

# Information Use Pattern of Primary School Teachers in Rural Areas of Plateau State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

*This paper investigated the information use pattern of primary school teachers in rural areas of Plateau State, Nigeria. The main objective of this study was to investigate the pattern of information used by rural public primary school teachers in Plateau State for their teaching and learning activities. Quantitative research methodology was used; questionnaires and observation were the instruments used for the study. The population of the study comprised all the school teachers in rural public primary schools of Plateau State, Nigeria. The findings of the study showed that the majority of school teachers used different types of information sources and resources. School teachers in this study used the information found for reference purposes. They photocopy the area of interest, jot down the main points, read the article directly and print a copy. The findings also showed over-dependence on headmaster/school authorities, library and information centres, and printed source/resources category. Books are the most popular resources needed and consulted by the school teachers in this study. Barriers to information were identified, and the following were the recommendations made. Government should establish libraries in primary schools in rural areas, and management should create more awareness on the use of library and information resources to both the school teachers and learners through library education and training programmes such as information literacy, user education, seminars, workshops, and conferences. The management should also provide more current information resources relevant to the needs of school teachers and learners in rural areas of Plateau State, Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Information use, Pattern, Plateau State, Rural areas, School Teachers

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## Introduction

Primary School is an important seat of foundational learning. It is the basic education every Nigerian child is expected to receive before proceeding to Secondary School (Odu in Abashe and Maren, 2019). Primary School is the bedrock on which all levels of education are built for any nation-building. All educated youths, adults, professionals in various fields have passed through primary School, before achieving their goals. Primary education in Nigeria has undergone several reforms from Universal Primary Education (UPE) to Universal Basic Education (UBE) intended to bring about changes in the Nigerian basic education for positive transformation within the system

and to respond to the yearnings and demands of the nation within the context of democratic government (Tahir in Ifeyinwa, 2010).The School library attached to primary School is like a soul to the body. Taking cognizance of the significance of the school library, the UBE emphasized that State governments should be responsible for the provision of equipment and libraries. As a result of the importance of school libraries, the implementation committee for the National Policy on Education included school libraries among the seven educational resources centers designed to enhance educational processes. Therefore, school teachers need to access information that becomes indispensable to their advancement and educational development. School Teachers need libraries to access relevant information for effective teaching, learning, and development.

Therefore, the existence of school libraries has become indispensable and plays a significant role in selecting, acquiring, maintaining, and disseminating useful and relevant information to school teachers and students (Usoro and Usanga,2007).This was supported by Waite in Benard (2014) that" school library as a collection of a wide range of learning and teaching materials which are housed in a place and centrally organized by librarians and indexed to serve users...". Due to the important nature of school teachers and the role they play in the development of communities, they need a greater awareness of access points to a variety of information resources that would enable them to execute their roles. School teachers require a variety of information to perform their professional activities, i.e., teaching and learning being the basic.

### **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study are;

1. ascertain the patterns of information use (that is, frequency, format, and mode of use) of rural public primary school teachers in Plateau State
2. identify the information resources used by rural public primary school teachers in Plateau State
3. identify the information sources used by rural public primary school teachers in Plateau State
- 4 ascertain the barriers to information use by rural public primary school teachers in Plateau State
5. determine the strategies for improving the pattern of information used by rural public primary school teachers in Plateau State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What are the patterns of information use (that is, frequency, format, and mode of use) of rural public primary school teachers in Plateau State?
2. What are the information resources used by rural public primary school teachers in Plateau State?

3. What are the information sources used by rural public primary school teachers in Plateau State?
4. What are the barriers to information use by rural public primary school teachers in Plateau State?
5. What strategies could be adopted for improving the patterns of information used by rural public primary school teachers in Plateau State?

### **Review of Related Literature**

The scientific research regarding the information use pattern dates back to the 1940s. After that, a considerable volume of literature has been published, dealing with the information needs and seeking patterns of library users. A great deal of research has also focused on the analysis of the information-seeking behavior of library users, irrespective of the types of their occupations and fields of study. The information use pattern of the academic community has been an important area of current research.

Information is broadly referred to as accurate, timely, specific, and organized data presented within a context that gives it meaning and relevance to an increased understanding and a decrease in uncertainty of facts (Web-Finance, 2013). From the definition of information, it follows that information simply means processed data that are meaningful for decision making (that is, raw facts that have been processed and organized for use by its intended users). Hence, information use denotes the State of using information for an intended goal of satisfying the users' needs (Oyinkepreye, 2012). According to the author, the quest for information use relates to the conscious and unconscious need for information not existing in the remembered experience of the investigators (querying of information sources); the conscious mental description of an ill-defined area of decision (inquiry from an authority in the field); forming of a rational Statement of a question (the rational and unambiguous description of the inquirer's doubt); the question as presented to the information systems (databases).

The term pattern connotes several meanings from varying authorities. Business Dictionary (2010) defined patterns as consistent and recurring characteristics or trends that help identify a phenomenon or problem and serve as an indicator or model for predicting future behavior. The source further proclaimed that a pattern relates to a model or original used as an archetype worthy of imitation. In these circumstances, pattern refers to a plan, method, model, or diagram used to guide making something. From a psychological point of view, the pattern, according to Philip (2002), refers to a model of behavior that is systematically designed to be used by a person or group of persons who functions in a given setting, environment, or unit. The term pattern can be defined as a reliable sample of trends, acts, tendencies, or other observable characteristics of a person, group, or situation.

Users of information, especially the school teachers, certainly have a pattern upon which they use it. In line with this, scholars across the globe implicitly and

explicitly contributed their quota on the pattern of use of information. Important work has been carried out by Watson, Blakeley, and Abbott (1988) on communication technologies in teacher education. The results show that the teachers' educators are inexperienced in the use of ICT. This ignorance could be partly attributed to the university computer networks staff's failure to understand the users' distribution and distance networks' needs.

Seth (1990), one of the eminent research scholars, has surveyed social scientists in his attempt to identify the particular characteristics of their information use pattern. The study reveals that the academic staff prefers mostly journals as sources of information, followed by books, seminars, and conferences. Similarly, Mishra (2011) reported that several patterns abound upon which students use information. Such pattern, according to Mishra, includes frequency of information use: (i.e., how often does the student use a particular or a number of information materials cum sources in the libraries); the format of information use (this relates to the physical nature and characteristics of the information materials or sources viz electronic (digital), pictorial, textual and graphical information); and the model upon which they search and use the information (i.e., the methods of obtaining the information from their varying sources such as manual searching, browsing the library catalogue and shelves, electronic searching (querying of databases), online searching and assistance from library personnel (querying the librarians).

The information use pattern of professors of Art History and Studio Art has been studied by Jacquelyn Challener (1999). She measured the frequency of library visits of the respondents and identified the reasons for such visits. She concludes that most of the participants use computers for seeking information. She also finds that the majority use slides extensively in the classroom, supplemented in most cases by textbooks and also journal articles. Finally, approximately 50% of the respondents use computers for teaching purposes.

Vijayalaxmi and Maheswarappa (2001) Stated that the principal pattern of information used by students relates to the frequency of use of such information. To them, students, depending on their schedule, fashion out how they intend to use the information at their disposal either in their libraries or elsewhere. The authors also emphasized that as information is an essential commodity for the sustenance of teaching and learning in an academic environment, the frequency of use of such information becomes imperative. As such, they believed that information is used by students concerning their time frame. Hence according to the information is used hourly, daily, weekly, and monthly depending on how urgent it is needed.

In another development, undergraduate students base their pattern of information used on the format of the information itself (Akande, 2013). In this aspect, Akande opined that information format undermines the pattern upon which students use such information. According to the author, based on their favoritism, students may decide to

use certain information simply because of the format in which that information is packaged. In this context, the author believes that information appears in varying formats such as textual, pictorial, graphical, and electronically (digital), among others, and students use them based on their affinity for a particular format.

A detailed review of the literature presented in this section reveals that many studies have been conducted to explore the information use pattern needs of various people from different academic and occupational backgrounds worldwide.

## **Methodology**

The research method used for this study was the survey research design. The survey research design was found appropriate for this study because, according to Harle (2009)," it is concerned with the collection of data for the purpose of describing and interpreting existing conditions, prevailing practices, beliefs, attitudes, on-going processes, etc.".In the case of this study, the existing condition which it sought to describe, interpret and report on is the determination of the level of information use pattern of school teachers in rural primary Schools in Plateau State. The population for this study comprised all School teachers in public primary schools in rural areas of Plateau State. Averagely, Plateau State has a population of 15414 teachers cut across 2420 schools in the 17 LGAs within the State (Dept. of Planning, Research, and Statistics PSUBEB Jos (2019)). Stratified random sampling and proportionate sampling were used to select the sample for the study. Plateau State is divided into three senatorial zones; each zone served as strata to which random and proportionate sampling technique with random selection was used to select the sample for the study. The instruments were administered directly to three hundred (300) sampled school teachers from two hundred and forty (240) primary schools in seventeen (17) local governments/ rural areas within the State. Out of which, only 280 (93.3 %) were returned and were usable. Questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection, and descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data collected for this study.

## **Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of Findings**

From the information gathered on the demographic factors, the age distribution of respondents under study ranged between 17-57 years of age (Mean=2.56 and SD=0.86)

Less than half (30.71%) of the school teachers aged between 27-36 years old, while 30.0% were between 37-46 years of age. Around 25.71% were 17-26 years old, and 13.51% were between 47-56 years old. Thus, the majority of respondents were of the age group range between 27-36 years. It could be said that more than half (56.42%) of the school teachers were of the age range between 17-36 years of age, indicating that most school teachers in rural areas of Nigeria are young people. With regards to the

gender indicated that more than half (61.4%) were males and (38.6%) were females. As such, there were more males as primary school teachers than females.

**Research Question One:** What are the information use pattern (that is, frequency, format, and mode of use) of school teachers in rural areas of Plateau State?

**Table 1: Information Use Pattern of School Teachers**

| Frequency of Use                        | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------------------|------------|----------------|
| I use the information daily             | 83         | 29.64          |
| I use the information hourly            | 56         | 20.0           |
| I use the information weekly            | 94         | 33.57          |
| I use the information as at when due    | 47         | 16.78          |
| <b>Total</b>                            | <b>280</b> | <b>100.0</b>   |
| <b>Information Format Used</b>          |            |                |
| I use printed information               | 187        | 66.78          |
| I use electronic information            | 93         | 33.21          |
| <b>Total</b>                            | <b>280</b> | <b>100.0</b>   |
| <b>Mode of Use</b>                      |            |                |
| I use information for reference purpose | 105        | 37.50          |
| I print my area of interest             | 94         | 33.57          |
| I jot down the main points              | 47         | 16.77          |
| I read the article directly             | 34         | 12.14          |
| <b>Total</b>                            | <b>280</b> | <b>100.0</b>   |

**Source: SPSS 23**

Table 1 shows data on the information use pattern (frequency, format, and mode of use) of school teachers in rural areas in Plateau State. With reference to the frequency of information used by school teachers, the results reveal that 29.64% of the respondents use information daily, 20.0% use the information hourly, while 33.57% of the respondents use information weekly, and 16.78% of them use the information as at when

due. This implies that the majority of the respondents use the information weekly while the least number of the respondents use the information as at when due.

In the same table, data on the format of information used is shown where respondents were asked to indicate the format of information used; the result revealed that 66.78% of them use printed information while 33.21% use electronic information. This shows that more than half of them use printed information while less than half use electronic information for their teaching responsibilities.

The table also shows data on respondents' model of information use. While 37.5% of the respondents Stated that they use information for reference purposes, another 33.57% of them indicated that they print their area of interest, while 16.77% Stated that they jot down the main points, and 12.14% indicated they normally read the article directly. This revealed that the majority of the respondents use information for reference purposes while few of them use information by reading the article directly.

**Research Question two:** What information resources are used by primary school teachers in rural areas in Plateau State?

**Table 2: Information Resources Used by School Teachers in Rural Areas in Plateau State**

| Information resources     | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|------------|----------------|
| I use books               | 102        | 36.42          |
| I use audiovisuals/TV     | 27         | 9.64           |
| I use radio               | 53         | 18.92          |
| I use databases           | 24         | 8.57           |
| I use reports             | 18         | 6.42           |
| I use journals            | 16         | 5.71           |
| I use internet            | 23         | 8.21           |
| I use government document | 17         | 6.07           |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>280</b> | <b>100.0</b>   |

**Source: SPSS 23**

Table 2 shows data on the information resources used by the school teachers in rural areas in Plateau State. Respondents were asked to indicate the common type of information resources used. Findings showed that the majority (36.42%) of the respondents used books for their teaching and learning. Less than half of the respondents used the other seven information resources (Audiovisuals/ Television, Radio, Internet,

Government Documents, and Journals). However, the least information resources used were databases (8.57%) and reports (6.42%). This revealed that the majority of them use books for their teaching and learning, followed by radio, television, and the other types such as databases, the internet, reports, government document, and finally journal publications.

**Research Question three:** What are the information sources used by primary school teachers in rural areas in Plateau State

**Table 3: Information Sources Used by School Teachers in Rural Areas in Plateau State**

| Information sources       | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Print information sources | 96         | 34.29          |
| Headteacher               | 54         | 19.29          |
| Colleagues                | 42         | 15.0           |
| Library                   | 31         | 11.07          |
| Media                     | 28         | 10.0           |
| Internet/online databases | 21         | 7.50           |
| Family                    | 8          | 2.86           |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>280</b> | <b>100.0</b>   |

**Source: SPSS 23**

Table 3 shows data on information sources used by school teachers in rural areas in Plateau State. Respondents were asked to indicate the common type of information sources used. The results of the study showed that the majority of the respondents used printed information sources (34.29%). Followed by those who used their headmaster /school authorities (19.29%), colleagues (15.0%), and library and information centres (11.07%) as their sources of information. The least used information sources were media (10.0%), internet/online databases (7.50 %), and/family (2.86%) as their information sources. This revealed that most of the respondents used printed information sources and the least source of information used was family.

**Research Question Four:** What are the barriers to information use by primary school teachers in rural areas in Plateau State?

**Table 4: Barriers to Information Use by Primary School Teachers**

| Barriers                                  | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Lack of time to visit and use the library | 9         | 3.21           |

|                                          |            |              |
|------------------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Limited income/finance to purchase books | 54         | 19.29        |
| Inadequate books in the library          | 52         | 18.57        |
| Lack of internet                         | 71         | 25.36        |
| Lack of standard library                 | 94         | 33.57        |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>280</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

**Source: SPSS 23**

Table 4 shows data on barriers to information use by primary school teachers in rural areas in Plateau State. There are challenges and barriers faced by school teachers in rural areas of Plateau State in terms of their information use process. A greater majority (33.57%) cited lack of standard library as the biggest barrier, while (25.36%) of the respondents said that lack of internet accessibility poses a challenge to them, another (19.29%) said limited income is their challenge. However, (18.57%) of the respondents agreed that inadequate books in the library are the problem, but (3.21%) agreed that lack of time to visit and use the library is their challenge. In this case, lack of standard library is considered the major challenge of the respondents on information use followed by internet inaccessibility, limited income, inadequate books and finally lack of time to visit the library were considered the least problems. In accordance with the above findings, Alumutairi (2011), in his relational model for factors affecting the information use pattern of the student, highlighted that factors, such as professional factors and information dimension factors, affect students' information-seeking patterns.

**Research Question Five:** What strategies could be adopted for improving the information use pattern of school teachers in rural areas?

**Table 5: Strategies for Improving the Information Use Pattern of School Teachers in Rural Areas**

| Improvement of information use pattern                                         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| There should be establishment of libraries in schools in rural areas           | 93        | 33.21          |
| Provision of adequate information resources in school libraries in rural areas | 34        | 12.14          |
| Organization of workshops and conferences on library and information use       | 72        | 25.71          |
| Information needed by teachers should be made                                  | 81        | 28.93          |

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|              |            |              |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| available    |            |              |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>280</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

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**Source: SPSS 23**

Table 5 shows that in response to an open-ended question in the questionnaire, (33.21%) respondents suggested that they should establish libraries in schools in rural areas. (12.14%) respondents suggested that the provision of good books in schools that have libraries can go a long way in improving their pattern of information use. Another (25.71%) suggested that workshops and conferences can encourage them in improving their information use pattern, and finally (28.93%) suggested that provision of information needed by teachers should be made available in primary schools in rural areas will improve their information use pattern.

**Summary of Findings**

Information use pattern adopted by primary school teachers in rural areas in Plateau State, Nigeria. From the findings of this study, it was revealed that teachers use the information on hourly, daily, weekly, and as at when due. The findings of the study also showed that respondents claimed to have good knowledge of information sources and resources available to them, particularly the printed sources and resources. It could be said that other information sources and resources tend not to be popular among school teachers in rural areas of Plateau State, Nigeria. Books were the most popular resources needed and consulted by the school teachers in this study. Hence, it could be said that the information use pattern of school teachers in rural areas of Plateau State Nigeria was the same as what was obtained in the 1980s. In this study, as observed by the researcher, the poor usage of other sources and resources besides textbooks could be attributed to a lack of awareness and familiarity with these information sources and resources, which invariably could have contributed to their low usage.

The factors affecting the information use pattern of school teachers in rural areas of Plateau State Nigeria include lack of time to visit and use the library, limited income, inadequate books in the library, lack of internet accessibility, lack of standard libraries, among others.

The strategies for improving the information use pattern of school teachers in rural areas of Plateau State include: establishment of libraries in schools in rural areas, provision of good books in schools that have libraries, workshops, and conferences on library and information use and provision of information needed by teachers should be made available in primary schools in rural areas that will improve their information use pattern among others.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, it can be said that teachers in rural areas of Plateau State use the information hourly, daily, weekly, and as at when due. It could also be said that other

information sources and resources tend not to be popular among them. Books were the most popular resources needed and consulted by the school teachers in this study, and the poor usage of other sources and resources besides textbooks could be attributed to lack of awareness, familiarity, and availability of these information sources and resources, which invariably could have contributed to their low usage.

### Recommendations

1. School libraries with internet facilities should be established in rural primary schools in the State
2. School libraries should provide printed and non-print materials that are convenient to school teachers.
3. The management should create more awareness on the use of library and information resources to both the school teachers and learners through seminars and workshops
4. They should also provide more and current information resources relevant to the needs of school teachers in rural areas of Plateau State, Nigeria.

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