

Information Needs, Information Sources, Information Uses and Information-seeking Behaviours of Lawyers in Oyo State Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was carried out to examine the information needs, information uses, information sources and information-seeking behaviour of lawyers in Oyo State, Nigeria. Data were collected from a sample of 103 lawyers, using a questionnaire and a self-completed interview schedule. Case preparation was a major reason for lawyers' information needs. A majority of the lawyers need information in order to enhance their performance and gain more knowledge. The quest for additional information is the main motive in searching for information by professionals and non-professionals alike. Knowing more and becoming well-informed on various aspects of society, constitute the major reasons why lawyers seek for information. Lawyers visit their personal information collection first, and consult available electronic sources before they resort to other sources. The major types of information needed by lawyers, largely relate to the following: weekly law reports, recent decisions of the Supreme Court, and information related to clients. The most consulted sources of information were personal experience, textbooks, journals, colleagues and partners, as well as firm case studies and court records. Creating ways to improve the capacity of lawyers to use digital resources by way of training, and expansion of the legal education curriculum to include ICT, will go a long way to address the challenges lawyers have in finding and using the information they need.

Keywords: information behaviour; lawyers; Nigeria; information seeking; information needs

Introduction and Background to the Study

Lawyers play a very significant role in society, and their work affects every aspect of human lives; being relevant on all issues, from getting married or buying a home to making investments. They play the roles of both advocates and advisors in the human quest to continuously engage in their tasks and interact with people in society (Bhardwaj and Madhusudan 2016; Fagbemi 2017). As advocates, they represent parties, human and organisational, in criminal and civil issues and trials by using evidence to argue cases in court in support of their clients, as the needs arise. As advisors, lawyers counsel their clients concerning their legal rights and obligations, and suggest particular courses of action in business, personal and other matters. While law lecturers teach law and conduct law research at the universities, law practitioners handle legal and associated issues. Whether acting as advocates or advisors, lawyers are regularly engaged in searching and researching to understand or interrogate the intent of the law and judicial decisions, and to apply the law to the specific circumstances faced by their clients. Lawyers help clients to prepare and file for cases, licences and applications and to seek for other resources before certain activities may occur. In addition, they represent clients' interests in administrative and other adjudications (Ahmed and Batcha 2014; Das and Jadab 2017; Fagbemi 2017; Fay 2017; Mansour and Ghuloum 2016; Mathabela 2018; Olorunfemi 2014; Ramachandrapa 2017).

Law is an enormous field of study, and many aspects of it are constantly changing (Padma and Ramasamy 2017). Laws even change or are abridged during very short intervals in many countries, thus leaving the lawyer with the difficult and time-consuming task of updating records, using various means such as attaching notes on self-adhesive papers next to the law in question. An understanding of the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of lawyers necessitates viewing the profession holistically as a field that requires a practitioner to concurrently satisfy the information needs of several types, for multiple purposes. At a given time, a lawyer may be an information professional working for a client; a researcher hoping to unlock a complex matter; part of an administrative team in a business setting; or someone aiming to grasp information for other purposes (Ramachandrapa 2017). Lawyers engage in the synthesis of monthly and quarterly law reports, and synthesising them from various sources poses difficult and time-consuming challenges.

Besides being specialised, the law is a highly technical subject. As a living discipline, it is dynamic and it keeps growing; touching on human lives each time more than previously. Lawyers are unbridled consumers of information as they fetch information from all sources possible to manage any issues/cases at hand. The efficient performance of tasks requires lawyers to have access to and use information from a variety of sources—print and electronic. A significant characteristic of law is that the practitioners are enclosed professionals and they operate in an enclosed discipline. Lawyers are often enviably classed as learned persons; persons who do not pass through the specific rigid process of professional training are not allowed to practise the profession. Yet, they operate in an information intensive environment and whatever they do, be it teaching, research, publishing, and consultancy, their efficiency depends on information.

Kuhlthau and Tama's (2001) study shows that lawyers are avid users and producers of information. They collect information from all possible sources available to them, in order to take a correct decision about any matter at hand. Crucially, every issue a lawyer encounters leads to some awareness about the need for information in order to confront the problem profitably. They consciously identify the sources of the information they need, and choose topics that will lead to fulfilling this information need (Hardee 2015). They then take steps to verify whether the sources they have in mind contain the information they need, and how such information specifically addresses the need at hand. Furthermore, they then gather the information that addresses their need, and finally they gain some knowledge, report on or use the information to meet the requirements of advising clients, arguing a case in court, and so forth. This is exactly Kuhlthau and Tama's (2001) model of information seeking. Lawyers need information regarding cases at hand, and this usually calls for a lawyer to engage in formal legal research. Also, there is a need for information regarding the applicable rules of law in each case. There also exists the need for information regarding the day-to-day operation and administration of a law firm.

Many lawyers depend on law libraries to prepare cases; some supplement conventional printed sources with computer sources, such as the internet and legal databases. Many lawyers are increasingly using various forms of information technologies to perform their varied tasks more efficiently. Software resources that facilitate searching legal literature and identifying legal texts relevant to a specific case at hand, are for example DocFox, AbacusNext, and so forth (Dempsey et al. 2000). Lawyers are increasingly using computers to organise and index their materials. They also utilise electronic filing, video-conferencing and voice-recognition technology to share information more effectively with other parties involved in a case (Bhardwaj and Madhusudan 2016; Olorunfemi 2014).

Statement of the Problem and Significance

There exist a plethora of studies about law students' information behaviour, and many discrete studies on the subject in different communities in Nigeria. However, these studies do not address the community of focus in the present study. Ibadan is home to the oldest university in Nigeria, and its huge elitist population has great implications for a large number of lawyers, as well as a high incidence of legal service consumers and consumption. Thus, the information behaviour of lawyers in Nigeria has not been sufficiently examined to generate more complete information that could guide decision making to increase productivity and improve the performance of lawyers. The studies that have been identified, including the present, adopted survey approaches, each guided by author-defined variables.

Like all other professionals, lawyers will perform better in their jobs and improve their legal services to clients if they can meet their information needs more efficiently. Law libraries and law information service providers will also meet lawyers' information needs more efficiently if they have a better understanding of the information requirements and related behaviours of lawyers. Adequate knowledge of information

needs, information uses and information-seeking behaviour of lawyers will improve the productivity of lawyers in respect of streamlining what information they require, and how to keep such information readily accessible. Sufficient access to adequate information will enable lawyers to work at a more efficient and faster pace. In the same way, libraries that serve lawyers' information needs, as well as information literacy education programmes for lawyers and law teachers, will prepare and equip lawyers better regarding how to meet their information needs efficiently.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

- 1) Examine the information needs of lawyers in Oyo State.
- 2) Examine the extent to which the information needs of the lawyers are satisfied.
- 3) Describe the information sources available and accessible to the lawyers in Oyo State.
- 4) Understand the use of information sources by lawyers in their different workplace contexts.
- 5) Identify the factors influencing their information-seeking behaviour.

Literature Review

Information Needs of Lawyers

Haruna and Mabawonku (2001) examined the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of lawyers in Lagos, Nigeria. Results revealed that many lawyers perceived the need to know the latest decisions of superior courts as their greatest professional information need. Others expressed needs that include knowing about recent legislation, obtaining information on local and international seminars and conferences, and on the acquisition and application of legal know-how. They also identified the library as the most heavily consulted information source for job-related information. In their own recent study, Abbas, MacFarlane, and Robinson (2017) have shown that law students heavily use mobile technologies in their search for information.

Kuhlthau and Tama (2001) have sought to gain a better understanding of the variety of tasks that involve lawyers as a particular group of information workers; how they use information to accomplish their work; and the role that mediators play in their process of information seeking. They used a semi-structured interview of eight lawyers who had been practicing for six to 10 years, with eight open-ended questions to initiate discussions. Kuhlthau and Tama found that the sources used for complex tasks by lawyers in their user groups were paper, computer, and people. They defined lawyers' tasks as complex because they involved considerable thinking and formulation that indicated the need for new approaches to meeting their information needs. They required a large variety of information at one time, and needed sources that were

structured to enable extensive exploration. The lawyers, however, had a clear sense of what they needed, but were not so sure of the adequacy of sources.

Information Sources of Lawyers

Anyago and Mabawonku (2014) examined the legal information resources' availability and utilisation as determinants of law lecturers' research productivity in Nigerian universities. The result shows that law books, legal periodicals, reference materials, law reports, legislation and statutes, newspapers, loose leaf indexes and abstracts, and digests were readily available to law lecturers. E-resources and online legal databases were less available and had the lowest scores in terms of availability. The study found that legal information resources such as law reports, legal periodicals, legislation and statutes, indexes and abstracts, law books, non-legal materials, reference materials, digests and e-resources were used by lecturers in Nigerian universities.

Itanyi (2015) has shown that many lawyers and law librarians are reluctant to fully embrace digital resources, particularly the internet. Despite the uptake of information and communication technology (ICT) in the 1990s, many respondents in Itanyi's study expressed discomfort with information technology itself, and hesitancy in adopting changes, although ICT will make lawyers' work easier and more effective.

Kuhlthau and Tama (2001) reported that lawyers found that database searching is too restrictive, yields too many unnecessary results, and requires the searcher to be overly specific in his search language. This finding, of course, begs the questions as to the expertise of the lawyers in digital literacy. In terms of professional information needs, law is a professional area that has a long history of cooperation and collaboration, and professionals have learned to depend on one another and work through professional associations to enable them to solve their day-to-day problems and meet numerous administrative information needs (Wilkinson 2001).

Information-seeking Behaviour of Lawyers

The information-seeking behaviour of final-year law students in Ekiti State University was the topic of research conducted by Ogba (2013). The findings show that the respondents browse library shelves to get information, they use printed books, but lack knowledge about the library services and current resources. They use the library for print materials while they browse in cybercafés for e-resources. The students avoid the e-library and seeking assistance from library staff, because they perceive them as being harsh. The respondents were further found to be Google-inclined, although they complained about the difficulties that they face using Google. The barriers found were: inadequate resources from the internet search; inability to select the right resources needed for research; lack of knowledge on sites to use for information research; finances to take care of the cost of services; the harshness of library officials; and lack of Nigerian resources online. The researchers suggested that these barriers were escalated by lack of information skills; a negative attitude of library staff; and bad experiences from previous information search experiences. Respondents were also found to lack

information skills in the evaluation of resources, as well as the interpretation of copyright and citation information.

Anyaogu and Mabawonku (2014) undertook a study with the purpose of finding out the various legal resources available to postgraduate law students at the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies; their information needs and information-seeking behaviour; the sources/services utilised by them; and their level of satisfaction with the information obtained from the sources in the library. The study revealed that law books were mostly available to the students, followed by law reports.

In a recent study that focused on law students' information-seeking behaviour, Abbas (2018, 1) "uncovered a digitally aware law student cohort, confident in the transitive use of technologies to access legal content with little appreciation for non-digital content and limited understanding of analogue research methods." According to the researcher, there is a newly-emerging information behaviour that challenges the traditional use of extensive and laborious manual resources guided by manual search skills that are often crucial to retrieving legal content of relevance from the vast array of paper-based legal content. In support of Abbas's findings, Leonard, Hamutumwa and Mnubi-Mchombu (2020) have also shown that electronic resources are being heavily used by law academics at the University of Namibia.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was the sample survey design, investigating a subset of registered and practising lawyers in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study was also approached from the perspective of combining quantitative and qualitative methods. A list of registered practising lawyers in Oyo state was compiled based on the records of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Oyo State Chapter. The register showed a total of 241 lawyers in Oyo State. Fifty percent (121) of this number was selected by systematic sampling technique, after the names of the lawyers had been arranged in alphabetical order and every second item selected. The researchers purposively identified six lawyers, three of whom have been in practice for more than 20 years and three for less than 10 years; these were considered informants in the qualitative aspects of the study.

Data were collected using a questionnaire and an interview schedule. The questionnaire contained four sections: Section A elicited information on demographic variables such as age, gender, aspects of law practised, and type of workplace. Section B focused on information needs and uses of lawyers, and the information sources available to them. Section C asked questions on the information-seeking behaviour of the lawyers, while Section D elicited data on the factors that determine their choice of information sources and the hindrances encountered in the course of seeking for information. The interview schedule contained three guide questions (structured after sections B, C, and D of the questionnaire), and they were administered to the respondents in the form of an open-ended questionnaire.

The questionnaire variables were measured using a variety of scales, including a Likert scale. Types of information needed were measured with: no extent; little extent; average; and high. Sources of information and preferred sources were measured with a “yes” or “no” response. Frequency of use of the sources, and difficulty encountered in using the sources, were measured with: not regularly; occasionally; and never. Factors influencing information source choices and use were measured with multiple response questions that permitted the respondents to rank their opinions. Finally, a list was created of possible recommendations to address the problems identified by the respondents, and the lawyers were asked to rank their responses as a “yes” or “no.”

The questionnaire copies were administered to the lawyers through Nigeria Law Publications Ltd, Ibadan, where the lawyers usually visit weekly to obtain law reports. Some copies were administered personally to lawyers working in the Oyo State Ministry of Justice, and the Faculty of Law, University of Ibadan. Of the 121 copies of the questionnaire that were administered, 103 were returned, representing 85.12% of return. In analysing the data, we used frequency distribution tables, and mean and standard deviation. The outcome of the interviews with the six key informants was only synthesised as a means to highlight the quantitative result, and also to amplify the voices of the lawyers. We used the abbreviations SL and JL to represent the opinions of respectively senior lawyers and junior lawyers in the study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1 shows the key socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The majority of the respondents were males (80.6%), while only 19.4% were females. The table also shows that respondents with a Bachelor of Law degree (66.0%) topped the list of the highest level of legal education attained. This was followed by holders of the Master of Law (27.2%), while only 5.8% had a PhD.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

Characteristics	Number	%
Gender		
Male	83	80.6
Female	20	19.4
Highest qualification		
Bachelor of law	68	66.0
Master of law (LLM)	28	27.2
PhD	6	5.8
Age group		
20–29	14	13.6
30–39	47	45.6
40–49	33	32.0
Above 50	9	8.7
Years of professional experience		
0–5	45	43.7
6–10	25	24.3
11–20	29	28.2
Above 20	3	2.9
Aspect of law practised		
Comparative law	5	4.9
Patent law	1	1.0
Corporate law	6	5.8
Tax law	1	1.0
Criminal law	34	33.0
Civil law	9	8.7
Common law	3	2.9
General practice	42	40.8
Others	2	1.9
Workplace of lawyers		
Institutional legal unit	10	9.7
Ministry of Justice	17	16.5
Department of Law	13	12.6
Private law firms	62	62.2

Respondents within the 30–39 years age group (45.6%) were the largest group. A total of 32% of the respondents were within the 40–49 years age bracket. Only nine lawyers (8.7%), were above 50 years. The lawyers who had been practising law for five years or less (i.e. 0–5) or 43.7% topped the list; this was closely followed by those with professional experiences ranging from 11–20 years (28.2%). Only three lawyers in the study had been in practice for 20 years and longer. The lawyers who practised in all aspects of law, topped the list (40.8%); this was closely followed by those practising criminal law (33.0%). The largest proportion (60.2%) worked in private firms, while 16.5% of the lawyers worked in the Ministry of Justice. About 13 lawyers (12.6%)

worked in the Department of Law of the University of Ibadan, while 10 (9.7%) worked in an institutional legal unit.

Information Needs of Lawyers

The majority of the respondents strongly agreed that they needed information for case preparation (M=4.71, SD=0.28), while information about decisions taken in past cases followed (M=4.45, SD=0.899). Lawyers agreed with the fact they needed information about statutes or laws that exist (M=4.44, SD= 1.258) as well as the administration of justice (M=4.32, SD=0.029), current awareness in law field (M=3.75, SD=0.568), and job presentation/professional conduct (M=3.68, SD=0.485). Fewer lawyers agreed that they needed information on general knowledge in the field of law (M=3.65, 0.355) and for the purpose of doing research (M=3.45, SD=1.298). One of the senior lawyers in the study had this to say: “Law is about information. A case for instance involves the organisation of pieces of correct information in relation to a certain matter, whether litigation or any other. Law is about human beings and justice. So, we are always looking for the most reliable information about any matter at hand. Without information the lawyer has no job” (SL1). “Our need for information is seamless, information is the basis of our arguments and decisions concerning any issues. The more you have, the better you are deciding issues quickly, and boldly confronting tasks” (JL3).

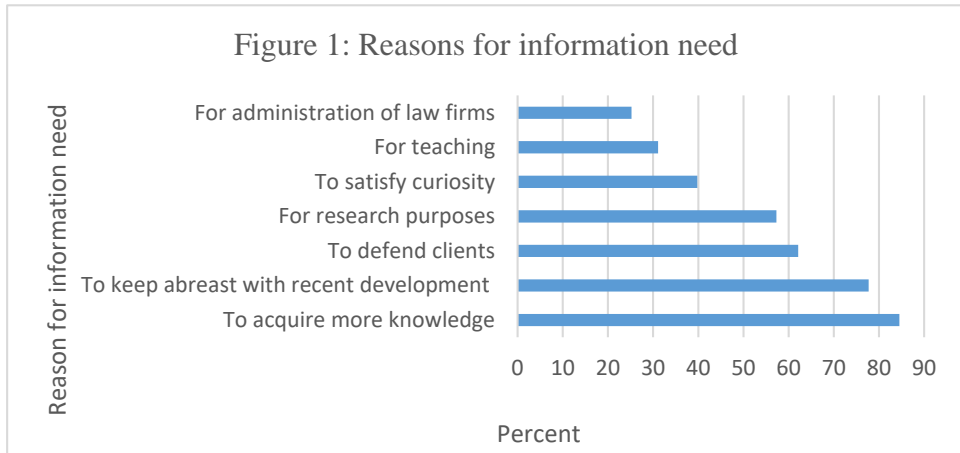
Table 2: Information needs

	Mean	SD
Case preparation	4.71	0.280
Past decisions	4.45	0.899
Statutes	4.44	1.258
Administration of justice	4.32	0.029
Current awareness in the field of law	3.75	0.568
Job presentation/professional conduct	3.68	0.485
General knowledge in the law field	3.65	0.355
Research	3.45	1.298

Reasons for Needing Information

The lawyers were requested to present reasons for their information need. The results are presented in figure 1.

The need for information (84.5 %) with a view to acquiring more knowledge, topped the list. About 80 respondents (77.7%) needed information in order to keep abreast with recent development in the legal profession, while 64 respondents (62.1%) needed information to defend their clients. Slightly more than half (57.3%) of the respondents needed information for research purposes.



Types of Information Needed and the Extent to which the Types of Information Are Needed

The lawyers were asked about the types of information they needed in order to carry out their duties. Table 3 shows the types of information highly needed by the respondents, which topped the list, including the following: weekly law reports (86.4%); recent decisions of Supreme Court (78.6%); and information about clients (50.5%). Information about witness (19.4%) topped the information needed at an average extent. SL1 and JL3 added: “We are always looking for previous cases that are similar to what we have at hand. Better still, we are looking for judgments on matters that are similar to the one we have at hand. Precedents matter in law. If there is a previous similar matter then we hang on that precedence” (SL1). “In searching for similar cases, our horizon is beyond the country. The extent of the search for information will also depend on the nature and complexity of the case. Complex cases will require more extensive information and searching for the information sometimes is not a trivial issue” (JL3).

Table 3: The extent to which the types of information are needed

	No extent	Little	Average	High	NR
Weekly law report	2.9%	-	10.7%	86.4%	-
Recent decision of supreme court	1.0%	1.0%	12.6%	78.6%	6.8%
Information about your client	18.4%	9.7%	18.4%	50.5%	2.9%
Information about witness	12.6%	10.7%	19.4%	42.7%	14.6%
Information about establishment working with	1.9%	24.3%	17.5%	41.7%	14.6%

Information Sources of Lawyers

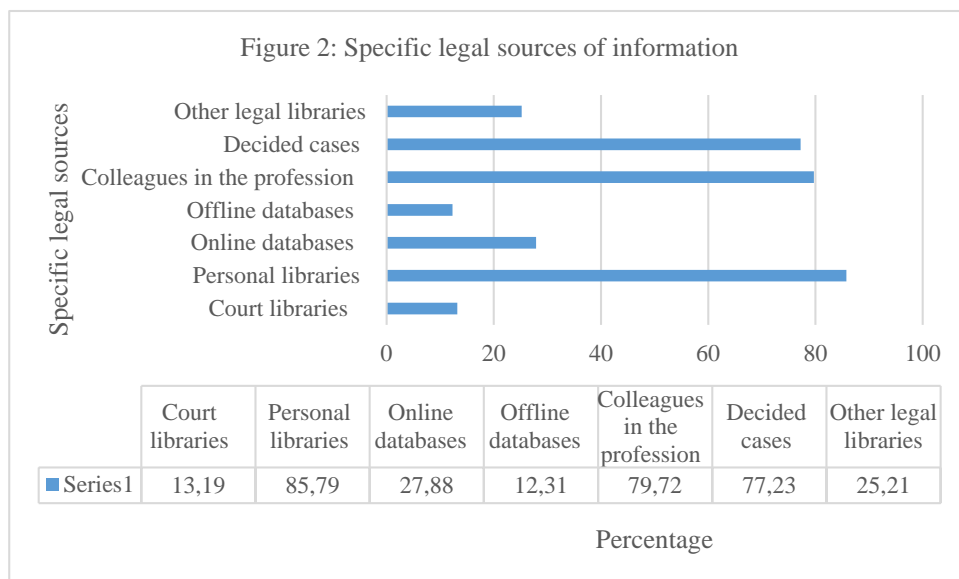
The information sources of lawyers are presented in table 4. Textbooks were the most popular type of information source used by lawyers (86.4%). This is closely followed

by personal experience (75.7%); journals (72.8%); colleagues and partners in the firm (70.9%); firm case studies (67.0%); and court records (62.1%). The information sources least used were bibliographies, at only (23.3%).

Table 4: The sources of information used by respondents

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Textbooks	86.4	13.6
Personal experience	75.7	24.3
Journals	72.8	27.2
Colleagues and partners in the firm	70.9	29.1
Firm case studies	67.0	33.0
Clients information	65.0	35.0
Court records	62.1	37.9
Online databases	55.3	44.7
Abstracts and indexes	52.4	47.6
Police reports	42.7	57.3
Theses and dissertations	36.9	63.1
Lectures	33.0	67.0
Bibliographies	23.3	76.7
Others:		
Law Reports	10.7	89.3
Foreign judgments and commentaries	1.0	99.0

For SL1, “I first scan through the issue at hand. Usually, many of the issues I encounter nowadays are issues I have dealt with in the time past, at least an aspect of it. So, the major thing is to remember as much as possible issues that relate to the issue. This residual knowledge is not always sufficient as every case must have some peculiarities. But the starting point is the synthesis and interpretation of the issues, first at a macro level and then the nitty-gritty” (SL1). SL2 has an interesting addition: “It may be easy to itemise information sources of lawyers, but the practical truth is that lawyers’ information sources are not finite. Important information could be obtained from anywhere including casual discussions among friends, listening to a radio or TV, and other unplanned events.” “The major issue is to be alert to know when an event supplies one some information to support [the] task at hand” (SL1). “I maintain a physical file library of every case I handle. So, I first refer to my file stack. I also have a small library which I would love to expand, but it is one of my first ports of call. I do not have all the resources I need because of lack of funds” (SL2). “Discussion with my client is the most important information source I need. It is this discussion that will determine what I will do, where to source for information, who to meet and so on” (JL2).



Other Information Sources

The major source of specific legal information to lawyers is their personal library collection, as reported by 85.79% of the respondents, followed by colleagues (79.72%), and cases that have been decided and recorded for further reference purposes (77.23%). “I have learnt a lot reading books and novels that are not related to any particular case at hand but that expose me to the works of great lawyers worldwide, and I apply my learning to strengthen myself” (JL2). “We hold briefings [every] other day in the office and we review cases at hand and collect opinions of colleagues on the matters. The briefing sections are usually very important strategies to learn from colleagues, share our experiences and receive instructions from the big boss” (JL3).

Online databases are used by only 27.88% of the respondents, while other law libraries serve as sources to 25.21%, court libraries serve 13.19% and offline databases serve 12.31%. “I have a laptop which I use to prepare my documents.” The response of SL1 (on use of e-resources) is apt: “But I prefer keeping very important information in print formats. They are easier for me to find and use. I am able to retrieve my documents in the laptop, but what happens when I lose or get a document deleted. No, I am not able to use the internet resources to store my documents; I use search to look for documents. Sometimes search fails. I have heard about how I can even index my documents on the internet and easily recall them when I need them, but where will I find the time to learn that” (SL1).

Frequency of Use of Information Sources

The frequency of use of various sources of information by the respondents is shown in table 5. Among the sources used regularly, the following constitute the top three:

textbooks (82.5%), personal experience (78.6%), and journals (70.9%). Lectures (35.0%) topped the list of sources that are used occasionally. This was followed by online databases (32.0%).

Table 5: Respondents' frequency of use of information sources

Information Sources	No response (%)	Regularly (%)	Occasionally (%)	Never (%)
Textbooks	9.7	82.5	7.8	-
Personal experience	12.6	78.6	8.7	-
Journals	10.7	70.9	18.4	-
Colleagues and partners in the firm	12.8	68.9	18.4	-
Clients information	10.7	62.1	27.2	-
Firm case studies	36.9	57.3	3.9	1.9
Court record	23.3	48.5	28.2	-
Abstract and indexes	21.4	47.6	28.2	2.9
Online databases	21.4	44.7	32.0	1.9
Police reports	35.9	40.8	17.5	5.8
Lectures	32.0	30.1	35.0	2.9
Bibliographies	46.6	24.3	19.4	9.7
Theses and dissertation	40.8	21.4	28.2	9.7

Preferred Sources

Table 6 shows that 81.6% preferred searching for information from textbooks, followed by journals with 78.6% respondents. Libraries were preferred by 74.8% respondents, while the internet was preferred by 72.8% respondents. Reference sources and professional resources centres were preferred next by 58.3% and 24.3% respondents respectively. The least preferred sources were OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) sources and law reports, with only 7.8% and 6.8% respondents respectively.

Table 6: Preferred sources of information of respondents

	Frequency	%
Textbooks	84	81.6
Journals	81	78.6
Libraries	77	74.8
Internet	75	72.8
Reference sources	60	58.3
Professional resources centres	25	24.3
CD-ROM literature	19	18.4
Information brokers/vendors	16	15.5
OPAC (On-line Public Access Catalogue)	8	7.8
Law reports	7	6.8

Adequacy of Information Sources

Table 7 shows that 51.5% of the respondents regarded the information sources as very adequate, while 44.7% regarded the information as adequate. Only 3.9% of respondents regarded information in the sources as inadequate.

Table 7: Adequacy of information sources

	Frequency	%
Very adequate	53	51.5
Adequate	46	44.7
Inadequate	4	3.9

Activities Performed when in Need of Information

When lawyers need information, the majority strongly agreed that their personal collection was the source lawyers resort to; they also agreed that consultancy with senior lawyers ($M=4.354$, $SD=0.238$); law dictionaries/encyclopaedia ($M=3.661$, $SD=0.981$); a visit or call to colleagues ($M=3.633$, $SD=0.771$); and Law Digest ($M=3.521$, $SD=0.621$) are frequently used sources.

Table 8: Activities performed when in need of information

	Mean	SD
I visit personal collection	4.751	0.981
Consult with senior lawyers	4.354	0.238
Consult law dictionaries/encyclopaedias	3.661	0.981
Visit or call colleagues	3.633	0.771
I visit Law Digest	3.521	0.621
I phone any expert person	3.445	1.101
I use electronic resources	2.361	0.151
I use the library	1.275	0.776

Lawyers were undecided regarding the use of phones to discuss cases with colleagues ($M=3.445$, $SD=1.101$) as an activity performed when in need of information; they disagreed with using electronic sources (2.361 , 0.151) and using the library ($M=1.275$, $SD=0.776$). For SL2: “I was introduced to cataloguing during my early years in the university. I also practised using catalogues for some time, having worked in a big chamber that has a library and a librarian. However, I struggle to organise my information today my own way. I know it does not work very well, for instance during a search for rarely occurring need. But I sometimes get by. I wish I could have a better grasp of how to organise my information items” (SL2).

Factors Influencing Choice of Information Sources

The respondents were asked to indicate the factors that influence their choice of an information source. The indicated factors are presented in table 9.

Table 9: Factors influencing choice of information sources

What factors influence choice of information sources?	Frequency	%
Accessibility to the information	86	83.5
Reliability of the information	78	75.7
Availability of the information	81	78.6
Cost effectiveness/affordability	49	47.6
Timeliness and up-to-dateness	60	58.3
Adequacy i.e. ability to meet information needs	56	54.4
Geographical distance	14	13.6
Relevance of information to the problem at hand	77	74.8

Note: There were multiple responses

The majority of respondents, 86 (83.5%), were influenced by accessibility to the information, followed by 75.7% influenced by the reliability of the information, and 78.6% of respondents that were influenced by the availability factor. Sixty (58.3%) respondents were influenced by timeless and up-to-dateness of the information, while only (13.6%) of the respondents were influenced by geographical distance

Problems Encountered by Lawyers in Seeking Information

The respondents were asked to state whether they sometimes encounter problems while seeking information. The majority of respondents (95.1%) had difficulty in getting the information they needed.

Nature of the Difficulty Encountered

The respondents were also asked to indicate the nature of the difficulty. The results are presented in table 10.

Table 10: Nature of the difficulty encountered

	Never %	Occasionally %	Often %	No Response %
Access to the information I need	13.6	65.0	11.6	9.7
Information is not available	11.7	53.4	20.4	14.6
High cost of information	2.9	27.2	44.7	25.2
Up-to-date information to	22.3	52.4	13.6	11.7
Lack of time to seek	12.6	51.5	24.3	11.7
Computer literate	66.0	13.6	6.8	13.6
I don't know how to get the information I need	75.7	9.7	2.9	11.7
Inadequacy of current materials	10.7	53.4	112.6	23.3

Slightly less than half (44.7%) of the respondents often faced the problem of the high cost of information when seeking for information, while only 24.3% were often faced with a lack of time for seeking for relevant information. A majority of respondents 67 (65.0%) did not have access to the information they needed occasionally, while 78 (75.7%) never experienced difficulty in getting the information they need. More than half (66.0%) never experienced the problem of not being computer literate. The opinions of SL1 and SL2 are very important: “Verifying information supplied by clients is always not an easy task. Sometimes it is more expensive than to collect the initial information” (SL1). “Technologies for managing information are emerging but how does one find the time to acquire the skill and even the technologies themselves? These are expensive stuff too. I would love to learn some technology stuff, but many training centres are only interested in word processing and activities that I do not need. But I use Google a lot to search for information and sometimes I get quite a lot of stuff that has helped tremendously” (SL2).

Recommendations on Solution to the Problems

Table 11 shows the suggestions offered by the lawyers for improving their access to the information they need.

Table 11: Recommended solutions to the problems encountered

	Frequency	%
Creation of information centres where information can be accessible	83	80.6
There should be internet facilities and training for lawyers by employers	75	72.8
Increase exposure to new information and communication technologies	74	71.8
Making relevant and current information available	68	66.0
Establishment of well-equipped libraries mainly for lawyers	61	59.2
Provision of translated versions of journals written in foreign languages	56	54.4
Others:		
Enacting law to recognise current information technology	2	1.9
Enactment of information bill (FOI)	3	2.9
Reduce sources of information	2	1.9
Regular seminars	2	1.9

The suggestion that topped the list was that information centres should be established (80.6%). This was followed by the suggestion that internet facilities and training should be provided for lawyers (72.8%). The other suggestions offered by a majority of the respondents were as follows: increase exposure to new information and communication technologies (71.8 %); make information sources readily available (66.0%); establish well-equipped libraries mainly for lawyers (59.2%); and provide translated versions of journals written in foreign languages to lawyers (54.4%).

Discussion of Findings

The aim of this study was to examine the information needs, information uses and information-seeking behaviour of lawyers in in Oyo State, Nigeria, using data collected with a questionnaire and an interview schedule. There were more males in the study than females. Lawyers with Bachelor of Law (LLB) degrees as highest educational qualifications were the majority of the respondents. Lawyers working in private law firms were by far more in number than those working in other workplaces.

Case preparation dominates the information needs of the lawyers. Evidently, this is because lawyers in private practice are higher in numbers than lawyers in other categories of workplaces. Case preparation most often involves appearing in court to defend cases. Haruna and Mabawonku (2001) made similar findings when they stated that lawyers need to refer to different sources of information like court decisions, past cases, current legislation and legal policies in order to take good decisions, or positively face the duty of resolving legal problems for different situations and different clients. Case laws are developed from the details of court cases and they are usually put together and published as law reports. Judges usually follow precedents of previous cases when

taking decisions; lawyers need access to these reports in making their cases, either in the court or in respect of any other services.

The results showed the various reasons for which lawyers need information. A majority of them need information in order to enhance their performance and gain more knowledge. The quest for additional information is the main motive driving the search for information by professionals and non-professionals alike. Knowing more and becoming well-informed in various aspects of society, constitute major reasons why lawyers seek for information. A lawyer that is knowledgeable can easily compare notes, argue cases, support and take decisions in various other situations, give legal advice, address disputes and make fruitful negotiations, draft legal documents and represent clients in various situations. This agrees with the findings of Ahmed and Batcha (2014).

Haruna and Mabawonku (2001) found that the type of resources used by lawyers in their study included law reports, journals and the internet. Using factor analysis, Adewale and Mansor (2016) showed that the information type that dominates lawyers' information seeking, are problem information, domain information, and problem-solving information; and they classed this information as task-oriented information.

This study has shown that lawyers use information from all possible sources. However, the most consulted sources of information were textbooks, personal experience, journals, colleagues and partners, firm case studies and court records. Ogba's (2013) study rather showed that law students used library shelves, and browsed in cybercafés; they would avoid the e-library and library facilities and avoided seeking assistance from library staff because they perceived them as being harsh. Anyaogu and Mabawonku's (2014) study showed that law books were mostly available and used by the respondents. Anyaogu and Mabawonku's (2014) study also showed that law books, legal periodicals, reference materials, law reports, reference materials, legislation and statutes, newspapers, loose leaf indexes and abstracts, and digests were readily available to law lecturers. E-resources and online legal databases were less available and had the lowest use scores.

Major factors that determine the choice of information sources used by lawyers were accessibility to the information source, reliability/credibility, availability, affordability, timeliness/up-to-dateness, adequacy, ability and relevance of the information to the problem at hand; however, accessibility ranked highest among all the factors. This is in line with Xie and Joo's (2010) observation that availability, reliability and accessibility are factors that influence the choice of information sources by people. It was also observed that there was a significant relationship between factors affecting the choice of information sources and the type of workplace. Anyaogu and Mabawonku's (2014) study further identified inadequate resources from the internet search, inability to select the right resources needed for research, lack of knowledge on sites to use for information research, money, harshness from library officials, and lack of Nigerian resources online. The barriers to the use of information sources are affected by poor information literacy

skills, bad attitude of library staff, and bad experiences from previous efforts to get information.

This study has further revealed that a majority of the lawyers encountered problems when accessing the type of information that they need. These problems include the high cost of information. Lawyers need information related to the legal profession and information regarding the case at hand. Much of the pieces of information are available in monthly/weekly law reports and other education materials such as books and journals. With the prevailing economic depression in Nigeria, it is increasingly becoming cumbersome for lawyers to acquire the information material due to its cost. A majority of the lawyers were forthcoming in offering suggestions on how to improve access to the information they need. Establishing information resource centres and libraries topped the list. This has the potential of promoting communication and self-directed learning among lawyers. Accessible information resources serve as training opportunities for lawyers in various aspects of law practice. The suggestions made by the study participants are useful for mapping out strategies aimed at providing lawyers with information resources that are not only accessible, but appropriate.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study was designed to determine the information needs, information sources and information-seeking behaviour of lawyers in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study has underpinned a common finding in the literature that lawyers' tasks and information are interwoven, and that lawyers are always in need and in search of information to make them more efficient in their tasks. Most importantly, lawyers need information for case preparation, and the major reason is to acquire more knowledge in the field. This finding is supported by their need for weekly case reports and decisions and judgments of the Supreme Court as the major type of information that lawyers need. Textbooks remain the major source of information of the lawyers and the specific legal source they consult most is their personal libraries. The lawyers are always reading textbooks, and they also prefer textbooks to other sources, and these resources are those that they have in their personal collections.

Only 51% considered the information they obtain as adequate, pointing to some possible shortcomings in their reliance on textbooks. Identifying the problem of access as a major factor affecting their use of the information sources, support any observations about the limitations of textbooks. For instance, the lawyers can hardly have all the textbooks they need, and their need is dynamic, with each situation often demanding new content. An overwhelming majority of the lawyers (95%) reported that they encountered difficulty in getting the information they need. Does this finding point to the limitations of their preferred sources of information, the textbook? The lawyers' main recommendation for a solution to the problems they encounter in accessing information, was the establishment of information centres to meet their needs.

Many studies on lawyers' information-seeking behaviour have continuously observed that lawyers are conservative about using information technologies as information

sources. However, it has also been suggested that the inadequacy and limitations of using the textbooks in their personal collections can be leveraged by using internet resources, such as the internet. Nigerian universities and legal education authorities should also retool the ICT content of their curriculum for training lawyers. Lawyers should also be exposed to information literacy that focuses on micro technology applications for personal information management, and digital law libraries that encompass a capacity for using software for legal professionals on the WWW.

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