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OUTLETS IN DISSEMINATING RESEARCH FINDINGS IN
SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA**

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ACADEMIC STAFF ATTITUDE TOWARDS OPEN ACCESS OUTLETS IN DISSEMINATING RESEARCH FINDINGS IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to establish the attitude of academic staff towards Open Access (OA) outlets. A descriptive research design was chosen for the study to describe the attitude of academics with regard to the outlets. The study was carried out in selected chartered private and public universities in Kenya. A total of 15,000 academic staff formed the study population from which a sample of 381 was drawn using stratified random sampling technique to select respondents from various universities. A questionnaire was designed for academic staff containing both open and closed ended questions. The study established a negative attitude of academic staff towards OA outlets. They were of the view that works published in conventional print journals were more recognized than those published in OA outlets and that OA outlets quality was lower than that of renowned print journals. Academics were also skeptical over the rigorous of review mechanisms for OA outlets. Therefore, their conservative preference for traditional outlets over newer publishing avenues was evident from their responses. The study recommend campaigns to enlighten the academic staff to recognize legitimacy and quality standard of OA outlets.

Key words: Open access, institutional repositories, attitudes, dissemination

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to share research findings, researchers use various outlets. They included use of highly ranked, prestigious print based journals and books. However, with the advent of the web, there are rapid changes in publication models. Nevertheless, publication in prestigious print based outlets been the criteria used by universities to promote academic staff. Thus, many of the academic's staffs' they spend their time trying to have their works published in those high-impact journals (Sweeny, 2000). Therefore, willingness to adopt newer outlets is likely to be dependent on academics attitude as well as preference regarding publishing in conventional print journals or the newly introduced open access (OA) journals and institution re (IRs). Considering that academic staff promotion is based on publication in renowned journals (Lang 2003; Bjork, 2004), their attitude on that and other issues of importance surrounding open access outlets such as the quality of OA works, issues of peer review, self-archiving, copyright issues in comparison with the already established traditional publication channels may influence their choice in adopting the newer platforms. Advocacy for open access has been on the argument that it has such benefits as greater access to scholarly literature, wider dissemination of new knowledge, greater research impact, and increased citation rates (Hernandez-Borges, et al.2006). However, the question that remained unanswered was whether academics in Kenya shared the same views with the proponents/ supporters and what is therefore their attitude towards the same?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic staff are key players in the adoption of the outlets and their attitude towards OA outlets may affect their publishing behavior. That in turn may also determine their adoption of OAJs and IRs or whether they become widely accepted as platforms for dissemination of research findings. The viability of OA outlets therefore depends on their acceptance and validation, a decision which may promote or jeopardize application of the outlets in the dissemination of research findings

Schroter, Tite, and Richard (2005) examined authors' attitudes towards open access publishing and author charges, their perceptions of journals that charge authors, and whether they would be willing to submit to these journals. They used semi-structured telephone interviews. Their respondents were 28 international authors from the United Kingdom; North America; Australasia; and Europe who submitted to the *BMJ* in 2003. The authors were randomly selected using computer generated random numbers. Their findings showed that authors were aware of

the concepts of open access publishing and that they would not mind publishing in journals they perceived as being of high quality even if they charged authors fees. Hence, journal quality was perceived more important than the cost when deciding where to submit papers. This study differs from the current one in the manner in which respondents were selected, as well as the mode of data collection. A further difference is evident in the sample sizes for the two studies.

Hernandez-Borges et al. (2006) studied the attitude and awareness of medical authors to OA publishing. The researchers used Spanish speaking writers who published in PubMed as their population. 354 authors were conveniently selected from 716. The sample cut across many institutions including university hospitals and non-university hospitals. They used a nine-item questionnaire which was emailed to the respondents. Comparisons were done using the Pearsons' chi-square test with significance set at $p < 0.05$. The return quota was 100 (28%). No differences were found based on medical specialty, type of residence or type of institution. About 30% cited lack of funds as a barrier. It was concluded that most of the authors were reluctant to pay author fees for the OA facility. This study differed from the current study in the manner of sampling technique, data collection and data analysis.

HoorndGraaf (2006) explored the attitudes of authors in the UK and the Netherlands towards Open Access. The survey mainly dwelt into copyright issues. These were seen to have an influence on academics' views of OA. Information was canvassed from a survey of authors of articles published in OA journals. A total of 1,226 authors of Open Access articles in Biomed Central journals, PLoS Biology and PLoS Medicine, *BMJ* and *EJCL* were used and 355 responded, giving a 29% response rate. The main issue addressed was the academic authors' views on the usefulness of present-day copyright policies for scholarly communication. The survey revealed that authors publishing in Open Access journals were not satisfied with assigning copyright to publishers. 71% of the authors preferred keeping the copyright, 2% preferred to transfer their copyright to journal publishers, 23% were neutral and 4% did not know. This study limited itself to copyright issues of authors who published in specific journals. It is not clear how the respondents were sampled or even how the data was analyzed. The current study used academics and canvassed their attitude on a wide range of IR and OAJ issues.

Fullard (2007) reported on the findings of a survey that was undertaken to assess the support for open access amongst researchers, research managers and policy makers in South Africa. The study focused mainly on quality, author charges and academic reward systems. An online questionnaire was used. Out of 500 South African biomedical authors 145 responded giving a response rate of 29%. Eleven (11) university research managers (52.3%) and eight representatives from official research organizations (61.5%) also completed the questionnaires. It was not clear whether all the targeted Deans of Research or Deputy Vice Chancellors (Academic) at the 21 public universities and the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) at 13 governmental organizations. The study revealed that academicians did not have a positive attitude towards OA resources. The study proposed advocacy by the library community to improve uptake of OAJs. This study focused on the various stakeholders and policy makers while the current study limited itself to academic staff. The study found that the authors' attitude was based on quality, academic reward system and author fees. The author did not indicate how the subjects were selected or even how the data was analyzed.

Shao and Scherlen (2007) examined the perceptions of academic journal editors on Open access publishing. The editors used were drawn from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. The authors conducted interviews with two editors from open access and four from traditional subscription-based journals in the region. They intended to gather information from the editors on how open access has or could affect their publications. The study used 18 journals. However, only 6 editors from those journals were contacted for informal interviews. One of the editors expressed fear that if open access publishing dominates, it could negatively affect the commercial publishing system and warns that readers could suffer if either of the two overly dominates the field. This study limited itself to journal editors while the current uses the academic user. The study also used interviews while the present used a questionnaire to obtain data. The authors did not make clear the methods they used in selection of the subjects as well as data analysis.

Gul, Shah and Baghwan, (2010) investigated the experience, attitudes and perceptions of researcher's about the open access (OA) movement. Their study was limited to 84 scholars out of 326 drawn from two faculties of Science and Social Science at the University of Kashmir. A 14-item questionnaire was used. They used stratified disproportionate sampling and their sample size for the departments of both faculties was confined to four scholars. They used Microsoft Excel for analysis. They found out that majority of researchers at the University of Kashmir mostly relied on web based resources to carry out their research programs (95.23 % of the scholarly community retrieved OA content using search engines, 29.76 % used OA journal to deposit their works and 9.52 % deposited their works in OA repositories). Colleagues (57.14 per cent) were the main referral sources of OA awareness with the least intervention from library professionals. This study is different from the current one in that the subjects for this study were scholars drawn from one university and two faculties while the respondents for the current were drawn from a number of universities and they too cut across all faculties. While this study used stratified disproportionate sampling, the current used stratified random sampling to select the respondents.

Hattingdi (2010) conducted a study in South Africa in order to unravel the attitude of faculty with regard to use of technology in teaching of online courses for distance learning. His study revealed that academic staff feared, resisted change and were concerned about intellectual property and the quality of the online courses. That prevented them from using technology in distance learning. Just like distance learning, dissemination via OA outlets makes use of Information Communication Technology (ICT). This study limited itself to attitudes of respondents in use of ICT in distance learning while the current focused on IRs and OAJs. It is however possible that similar situations would be experienced in as far as OA outlets are concerned.

Oliveira (2011) examined the opinions of directors of Seventh-Day Adventist university libraries around the world regarding the advantages of OA as well as the main challenges they face for the implementation of an institutional repository. They used 92 university and technological library directors drawn from 66 different countries but only 13 library directors from 10 countries answered the survey. The response rate was only 14%. The study reported technological infrastructure; funds; specialized personnel, implementation and maintenance quality control system among the barriers. A four question questionnaire was used to collect data and emailed to the participants. Only thirteen librarians from ten countries returned the questionnaire. This study only solicited for opinions from librarians of Seventh-Day Adventist universities in the world while the current one studied academics from different universities in Kenya. More so, this study used a four-question survey which was emailed to the participants while the present was self-administered.

Xiao and Askin (2014) examined academics' awareness of and attitudes towards Wikipedia and Open Access journals for academic publishing in order to help understand perceived benefits and challenges of the two models. They compared the Wikipedia and open access journals to determine their advantages and disadvantages which they considered necessary in making scholars submit their research papers in either of the models. A web survey was administered. An online open-ended questionnaire whose data was mainly nominal was used for this study to compare views on the various aspects. The study involved 41 top world ranked universities from the USA, Canada, China, and India. They used six selected departments of chemistry, biology, physics, education, psychology, and sociology. Of 198 e-mails sent, 120 were received. Thematic analysis was used. The study analyzed the relationships using correlations. Their study showed that Wikipedia had perceived advantages and challenges compared to the Open Access model. It also revealed that researchers' experiences with Open Access journals were correlated with their Wikipedia experiences, whereby those who have not had any Open Access journal experiences were more likely not to have had any Wikipedia experience. While this study used an online questionnaire, the current used a self-administered questionnaire. Further, it was limited to scholars in some top world ranked universities in some countries while this focused on scholars drawn from selected Kenyan Universities. The open-ended questionnaire in this study generated qualitative data while the current used a combination of both quantitative and qualitative.

These studies show that the attitudes of (potential-) contributors to publications are influenced by the cost of subscription, copyright issues, technology related infrastructure, and negative effects on commercialization and outright disinterest in OA resources.

3. METHODS

i. Research Design and Locale

A descriptive research design was chosen for this study. This design describes and characterizes present conditions occurring at a specific place (s) and time in order to explain a phenomenon. It deals with conditions, practices, structures, or processes that evidently portray the trends that exist or opinions held. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). A descriptive design tries to describe what is happening in more detail, and fill in the missing information and expand general understanding.

OA outlets are such a phenomenon which requires such description especially with regard to their adoption among academic staff in selected universities in Kenya. The researchers intended to determine what existed with regard to adoption of OA outlets by describing the views and attitudes of the academic staff. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected. Quantitative data was obtained from closed ended questions while qualitative data was obtained from open ended questions which led to descriptive explanations through appropriate presentations.

ii. Study Variables

Adoption of OA outlets was taken to be the dependent variable in this study. Academic staff attitude was taken to be the independent variable. Academic staff attitude was considered key in determining adoption of these outlets. This included their attitude regarding the quality of OA works, usefulness of the outlets and their attitude with regard to providing their works on OA. If they perceived OA contents as being of low quality, they were not likely to utilize such content. Similarly, if the academic staff hold onto the notion that providing their works on OA was likely to

expose their works to plagiarism, they were not likely to disseminate their works using OA outlets hence difficulty in adoption.

iii. Study Locale

The study was carried out in chartered private and public universities all over Kenya. These universities are scattered in an uneven proportion throughout the country. The findings were generalized to the entire academic community in Kenya.

iv. Population

All academic staff in both public and private universities formed the population of this study. There were seven public and twelve private chartered universities in Kenya at the commencement of this study, with a total academic complement of 15,000. This population was chosen on grounds that by nature of their work academic staff are supposed to generate and disseminate knowledge.

v. Sampling Techniques

Several techniques were used to obtain the required sample. Purposive sampling was used to select 19 universities which comprised of 7 public and 12 private universities out of a total of 43 at the time of the study. The study used a census approach to select all the 19 universities. The then seven public universities were included in the study because they were older than those that were not fully fledged. The 12 private universities used were the only chartered universities at the time of the study and were compliant with the law relating to accreditation at the time of study. All the public and private institutions used for this study were either fully-fledged universities or complied with the law relating to accreditation. In addition, these universities were used for this study because they were considered stable in form of staff and infrastructure and more likely to have an establishment for OA outlets. Stratified sampling technique was used to select respondents belonging to different universities. It was observed that the selected institutions did not have equal numbers of staff. For this reason, proportionate distribution of the total sample was applied to determine the number of respondents from each university. The results of the sampling techniques are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Sampling Grid for Individual Universities

	Name of University	Target Population Academic Staff	Sample Size
1	UoN	1591	40
2	KU	1241	31
3	MU	1181	30
4	JKUAT	928	24
5	Maseno	873	22
6	Egerton	970	25
7	MMUST	958	24
8	ANU	574	15
9	CUEA	663	17
10	Daystar	587	15
11	KEMU	681	17
12	USIU	679	17
13	PACU	559	14
14	SU	658	17
15	St. Pauls	586	15
16	Kabarak	597	15
17	Scott Theological College	501	13
18	University of Eastern Africa	582	15
19	MKU	591	15
	Total	15,000	381

Source: University Human Resources Office

vi. Sample Size

The formula used to obtain the sample size involving a target population equal to or greater than (\geq) 100,000 was:

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2} \quad (\text{Kothari, 2004})$$

Where,

n = Sample size for target population

p = probability of occurrence

q = probability of non-occurrence

e = 0.05 (Level of Significance)

z = 1.96 (Coefficient for z score in a normal distribution)

The sample was adjusted using Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, (2009) formula:

$$n' = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{n}{N}}$$

n' = The required adjusted sample size for the small target population.

This modification was necessitated by the fact that the population under study was below 100,000. This yielded $n' = 374$ academic staff and $n' = 238$ for library staff. Specifically, the study used 381 academic staff and 248 library staff. The discrepancy in the figures between the calculated figures and actual figures used for the study arose because of decimals at various levels of calculations. For this reason, where figures such as 29.3 were obtained when frequencies were calculated, such samples were rounded off to the nearest whole number.

vii. Research Instruments

Two sets of questionnaires were designed: one for the academic staff who were the main target for this study and another for librarians to help obtain supporting data. A Questionnaire for academic staff (QAS) was a general instrument administered to academic staff in the selected universities. The main objective for the instrument was used to gather information on their attitudes of OAJs and repositories comprising of both open and closed ended questions and statements

The questionnaire was preferred to other data collection techniques because of its cost effectiveness for such a study that involved a large sample size and large geographic areas. Besides, the questionnaire was also preferred because there was high literacy rate among the selected respondents. Finally, the questionnaires used helped in reducing bias thus ensuring that the researcher's opinion did not influence the respondents to answer questions in a certain manner. These were first pretested to ensure validity and reliability.

viii. Pilot Study

Two universities that did not constitute part of the final study were used to conduct the pilot study. These included the then Kenya Polytechnic University College currently known as Technical University of Kenya and Presbyterian University of East Africa (PUEA). At the Technical University College, out of 697 members of academic staff, 18 were selected while out of 15 library staff, 6 were selected. At the Presbyterian University with 448 members of academic staff, 11 were selected, while 4 out of 10 library staff were selected. The pilot study sample size was determined using the formulae $n' = (n/1+n/N)$. A questionnaire was subsequently administered to them. Data collected from the pilot study were analyzed.

Results from the pilot study were used to test any vagueness in the questions used, to find out how long a respondent would take in answering the questionnaire, to establish the usefulness of the content and to find out whether the results would be dependent on either the person administering or the time of administration. The questionnaire was thereafter adjusted accordingly.

ix. Validity and Reliability

In this study, content validity was achieved by ensuring that the research instrument adequately covered the area being studied. Each theme under investigation had adequate representation. Content validity of the questionnaire was further attained through evaluation and scrutiny by experts in the field of Information Science and open access publishing. These were helpful in determining whether the instruments adequately addressed the study objectives.

The research instrument was then pretested prior to the actual study with identical procedures to those that were employed during the actual data collection and questions reviewed as necessary. That was done to clarify areas of ambiguity as well as make the data usable. Finally, construct validity was achieved by ensuring that all the terms used were operationally defined. This was established after the pilot study.

Data obtained from the pilot study was used to determine the reliability of the various items in the instrument. Gay (1992) defines reliability as the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it is designed to measure and is expressed as a coefficient. To ensure that the same results were consistently obtained from the study, during pilot testing the instrument was administered by different people at varying conditions of time of day and venue. The instrument proved to be robust as there were no variations in the responses based on surrounding circumstances. To determine the internal consistency of each test item in the instruments, a correlation coefficient was determined using Cronbach correlation coefficient. The closer Cronbach's alpha was to 1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. The reliability test yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.76 which is closer to 1.0. The reliability coefficient that was obtained from the pilot was accepted since it attained a coefficient which the researcher considered to be reasonable based on George and Mallery (2003) who provide a guideline for interpreting correlation coefficients where ">0.9-Excellent, >0.8-Good, >0.7-Acceptable, >0.6-Questionable, >0.5 – Poor and <0.5- Unacceptable".

x. Data Collection

Before commencement of the study, the researcher sought permission to conduct the study from the National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The researcher further sought permission from the specific universities where the research was to be conducted. The researcher administered and collected the questionnaires personally to both the academic and library staff. That was especially so for the universities within Nairobi County, and that was done in order to ensure a high return rate and avoid delays. For the universities outside Nairobi County, the researcher used research assistants to administer the questionnaires.

xi. Data Analysis

Prior to the analysis, all questionnaires were scrutinized for completeness. A coding scheme was designed after data collection to facilitate analysis by use of a computer. The scheme matched every response with a number for efficient analysis.

Data was analyzed differently depending on the type. The data generated was of both quantitative and qualitative nature. Quantitative data was obtained from the closed ended questions. This data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequencies, percentages, graphs and the mean were computed. Data obtained this way was compared between the two groups of academic and library staff by way of percentages. Data was also presented using tables, pie charts and graphs. **Qualitative data was obtained from open ended questions. The responses from this type of data were classified into broad themes and the content analyzed. Objectives one to four generated nominal data which was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented using tables, pie charts and graphs. Objective number five generated ordinal data which was analyzed using a Likert scale and presented using the mean score of the intervals.**

4. RESULTS

In order to establish the attitude of academic staff towards OA outlets, some statements on various aspects of OA were designed for the respondents. Their responses were summarized and presented in Table 1.2 below:

Table 1, Academic Staff Attitudes with Regard to OAJs and Repositories

Statements about OAJs and Repositories	Strongly Disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Somewhat Agree (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly Agree (5)		Total		Mean Score
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
OAJ do not Offer Proper Peer Review	40	12.5	106	33.2	96	30.1	61	19.1	16	5	319	100	2.7
Cannot Publish Work in OAJs or IRs because it will be copied	82	25.3	116	35.8	57	17.6	42	13	27	8.3	324	100	2.4

Works published in conventional print journals more recognised than those in OAJs	34	10.4	69	21.1	68	20.8	78	23.9	78	23.9	327	100	3.3
Prefer to Publish Research Work in Printed Journals and Books other than in IRs and OAJs	23	7.1	75	23.1	57	17.5	94	28.9	76	23.4	325	100	3.4
Quality of Articles Published in OAJs is Lower than of works Published in Renown Printed Journals	54	17.1	102	32.4	60	19	64	20.3	35	11.1	315	100	2.8
Self-archiving my work in the IRs is Time Consuming	42	13.7	124	40.4	85	13.7	35	11.4	21	6.8	307	100	2.6

The study established that academic staffs attitude towards OA outlets was not positive. Journal Peer review is an issue of paramount importance in research and publications as it determines the quality of a publication. On the aspect of peer review over half of the respondents (2.7) were skeptical that OAJs undergo rigorous vetting. Academics were also skeptical over the rigor of review mechanisms for OA outlets. They were of the view that works published in conventional print journals were more recognized than those published in OA outlets and that OA outlets quality was lower than that of renowned print journals.

This suggests that they may have been ignorant of the existence of peer review mechanisms for OAJs or they were aware of the process of peer review in general, but did not think that OAJs undergo that. This skepticism over the rigor of review mechanisms coupled with ignorance of OAJ-specific review mechanisms has a negative impact on the uptake of OAJs.

OAs success depends on the academics attitude with regard to the issue of intellectual property ownership. With regard to copyright issues in publishing through OA outlets, the overall tendency in the responses was that copyright issues existed but not so prominently (2.4). The interesting fact about copyright in dissemination is that publishing through OAJs implies opening up one's work even accommodating the risk of copying, yet the tendency to prefer other means of dissemination hints at resistance to change or a misconception of what OA is about. In other words, through their responses the respondents voiced their disagreement with the principle of OA of providing research works free of charge without restrictions on copying. To re-emphasize this discord between OA principle and researchers concerns about copyright undergirds a challenge to the adoption of OA outlets.

On the status associated with using a publishing outlet, a sizable number of respondents (3.3) expressed preference for traditional print outlets as opposed to OA ones due to the recognition that comes with printed publications. This preoccupation with the prestige of traditional publishing outlets poses an observable threat to the need to shift to OA outlets. Further, the preference for traditional outlets is buttressed by their key role in upward mobility of academic staff. Bjork (2004) and Lang (2003) earlier observed that most universities promoted their academic staff based on the works they published in printed peer reviewed journals. This practice is linked to the issue of the prestige of traditional print-based outlets, and its attendant implications for adoption of OA outlets.

A similar pattern as that noticeable above recurs on the matter of preference for a particular dissemination outlet, with the majority of respondents (3.4) expressing preference for the traditional print-based outlets. This preference pointed to the lack of receptivity to alternative ideas and practices in trying out new avenues of dissemination. This study revealed a preference for traditional outlets, indicating a tendency among academic staff to use outlets they know and have been used to before. This conservatism was considered a challenge that threatened adoption of newer outlets including the OA outlets.

On the quality of articles published, a slight majority of respondents (2.8) felt that the quality of articles published in OAJs was lower than that of articles published through traditional printed journals. This re-echoes the same sentiments expressed in various publications on peer review issues raised about research works published through OA outlets. Thus the concern with quality standards associated with these outlets manifests itself in a similar way on a related issue, and raises a similar challenge to their adoption.

Finally, on the process of depositing research findings in an IR, a slight majority of respondents (2.6) thought that the process was time consuming. The time element is closely tied to the activities involved in self-archiving, which are inevitably considered to be complicated. Rogers (2003) in his theory, diffusion of innovations which this study was anchored on, pointed out that an innovation with the attribute of ease of use was more likely to be adopted. The characteristic of complexity associated with self-archiving does not augur well for their use as dissemination outlets.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that academic staff have a negative attitude towards OA outlets. Academic staff preference for traditional outlets over newer publishing avenues undermines dissemination of research. They were skeptical over the rigor of review mechanisms coupled with ignorance of OAJ-specific review mechanisms and discord between OA principle and researchers concerns about copyright.

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