3
	50 and above	106	47.1
Gender	Male	103	45.8
	Female	120	53.3
	Prefer not to say	2	0.9
Population	Federal University of Health Sciences, Otukpo	18	8.0*
	Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi	123	54.7
	Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi	84	37.3
Role	Library academic staff	136	60.4
	Non-academic library staff	89	39.6
Years of service	Less than 5 years	31	13.8
	5–10 years	122	54.2
	More than 10 years	72	32.0

FUHSO is a relatively new university compare to others

The demographic distribution shows that respondents were concentrated in the 40–49 and 50-and-above age groups, accounting for 111 (49.3%) and 106 (47.1%) respectively. It is of note that none of the Library staff in public university libraries in Benue State was below the age of 30. Females constituted 120 (53.3%) and males 103 (45.8%). Meaning that female library staff are in the majority public university libraries in Benue State. Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University contributed 123 (54.7%) respondents, Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University 84 (37.3%), and Federal University of Health Sciences, Otukpo 18 (8.0%) in terms of population. Library academic staff accounted for 136 (60.4%) while non-academic library staff accounted for 89 (39.6%). Therefore, it is safe to say that the respondents of this study are predominantly library academic staff. Respondents with 5–10 years of service formed the largest group, 122 (54.2%).

ANSWERING OF RESEARH QUESTIONS

Research Question 1: How aware of Open Access policies are the library staff in public university libraries Benue State?

Table 3: Awareness of Open Access Policies in public university Libraries in Benue State

Items	Not aware	Neutral	Aware	Strongly Aware	Mean	SD	Percentages (%)	Remarks
I am aware of the concept of Open Access (OA) publishing.	45	0	130	50	3.72	1.20	80.0%	Aware
I am aware of national or institutional OA policies/mandates in Nigeria.	10	14	132	69	4.13	0.80	89.3%	Aware
I am aware that my university has an institutional repository/OA Platform	41	16	113	55	3.73	1.17	74.7%	Aware
I am aware of the benefits of OA (e.g., free access, visibility of research).	22	15	138	50	3.92	0.95	83.6%	Aware
I am aware that training or sensitization on OA policies is provided by my institution.	25	13	135	52	3.90	0.99	83.1%	Aware
			Composite mean			**3.88**		

Findings:

- Respondents exhibit a high overall awareness of OA policies, reflected by a composite mean of 3.88.
- The highest specific area of awareness is regarding national or institutional OA policies and mandates, which scored a mean of 4.13.
- While overall awareness is high, basic familiarity with the general concept of OA policies ranked lowest (3.72), suggesting that institutional policy mandates are better communicated by institutions than leaving the understanding of the underlying conceptual frameworks with individual staff members.

Respondents demonstrated a high level of awareness of Open Access policies. The overall awareness mean was 3.88. Awareness of national or institutional OA policies/mandates recorded the highest item mean (4.13), while awareness of the concept of OA publishing recorded the lowest item

mean (3.72). This indicates that respondents generally understand OA and its institutional/policy dimensions better than its application to their personal research and publications.

The high level of awareness is particularly relevant when considered against the Nigerian context described by Ani and Edem (2013), who identified financial difficulties as a longstanding problem affecting the ability of academic libraries to sustain access to scholarly resources. Where subscription-based access is constrained by financial pressures, awareness of OA may become particularly valuable because it introduces another avenue through which scholarly information can be accessed. Ifijeh and Yusuf (2020) similarly identified OA resources as having potential to improve access to current scholarly information in developing-country contexts. The present findings are therefore compatible with these earlier observations, although the study does not establish that awareness itself resulted from financial pressures or directly produced improved access.

Research Question 2: What is the level of implementation of Open Access policies in public university libraries in Benue State?

Table 4: Level of Implementation of Open Access Policies in Academic Libraries in Benue State

Items	No Implementation	Low implementation	Moderately implemented	Fully Implemented	Mean	SD	(%)	Remarks
My university library provides access to OA repositories.	1	10	94	120	3.70	0.87	53.3%	Implemented
My university library promotes the deposit of theses/dissertations in OA repositories.	10	5	60	150	3.87	1.03	66.7%	Implemented
OA resources are considered in acquisition decisions at my university library.	3	8	54	160	3.90	0.87	71.1%	Implemented
The library organizes sensitization/awareness campaigns about OA resources.	8	0	55	162	3.94	0.93	72.0%	Implemented
OA resources have influenced reductions in journal/database subscription	4	2	58	161	3.88	0.81	71.6%	Implemented

costs.								
There is evidence of institutional support (funding/ICT) for OA implementation.	4	4	54	164	3.91	0.84	72.4%	Implemented
Composite mean					3.87			

Findings:

- Libraries are actively prioritizing sensitization campaigns (mean 3.94) and demonstrating institutional support through funding and ICT (mean 3.91).
- Implementation of OA policies is strong, with a high composite mean of 3.87.
- The actual provision of access to OA repositories scored the lowest (mean 3.70), indicating a slight gap between promotional efforts and practical access provision.

The findings indicate a high level of implementation, with an overall mean of 3.87. The highest-rated implementation activity was the organization of sensitization/awareness campaigns (M=3.94), followed closely by institutional funding and ICT supports for OA implementation (M=3.91) and consideration of OA resources in acquisition decisions (M=3.90). The provision of access to OA repositories had the lowest mean (M=3.70), suggesting that implementation is positive but not uniform across all universities.

These results suggest that OA has moved beyond being merely a theoretical concept and is reflected in a number of practical library activities. Particularly important for this study is the finding that 71.1% reported that OA resources were considered in acquisition decisions often or always. This directly relates to the central concern of the research because acquisition in contemporary academic libraries is no longer limited to purchasing or licensing materials.

Research Question 3: To what extent has Open Access policies improved the acquisition of scholarly information resources for students, and staff of public university libraries in Benue State?

Table 5: Impact of Open Access Policies on Access to Scholarly Resources

Items	No Extent	Low Extent	Moderate Extent	High Extent	Mean	SD	(%)
OA policies have improved my access to scholarly journals.	28	12	157	28	3.76	0.97	82.2%
I rely on OA resources for my academic work/research.	49	10	131	35	3.59	1.16	73.8%
OA has made it easier for students/staff to keep up with current research.	35	19	126	45	3.74	1.08	76.0%
The university's research outputs are more visible due to OA policies.	45	40	102	38	3.50	1.16	62.2%
OA resources have reduced the barriers to accessing learning/research materials.	31	3	125	66	3.91	1.15	84.9%
OA policies have enhanced collaboration through increased access to resources and free publishing outlets	3	6	170	46	4.15	0.51	96.0%
Composite mean					**3.77**		

Findings:

- The most significant benefit observed is the enhancement of collaboration through increased access to resources and free publishing outlets, this item has an impressive score of 4.15 mean.
- OA policies are perceived to have a considerable positive impact, achieving a composite mean of 3.77.
- Interestingly, the visibility of the universities' own research outputs was perceived less strongly (3.50), suggesting that users view OA more as a tool for consuming external resources than uploading and promoting their own.

The perceived impact of OA policies was positive, with an overall mean of 3.77. The strongest result was that OA policies enhanced collaboration among students, staff and researchers (M=4.15), followed by reduced barriers to accessing learning/research materials (M=3.91). The lowest mean was for increased visibility of university research outputs (M=3.50), showing that the university visibility benefits were perceived less strongly than access and collaboration benefits of individual staff.

The third objective sought to evaluate the extent to which OA policies have improved access to scholarly information resources. The results indicate a generally positive perception of OA's contribution to access to information resources. This finding corresponds with Ifijeh and Yusuf (2020), who identified the potential of OA to improve access to current scholarly

materials, particularly within contexts where conventional access may be constrained. The present study provides further empirical evidence to back previous findings in that regard.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges academic libraries face in adopting and implementing Open Access policies for resource acquisition and how severe are they?

Table 6: Challenges to Adoption and Implementation and how severe they are

Item	1 = Not a Challenge	2 = Minor Challenge	3 = Moderate Challenge	4 = Serious Challenge	5 = Very Serious Challenge	Mean	SD	Percentages (%)
Inadequate ICT infrastructure (internet, computers, servers) is a challenge to OA adoption.	5	5	20	119	76	4.14	0.84	86.7%
Limited funding/resources hinder OA policy implementation.	10	11	15	123	66	4.00	0.98	84.0%
Copyright and licensing restrictions discourage OA adoption.	0	4	8	124	89	4.32	0.63	94.7%
Low digital literacy among users limits OA usage.	0	9	6	139	71	4.21	0.68	93.3%
Lack of institutional mandates weakens OA policy adoption.	0	3	5	162	55	4.20	0.53	96.4%
Limited awareness among faculty/students slows OA uptake.	9	0	9	148	59	4.10	0.81	92.0%
Composite mean						**4.16**		

Findings:

- Challenges to implementing OA policies are universally recognized as serious, with a high composite mean of 4.16 out of 5.00.
- Legal and regulatory hurdles represent the most severe barrier, with copyright and licensing restrictions scoring the highest at 4.32.
- User issues such as low digital literacy (4.21) and structural challenge like lack of institutional mandates (4.20) heavily constrained OA adoption.
- Even the least severe challenge, limited funding (4.00), still passes the threshold to be classified as a serious barrier.

All six listed barriers were rated as serious challenges, with an overall challenge mean of 4.16. Copyright and licensing restrictions had the highest mean (M=4.32), followed by lack of institutional mandates (M=4.20) and low digital literacy (M=4.21). Limited funding had the lowest challenge mean (M=4.00), although it was still rated serious statistically. Overall, the findings indicate that infrastructure, funding, policy, digital literacy and legal/licensing issues constrain OA adoption

The fourth objective sought to identify the challenges facing OA adoption and implementation. The findings demonstrate that respondents regarded all six identified challenges as substantial. The findings on challenges are consistent with the previous studies reviewed. Igwesi and Agbo (2021) emphasized infrastructure and technical capacity; Okpala and Ozioko (2022) highlighted policy, awareness, and institutional issues; Ani and Edem (2013) emphasized funding pressures; and Igbashal (2019) drew attention to the financial constraints affecting academic libraries in Benue State. The present study therefore does not point to a completely new set of barriers; rather, it provides evidence that these previously identified concerns remain relevant within the universities investigated.

Summary of Findings

- Respondents reported a high level of awareness of Open Access policies (M=3.88).
- Respondents reported a high level of implementation of OA policies (M=3.87), although some implementation activities were stronger than others.
- OA policies were perceived to have a considerably benefited participating institutions in access to scholarly information and related academic activities (M=3.77).
- Challenges to OA adoption and implementation were identified and rated serious overall (M=4.16), particularly copyright/licensing, digital literacy and institutional mandates.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concludes that Open Access policies and practices have become an important component of scholarly information provision by librarians in the selected public university libraries in Benue State for the use of both students and staff. The respondents demonstrated a generally high level of awareness of OA policies, which are being implemented to a considerable extent in the libraries studied**,** the results suggest that OA is making a useful contribution to the resourcing of the libraries of the participating institutions. The study further concludes that significant challenges continue to constrain the full adoption and implementation of OA. In particular, respondents identified weak institutional mandates, copyright and licensing

restrictions, and low digital literacy**.**

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers strongly recommend that the university managements together with Library managers take the following step for better provision of scholarly online resources;

- Policy & Legal Clarity: formulate explicit institutional Open Access guidelines that clearly define copyright ownership, Creative Commons licensing models, and the protection of author rights to remove unfavourable/negative legal implication.

- Infrastructural Investment: Upgrade repository architecture, server reliability, and broadband connectivity across university libraries to support seamless self-archiving and open retrieval.

- Capacity Building: Mandate targeted digital literacy and open publishing training programmws for academic faculty and library personnel to ensure sustained engagement.

- Institutionalizing these measures will allow public universities in Benue State to transition from foundational policy awareness to a fully integrated, sustainable Open Access ecosystem.

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