

## Academic Library as Effective Tool for Achieving Intellectual Freedom among Undergraduate Students in Universities in Kwara State

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### Abstract

*This study examines the academic library as an effective instrument in achieving intellectual freedom among undergraduate students in universities in Kwara State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and the data was collected using a questionnaire. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 359 respondents for the study and a questionnaire was administered to all respondents from which 336 were returned and found useful for data analysis. Data collected were analyzed using frequency tables and simple percentages. The findings indicate that majority of the respondents are aware of intellectual freedom and familiar with freedom of expression, opinion, freedom to seek information and have freedom of access to information without interference. The study revealed that the majority of the respondents see the library as an information center and knowledge repository where they can acquire updated information to satisfy their information needs. Academic libraries have not fully adopted intellectual freedom, and the library bill of Rights, code of ethics, freedom of information, access to information, and copyright law are not effective among undergraduates through the use of academic libraries in Kwara state. This can be premised on the poor funding of the academic libraries by the university administration which has hindered the provision of necessary information materials on intellectual freedom by academic libraries. The study recommended that there should be policies on the ethical conduct of libraries and academic libraries should provide adequate orientations to their users on intellectual freedom.*

**Keywords:** *academic libraries, intellectual freedom, information, undergraduate students.*

### Introduction

Several attempts have been made to find a universal definition of intellectual freedom. But none of these attempts have defined intellectual freedom without acknowledging the freedoms or

rights of an individual to conceive and share ideas and to access and disseminate information that pleases an individual's conviction without any restriction or limitations. This concept is borne out of the beliefs that all human beings have the fundamental right to have access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity, and intellectual activity, and to express their thoughts in public. Intellectual freedom is conceptualized on the principles of protecting the rights of all individuals to seek the types of information they want and to read anything that interests them. Any attempt by a member of the community to remove materials from a library collection or to decline access to information or its bearing media may be the most common challenge to intellectual freedom that any library will face (Yaya, Asunmo, Abolarinwa & Onyenekwe, 2015).

Generally, intellectual freedom is a concept of central importance to a progressive society at all levels of educational provision such as in; media, research and debate, politics and business, as well as information institutions such as libraries. Modern society needs imagination rather than acceptance, creativity rather than conformity, it needs people who ask questions and uses the answers they obtain to leverage improvement and change. Put more directly, intellectual freedom is the engine that carries us into a life of greater economic security, better health care, improved material prosperity, enriched communication, and a host of freedoms that stem from freedom of the mind. Therefore, there is a need to feel confident not only in the understanding of its meaning but also in the precise nature of its significance globally. It is easy for those who work in a climate of intellectual freedom to assume that respect for intellectual freedom is the global norm. Where individuals have access to global and local networks that can provide virtually any information that might be desired, work with like-minded colleagues from several other countries, and have the protection offered by The Universal Declaration of Human Rights as Article 19 (as cited in Arko-Cobbah, 2007). Intellectual freedom is defined as the right of everyone to freedom of opinion and expression, these rights include freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. The ALA (2016) also described intellectual freedom as the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. However, part of the ways by which intellectual freedom can be achieved among undergraduates is through the academic library. This is because the academic library is regarded as the heart of the intellectual system of the university or better still the nerve center of the university (Joseph and Urhiewhu 2016). It is the intellectual hub for all academic activities that are happening in the academic environment because of its tripartite purposes of supporting teaching, learning, and research of the parent institution. It is the repository of all publications emanating from and outside the institution, and this is attesting that an academic library is also established to support creativity and intellectual exposition.

Corroborating this view, Olurotimi (2015), asserted that an academic library is a central and important organ in any academic institution. Its importance hinges on the importance that it is attached to research which is the core area of any university in the world. This point is also buttressed by Adegoke (2015) who claimed that academic libraries serve complimentary purposes such as supporting the research of the university, faculties, and students. The support of

teaching requires materials for learning and research and of what use are the library resources (Adegoke, 2015). Users are not informed on how to intellectually explore and exploit the huge resources housed in the library. In furtherance to this, it behooves the library to educate users, especially students on how to uncover and access intellectual resources stored in a library and as well identify, acquire, organize, store, and provide access to the relevant intellectual and research products of scholars worldwide (Arko-Cobbah, 2008).

In addition to this, the academic library as an integral part of an academic environment, is expected to play its role in promoting the intellectual exploits of undergraduates by exposing them to various aspects of intellectual freedom like freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of access to information, censorship, plagiarism and some other things that may make the idea they conceived, hold, record, receive, access, publish or disseminate to be influential or detrimental to the society at large.

Though there is minimal literature about intellectual freedom in academic libraries, there are three common parameters concerning academic libraries and intellectual freedom, are: the relationship between academic freedom and intellectual freedom; the finding that academic libraries face fewer censorship challenges than public or school libraries, and the study of several specific topics related to intellectual freedom, such as Internet filtering and privacy of patron records, etc (Oltmann, 2017).

The assertion above behooves that there is a clear nexus between an academic library and intellectual freedom, though literature available on the concept is acutely low. This is because the academic library is expected to support the learning and research of an individual, which is expected to contribute to the vibrant expression of their intellectual convictions. On the other hand, intellectual freedom empowers individuals to conceive, create and express ideas or opinions; share, hold, receive, access, or disseminate them regardless of frontiers without any restriction or limitation. Therefore, this study is designed to capture how the academic library can serve as an effective instrument in achieving intellectual freedom among undergraduates in the selected universities in Kwara State.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of understanding of intellectual freedom among undergraduates in the selected Universities in Kwara State?
2. What is the level of library patronage among the undergraduates in the selected Universities in Kwara State?
3. What is the level of adoption of intellectual freedom of academic libraries among undergraduates in the selected Universities in Kwara State?
4. What is the effectiveness of intellectual freedom on the use of academic libraries among undergraduates in the selected Universities in Kwara State?
5. What is the level of compliance of the academic library in the area of intellectual freedom of undergraduates in the selected universities in Kwara State?

6. What constraints are undergraduates facing while fulfilling their intellectual freedom in the library in the selected universities in Kwara State?

**Methodology**

This study adopts the descriptive research design of the survey type to obtain relevantly and needed data on the research topic. This research design was employed because it gives room for careful recording of observations. The population of this study includes all the 64,447 undergraduates in Kwara State.

**Sample and Sampling Techniques**

Multi-stage sampling techniques were used. At the first stage, the entire Universities in Kwara State were stratified into three arms, i.e Federal, State, and Private Universities. At the second stage, a simple random sampling technique was used to select two faculties from each of the three strata of the Universities to make six (6) faculties from all the Universities. However, at the third stage, from each of the faculty selected, a purposive sampling technique was used to select 10% of undergraduate students to make the total respondents to be 359 for the study. These techniques were considered appropriate because they give no room for bias and make theselected sample to be more representative of the entire undergraduate students in Kwara state.

**Validity and Reliability of the Instruments**

In invalidating the instruments, experts in the field of Library science and research measurement and evaluation were consulted for proper vetting of the instruments. They were specifically requested to carry out the face and content validity of the instruments by evaluating the quality of items in terms of clarity, appropriateness of language, and adequacy of the items. However, in establishing the reliability coefficient of the instruments, a pilot study was conducted on a small sample outside the scope of this study specifically University of Ibadan undergraduates. This was done using the inter-rater method of testing reliability. Hence, the psychometric index for the reliability obtained was range between 0.81 – 0.92.

**Results and Discussion of Results**

**Table 1: Level of awareness of intellectual freedom**

S/N	Level of awareness of intellectual freedom	Highly Aware	Aware	Highly Unaware	Unaware
1	Freedom of Expression	182 (54.2%)	116 (34.5%)	28 (8.3%)	10 (3.0%)
2	Freedom of Opinion	160 (47.6%)	141 (42.0%)	10 (3.0%)	25 (7.4%)
3	Freedom to seek information in any media	189 (56.3%)	147 (43.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
4	Freedom of access to information	188 (56.0%)	148 (44.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

5	Freedom to receive information in any media without interference	159 (47.3%)	157 (46.7%)	8 (2.4%)	12 (3.6%)
6	Freedom to impart ideas through any media without interference	122 (36.3%)	193 (57.4%)	4 (1.2%)	17 (5.1%)

Table 1 revealed that the majority of the respondents (88.7%) are aware of freedom of expression and while only a few (11.3%) are not aware of it. 89.6% of the respondents are aware of freedom of opinion while 10.4% are not aware of it. All the respondents are aware of the freedom to seek information in any media. Also, all the respondents are aware of the freedom to access information. 94.0% of the respondents are aware of the freedom to receive information in any media without interference while 6.0% of the respondents are not aware of it. 93.7% of the respondents are aware of the freedom to impart ideas in any media without interference while 6.3% of the respondents are not aware of it.

**Table 7: level of library patronage among undergraduate students**

S/N	Level of library patronage	Daily	weekly	Monthly	Occasionally	Non patronage
1	I patronize the library to read news	144 (42.9%)	97 (28.9%)	36 (10.7%)	0 (0.0%)	59 (17.6%)
2	I patronize the library for research	114 (33.9%)	65 (19.3%)	127 (37.8%)	0 (0.0%)	30 (8.9%)
3	I patronize the library for class assignment	156 (46.4%)	121 (36.0%)	29 (8.6%)	0 (0.0%)	30 (8.9%)
4	I patronize the library for recreation	46 (13.7%)	54 (16.1%)	51 (15.2%)	28 (8.3%)	157 (46.7%)
5	I patronize the library for career development	60 (17.9%)	48 (14.3%)	38 (11.3%)	0 (0.0%)	190 (56.5%)

Table 2 revealed that 42.9% of the respondents patronize the library to read the news daily, 28.9% patronized the library to read news weekly, 10.7% patronize the library to read news monthly while 17.6% of the respondents do not patronize the library to read the news. 37.8% of the respondents patronized the library for research purposes monthly, 33.9% patronized the library for research purposes daily, 19.3% patronized the library for research purposes weekly while only 8.9% do not patronized the library for research. Also, 46.4% of the respondents patronized the library daily for a class assignment, 36.0% patronized the library weekly for a class assignment, 8.6% patronized the library weekly for class assignment while only 8.9% of the respondents do not patronized the library for a class assignment. However, 46.7% of the respondents do not patronized the library for recreation purposes, 16.1% patronized the library

weekly for recreation purposes, 15.2% of the respondents patronized the library monthly for recreation purposes, 13.7% patronized the library daily for recreation purpose while only 8.3% patronized the library occasionally purpose. Furthermore, 56.5% of the respondents do not patronized the library for career development, 17.9% patronized the library daily for career development, 14.3% of the respondents patronized the library weekly for career development and 11.3% of the respondents patronized the library monthly for career development.

**Table 3: Level of adoption of intellectual freedom**

S/N	Level of adoption of intellectual freedom	Highly Adopted	Adopted	Unadopted	Highly unadopted
1	Library bill of right	115 (34.2%)	93 (27.7%)	98 (29.2%)	30 (8.9%)
2	Code of ethics	87 (25.9%)	52 (15.5%)	70 (20.8%)	127 (37.8%)
3	Freedom of Information	80 (23.8%)	43 (12.8%)	176 (52.4%)	37 (11.0%)
4	Access to information	185 (55.1%)	28 (8.3%)	36 (10.7%)	87 (25.9%)
5	Intellectual property	172 (51.2%)	0 (0.0%)	28 (8.3%)	136 (40.5%)
6	Privacy	64 (19.0%)	48 (14.3%)	0 (0.0%)	224 (66.7%)
7	Copyright law	58 (17.3%)	57 (17.0%)	85 (25.3%)	136 (40.5%)

Table 3 revealed that 61.9% of the respondents agreed that the library bill of rights is highly adopted in the academic library while 38.1% of the respondents agreed that the library bill of rights is not adopted in the library. 58.6% of the respondents agreed that a code of ethics is not adopted in the library while 41.4% of the respondents agreed that the library bill of rights is adopted. 63.4% of the respondents agreed that freedom of information is not adopted in their library while 36.6% of the respondents agreed that freedom of information is adopted. 63.4 of the respondents agreed that access to information is highly adopted in the library while 36.6% of the respondents agreed that access to information is not adopted. 51.2% of the respondents agreed that intellectual property is adopted while 48.8% of the respondents agreed that intellectual property is not adopted in the library. 66.7% of the respondents agreed that privacy is not adopted in the library while 33.3% of the respondents agreed that privacy is adopted in the library 65.7% of the respondents agreed that copyright law is adopted in the library while 34.3% of the respondents agreed that copyright law is adopted in the library.

**Table 4: Effectiveness of intellectual freedom**

S/N	Effectiveness of intellectual freedom	Highly effective	Effective	Highly ineffective	Ineffective
1	Library bill of right	86 (25.6%)	56 (16.7%)	58 (17.3%)	136 (40.5%)
2	Code of ethics	114 (33.9%)	28 (8.3%)	29 (8.6%)	165 (49.1%)
3	Freedom of Information	86 (25.6%)	56 (16.7%)	29 (8.6%)	165 (49.1%)
	Access to information	121 (36.0%)	29 (8.6%)	57 (17.0%)	129 (38.4%)
5	Intellectual property	150 (44.6%)	29 (8.6%)	29 (8.6%)	128 (38.1%)
6	Privacy	151 (44.9%)	98 (29.2%)	28 (8.3%)	59 (17.6%)
7	Copyright law	221 (65.8%)	56 (16.7%)	0 (0.0%)	59 (17.6%)

Table 4 revealed that 57.8% of the respondents agreed that the library bill of rights is ineffective while 42.2% of the respondents agreed that the library bill of rights is effective. 57.7% of the respondents agreed that the code of ethics is ineffective in the library while 42.3% of the respondents agreed that the code of ethics is effective in the library. 57.7% of the respondents agreed that freedom of information is ineffective in the library while 42.3% of the respondents agreed that freedom of information is effective in the library. 55.4% of the respondents agreed that access to information is ineffective while 44.6% of the respondents agreed that access to information is effective in the library. However, 53.2% of the respondents agreed that intellectual property is effective while 46.8% of the respondents agreed that intellectual property is ineffective. 74.1% of the respondents agreed that privacy is effective in the library while 25.9% of the respondents agreed that privacy is ineffective in the library. Also, 82.4% of the respondents agreed that copyright law is effective in the library while 17.6% of the respondents agreed that copyright law is ineffective.

**Table 5: Compliance level of intellectual freedom**

S/N	Compliance level of intellectual freedom	Highly complied	Complied	Non complied	Highly non complied
1	Freedom of Information	249 (74.1%)	28 (8.3%)	0 (0.0%)	59 (17.6%)
2	Library bill of right	221 (65.8%)	28 (8.3%)	28 (8.3%)	59 (17.6%)

3	Code of ethics	150 (44.6%)	58 (17.3%)	28 (8.3%)	100 (29.8%)
4	Intellectual freedom	151 (44.9%)	28 (8.3%)	57 (17.0%)	100 (29.8%)
5	Access to information	123 (36.6%)	28 (8.3%)	29 (8.6%)	156 (46.4%)
6	Intellectual property	94 (28.0%)	58 (17.3%)	84 (25.0%)	100 (29.8%)
7	Privacy	94 (28.0%)	56 (16.7%)	57 (17.0%)	129 (38.4%)
8	Copyright law	93 (27.7%)	58 (17.3%)	57 (17.0%)	128 (38.1%)

Table 5 revealed the compliance level of the library to intellectual freedom were the majority (82.4%) of the respondents agreed that freedom of information is highly complied with in the library while 17.6% of the respondents agreed that freedom of information is not complied with in the library. 74.1% of the respondents agreed that the library bill of rights complies to while 24.9% of the respondents agreed that the library bill of rights is not complied with in the library. 61.9% of the respondents agreed that the code of ethics is complied with in the library while 38.1% of the respondents agreed that the code of ethics is not complied with in the library. 53.2% of the respondents agreed that intellectual freedom is complied with while 46.8% of the respondents agreed that the library does not comply with intellectual freedom. However, 55.0% of the respondents agreed that access to information is not complied with in the library while 45.0% of the respondents agreed that access to information is complied with in the library. 54.8% of the respondents agreed that intellectual property is not complied with in the library while 45.2% of the respondents agreed that intellectual property is complied with in the library. 55.4% of the respondents agreed that privacy is not complied with in the library while 44.6% of the respondents agreed that privacy is complied to in the library. 55.0% of the respondents agreed that copyright is not complied with in the library while 45.0% of the respondents agreed that copyright is complied with in the library.

**Table 6: Constraint faced by undergraduate students while fulfilling their intellectual freedom**

S/N	Challenges faced by Undergraduate students	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
1	Poor funding of the library	94 (28.0%)	56 (16.7%)	86 (25.6%)	100 (29.8%)
2	Poor service provision	179 (53.3%)	0 (0.0%)	57 (17.0%)	100 (29.8%)



3	Insufficient information materials on intellectual freedom	150 (44.6%)	57 (17.0%)	29 (8.6%)	100 (29.8%)
4	Inadequate infrastructural facilities	178 (53.0%)	0 (0.0%)	58 (17.3%)	100 (29.8%)
5	Poor user patronage	151 (44.9%)	56 (16.7%)	29 (8.6%)	100 (29.8%)
6	Proliferation of internet	180 (53.6%)	0 (0.0%)	56 (16.7%)	100 (29.8%)
7	Poor professional conducts of the library personnel	151 (44.9%)	85 (25.3%)	0 (0.0%)	100 (29.8%)
8	Restriction of access to some materials	93 (27.7%)	29 (8.6%)	114 (33.9%)	100 (29.8%)
9	Poor knowledge of copyright law	28 (8.3%)	121 (36.0%)	58 (17.3%)	129 (38.4%)

Table 6 revealed constraints respondents face in fulfilling their intellectual freedom where 55.4% of the respondents disagreed that poor funding is a constraint in fulfilling intellectual freedom while 44.6% of the respondents agreed to it. 53.3% of the respondents agreed that poor service provision is a constraint in fulfilling intellectual freedom while 46.7% of the respondents disagreed. 61.6% of the respondents agreed that insufficient information materials on intellectual freedom are a constraint in fulfilling intellectual freedom while 38.4% of the respondents disagreed. 53.0% of the respondents agreed that inadequate infrastructural facilities are a constraint in fulfilling intellectual freedom while 47.0% of the respondents disagreed. 61.6% of the respondents agreed that poor user patronage is a constraint in fulfilling intellectual freedom while 38.4% of the respondents disagreed. 53.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that the proliferation of the internet is a constraint in fulfilling intellectual freedom while 46.4% of the respondents disagreed. However, 63.7% of the respondents disagreed that restriction of access to some materials is a constraint in fulfilling intellectual freedom while 36.3% of the respondents disagreed. 55.7% of the respondents disagreed that poor knowledge of copyright is a constraint in fulfilling intellectual freedom while 44.3% of the respondents disagreed.

### Discussion of findings

The result of the study revealed that the majority of the respondents are aware of intellectual freedom. The result further shows that the respondents have the knowledge and familiarity with freedom of expression, freedom of opinion, freedom to seek information in any media, freedom of access to information, freedom to receive information in any media without interference, freedom to impart ideas in any media without interference. The study examined the level of library patronage among undergraduate students and the result revealed that the majority of the

respondents see the library as an information center and knowledge repository where they can acquire updated information to satisfy their information needs. The study explained further that users patronized the library to read news, for research, class assignment. However, the study found out that the respondents do not see the library as a recreational center where they can refresh themselves after their daily routine or a place for their career development.

Also, the study examined the adoption level of intellectual freedom in the academic libraries among the undergraduate students and the result showed that academic libraries in Kwara state do not adopt a code of ethics, freedom of information, privacy, and copyright law i.e. the libraries have not fully adopted intellectual freedom, this may be as a result of less conversant of freedom of information right in this part of the world and poor implementation of policies by the libraries.

Furthermore, the study investigated how effective intellectual freedom through the use of academic library among undergraduate students in Kwara state and found that library bill of right, code of ethics, freedom of information, access to information, and copyright law are not effective among undergraduates through the use of academic libraries in Kwara state. However, the study further showed that intellectual property and privacy are effective in academic libraries.

The study inquired on the compliance level of academic libraries in the area of intellectual freedom and found that academic libraries in Kwara state have partially complied with intellectual freedom in their delivery of services to the users. However, the study revealed that access to information, intellectual property, privacy, and copyright law is not complied with in the library this may be as a result of slow in decision making and poor policy implementation by top library management.

In addition, the study also examined the constraints that hindered undergraduate students in fulfilling their intellectual freedom and it was revealed that undergraduate students faced numerous problems in fulfilling their intellectual freedom. This study, however, emphasized that the numerous problems faced were from both the libraries management who failed to provide infrastructural facilities that will promote intellectual freedom, and the personnel who do not possess adequate skills to provide good services.

### **Conclusions**

Undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin, Al-Hikmah University, and Kwara State University are aware of intellectual freedom either through their libraries or elsewhere, and their level of awareness of intellectual freedom is high. Undergraduate students of the three institutions understand that intellectual freedom is comprised of freedom of expression, opinion, access to information, to seek and receive ideas in any media regardless of frontiers. Libraries in the institutions do not adopt the principles of intellectual freedom, which makes students patronize the library majorly for their classwork and to read the news. The libraries are not effective instruments in promoting intellectual freedom as they are not yet complying with the

principles of intellectual freedom. However, the constraints faced by the students on intellectual freedom in academic libraries are poor funding, unavailability of information materials on intellectual freedom among which are found to be preventing the library from serving as effective instruments in achieving intellectual freedom.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby made:

- i. Academic libraries should be providing adequate orientations to their users on intellectual freedom so that they can have an in-depth understanding of what intellectual freedom entails.
- ii. Libraries should restrict all forms of censorship and other intellectual freedom issues as this would empower access to information resources in desired media and it will also contribute to the advancement of research.
- iii. The fields of library and information science in Nigeria should be marking World Intellectual Freedom Day as this would help in expanding the awareness and coverage of intellectual freedom beyond where it is known.
- iv. Academic libraries should be providing training and retraining to their personnel, so that they can be conversant with new knowledge and skills, and most importantly, how to interact and relate with their users.
- v. Should cultivate the habit of patronizing the library for other purposes apart from reading alone.
- vi. Libraries should go back to the drawing table and review their services to adopt the latest means of service provisions that will transform the services of the library and transcend it beyond the library's wall.

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