

Perception of Researchers on the Impact of Institutional Repository on Webometric Ranking of Universities: A Study of Selected Universities in Oyo State in Nigeria

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijliss.15/vol11n3118>

Published July 15, 2025

Citation: Adekunjo O.A., Adedokun O.O., Unuabor S.O., and Bamgbose O.J. (2025) Perception of Researchers on the Impact of Institutional Repository on Webometric Ranking of Universities: A Study of Selected Universities in Oyo State in Nigeria, *International Journal of Library and Information Science Studies*, 11, (3) 1-18

Abstract: *Institutional repositories are now vital for increasing the reputation of research and strengthening the global presence of academic institutions. Using a descriptive survey approach and a standardized questionnaire as data collection instrument, the study involved 180 academic staff members from three universities. The results showed that consistent usage is still moderate, even though most researchers are aware of and have utilized their institutional repositories. The majority of the respondents concurred that repositories boost webometric ranks and increase the visibility of research. However, significant challenges like poor training, low publicity, a lack of technical assistance, and copyright issues were noted. Despite a generally favorable opinion, the study finds that in order to fully reap the benefits of institutional repositories in raising academic visibility and raising university rankings, institutional efforts need to be reinforced through more user training, awareness campaigns, and infrastructure support.*

Keywords: institutional repositories, webometric ranking, researcher perception, Nigerian universities, research visibility.

INTRODUCTION

In today's knowledge-driven economy, institutions are being assessed more and more on their online presence and impact in addition to more conventional criteria like research production and academic performance. Webometric ranking, which assesses universities according to their online visibility and influence, has become a significant factor in evaluating the performance of universities around the world. Jati and Dominic (2017) state that webometrics seeks to examine communication frameworks, identify study fields, examine the evolution of a subject or domain through historical studies, and assess research by nations, organizations, or individuals. It emanated out of the need to have a comprehensive ranking that will accommodate most universities in the world in order to provide a more accurate ranking system (Memisevic and Memisevic, 2022). Thus, webometric ranking is by far the largest academic ranking for higher education institutions, and it provides information about the performance of universities from all over the world. Webometrics currently covers 31,000 higher education institutions across over 200 nations. Three factors are used in Webometrics to rate universities: distinction, openness, and influence.

The creation and efficient usage of institutional repositories (IRs) is one of the key factors that contribute to increased webometric presence. Digital archives known as institutional repositories gather, store, and distribute an organization's intellectual output, particularly research articles, theses, dissertations, and other academic materials (Chan, 2004). Among the many purposes of institutional repositories are promoting free dissemination of knowledge, the long-term conservation of scholarly works, and raising the university's prominence in research. In recent years, IRs have become key instruments for academic institutions looking to improve their competitive edge in web-based rankings and global visibility (Memisevic and Memisevic, 2022). Studies have revealed that academic institutions with well-maintained repositories typically score higher on webometric rankings because of their enhanced online visibility, accessibility, and citations (Alemneh, 2010; Abrizah, Noorhidawati and Kiran, 2010; Jati and Dominic, 2017). The relationship between webometric performance and the use of institutional repositories has been investigated in a number of environments, indicating that institutional repositories are now a necessity in academics in the digital age rather than optional.

The National Universities Commission (NUC) and other relevant stakeholders in Nigeria have placed a greater emphasis on the significance of ICT and digital repositories in improving academic achievement and the propagation of knowledge (Asekun-Olarinmoye, 2015). Institutional repositories have been developed by a number of Nigerian universities pursuant to the demand for greater visibility and international academic practices (Okunlaya, 2016). Institutional repositories in Nigeria have the ability to transform institutions by exhibiting indigenous research to a global audience. By presenting local research to a worldwide audience, institutional repositories in Nigerian universities have the ability to reposition institutions. However, obstacles such as insufficient financing, low researcher awareness, low level of digital literacy, and

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insufficient amenities prevent these repositories from attaining their full potential (Oladokun, 2015).

While IRs and their contributions to university ranking systems are gaining recognition globally, there are still only a few local studies have investigated the relationship between researchers' perceptions and the efficiency of institutional repositories in enhancing webometric rankings in Nigerian universities. Although a few studies (Anupama, Vatnal and Manjunath, 2012; Yusuf & Onifade, 2013) have examined institutional repositories in Nigeria, they frequently concentrate on administrative and technical factors rather than the behavioral and perceptive factors. This study therefore attempts to fill the research gap by exploring the perceptions of researchers in selected universities in Oyo state concerning the impact of institutional repositories on webometric ranking of their institutions.

Statement of the Problem

The introduction of institutional repositories (IRs) has transformed scholarly communication by making research outputs publicly accessible and enhancing the international profile of academic institutions. Institutional repositories serve as a strategic strategy for increasing university visibility and making a substantial contribution to webometric rankings by holding an institution's intellectual content and making it available online (Lynch, 2003; Chan, 2004). The importance of webometric rankings, that assess universities according to their online presence and influence, has grown as more and more stakeholders- including researchers, funding organizations, legislators, and potential students rely on them to gauge the standing and performance of their institutions (Memisevic and Memisevic, 2022).

In an attempt to modernize research dissemination and conform to international academic standards, an increasing number of Nigerian universities have implemented institutional repositories. Nonetheless, the influence of these repositories on webometric rankings is still not well understood, particularly from the viewpoint of researchers and academic staff who are the main users of these platforms as well as contributors (Oladokun, 2015). The efficacy of institutional repositories in Nigerian universities is still threatened by a number of issues, such as low researcher submission rates, ignorance, poor training, limited infrastructure, and a lack of institutional support (Anunobi & Mbadugha, 2011; Yusuf & Onifade, 2013).

Even with the established advantages of IRs, many Nigerian universities still have low levels of researcher involvement in repository development and content submission. Many Nigerian academics may not know that their institution has a repository, or they do not believe that it makes a substantial contribution to their academic standing or institutional exposure (Yusuf and Onifade, 2013). Furthermore, the technical, infrastructure, or policy aspects of IRs have typically been the focus of studies, with little consideration paid to the perceptions of academics regarding these repositories and their real influence on webometric rankings (Okunlaya, 2016; Migwi and Ocholla, 2019).

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This gap in the literature is crucial since researcher involvement and content submission are key components of any institutional repository's performance, and consequently, its impact on webometric ranking. In the absence of a favorable opinion of IRs and a comprehension of their strategic importance, researchers are unlikely to actively support or contribute to them. Therefore, it's essential to understand their attitudes, motives, and fears in order to enhance outreach, repository policies, and alignment with ranking objectives.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the perception of researchers on the impact of institutional repositories on the webometric ranking of universities in Oyo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Determine the level of awareness and use of institutional repositories among researchers in selected universities in Oyo State.
- ii. Assess perceptions of researchers on the role of institutional repositories in enhancing the visibility and accessibility of research outputs.
- iii. Examine the perceived relationship between institutional repository usage and webometric ranking of their universities.
- iv. Identify the challenges faced by researchers in using institutional repositories.

Research Questions

- i. What is the level of awareness and usage of institutional repositories among researchers in the selected universities?
- ii. How do researchers perceive the contribution of institutional repositories to the visibility and accessibility of their scholarly outputs?
- iii. What are the researchers' perceptions on the impact of institutional repositories on the webometric ranking of their universities?
- iv. What are the challenges hindering researchers from using institutional repositories?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The usage of the academic communication model in an open access system is mostly determined by knowledge of the IR concept, its goals, advantages, and existence. The primary responsibilities of university academic staff are teaching, research, and community service, all of which necessitate the utilization of high-quality information resources. Universities' faculty members' quality of instruction, research output, and general capacity to advance society are all enhanced when they have access to pertinent and high-quality information resources (Oladokun and Bakare, 2024). Hence, the need for tertiary institutions, especially universities to develop quality institutional repositories and the need for effective use of these repositories by scholars.

Previous studies have demonstrated that one of the first things to be considered while using an institutional repository is awareness. A limited number of individuals, including lecturers, are aware of institutional repositories as an innovation, thus they are unlikely to view them as a

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resource for information or a method of disseminating their own research projects (Nunda and Elia, 2019). Consequently, a substantial amount of research has been published about institutional repository awareness and how it affects institutional repository usage. The literature that is currently accessible on awareness of institutional repositories further illustrates the multifaceted nature of the concept (Oladokun and Bakare, 2024).

According to a study conducted by Yang and Li (2015), there was very little knowledge about the institutional repository at Texas A&M University (TAMU). Findings of the study showed that only 27% of the respondents from the institution's ten colleges who were interviewed knew about the institutional repository's existence, and only 7% had at least one published paper article uploaded to the repository. One may assume that this discovery is an exception to the rule, given that it comes from an institution in America, which has the most institutional repositories worldwide. Yet, a different study carried out three years later also revealed that lecturers' use of institutional repositories was still impacted by awareness. A study by Manch and Vasudevan (2018) examined University of Calicut researchers' knowledge of IRs and open access publication. The study found that the vast majority of university academics understood the meaning of open access publication and IRs. The main obstacle preventing researchers from submitting their work to IRs was that most of them did not know how to do so and many of them believed the repository would be of minimal reputation.

Tiemo and Ebiagbe (2016) examined the awareness and attitudes of lecturers towards the implementation of IRs in Niger Delta University, Bayelsa, Nigeria. Most of the study respondents agreed that if the repository is created at the university, it will allow them to disseminate their publications, but this will violate the copyright legislation, it was found that lecturers were highly aware of the institutional repository.

Fasae and Adekoya (2021) also studied the awareness and perception of academic staff of private universities towards the use of institutional repositories in Nigeria. The study sampled a total of 259 academic staff randomly selected from six private universities in the Southern Nigeria using a descriptive survey research design. The study revealed that academic staff members were aware of and had a positive view of using the institutional repositories. It was also discovered in the study that institutional repositories were used effectively, and the contents of IRs are very pertinent to the requirements of private university academic staff. The tested hypotheses showed significant correlation between academic staff members' awareness, perception, and use of institutional repositories at private universities.

The contribution of IRs to the visibility of a university's scholarly output and reputation, as well as the perception of faculty members towards this innovation has been a subject of investigation in a number of studies. Chukwueke (2020) posits that the effectiveness of university teaching, learning, research, and administrative functions depends heavily on the establishment and correct supervision of institutional documents and information resources. It is a way for higher education institutions to expand access to their academics' and researchers' scholarly contributions.

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Kakai (2018) noted that IRs has emerged as the major platforms through which academic institutions carry out the functions of creating, enhancing and disseminating knowledge. Hence, IRs are essential for university ranking, intellectual communication, institutional visibility and the viability of institutional knowledge management. Sanni (2018) also submitted that in addition to increasing public knowledge of academics' and researchers' publications, IR facilitates scholarly communication within the academic community.

Okumu (2015) opined that IR has the ability to showcase the scientific, sociological, and economic significance of a university's research endeavors, thereby raising the university's profile, standing, and public worth. It may also be used as a concrete gauge of a university's quality. In the study of Asadi (2019), it was found that university repositories give researchers access to more comprehensive information on the work being done in the particular field of interest by the individual or groups. IR gives users of information access to a vast array of intellectual or academic content in a single platform and place.

Similarly, Lee and Stvilia (2017) submitted that access to IR enhances an institution's reputation, worth, visibility, and image by exhibiting its own intellectual output, which raises the institution's standing in academic rankings. It also demonstrates how much institutional research funding is actually spent on research. The study of Adeyemo and Jamogha (2021) also revealed that an institution's research activity can be inferred from IR, which encourages research funding organizations that have previously supported studies to undertake more. Institutions and the government are encouraged to give more cash and grants for research by groundbreaking research findings.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design was used in this study. The design was deemed suitable as it enables the researcher to gather measurable information from a representative sample of the population to characterize the current views, opinions, and experiences of researchers concerning the use of institutional repositories and their influence on university webometric rankings. When collecting standardized data that can be statistically examined to make conclusions and generalizations, a descriptive survey is an appropriate tool (Siedlecki, 2020).

The target population of this study consists of researchers (lecturers and research assistants) from selected universities in Oyo state. The selected universities are University of Ibadan (UI), Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH) and Ajayi Crowther University (ACU). These institutions were selected based on their established digital repositories and inclusion in recognized webometric ranking.

The study adopted a stratified random sampling technique to guarantee that the sample accurately reflected the various academic positions and faculties within each university, including Professors, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers I and II, Assistant Lecturers, and Research Fellows. Respondents were chosen proportionately from each university's faculties to represent the variety of academic fields.

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The study used a sample size of 180, with 60 researchers from each of the three universities that were chosen. This was carefully chosen in order to guarantee that the data obtained would be representative, statistically sound, and sufficient for generalization within the study environment. Bartlett, Kotrlik, and Higgins (2001) assert that a sample size of at least 150–200 is adequate to generate statistically valid results at a 95% confidence level with a 5–7% margin of error for a population of more than 1,000. There are hundreds of academic employees spread over several faculties and departments at each of the chosen universities. The sample, which was drawn from 60 respondents per institution, represents over 10% of the total population of full-time academic staff members who are engaged in teaching and research.

A structured questionnaire was selected as the data collection instrument. The questionnaire contained open and closed ended questionnaires and divided into various segments with each segment addressing one research objective. The questionnaires were distributed to the selected set of academic staff members at the designated universities both in person and, if required, by institutional email. To guarantee seamless administration, permission was sought from department heads and university authorities. The retrieved questionnaires were analyzed using frequency counts, mean ranking and standard deviation through SPSS version 20.0

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	84	46.7
Female	96	53.3
Total	180	100
Age		
21-30 years	22	12.2
31-40 years	36	20
41-50 years	46	25.6
51-60 years	40	22.2
60 and above	36	20

Total	180	100
Level of Education		
Bachelor's degree	29	16.1
Master's degree	86	47.8
PhD	65	36.1
Total	180	100
Discipline		
Pure Sciences	26	14.4
Engineering and Technology	24	13.3
Applied Sciences	41	22.8
Humanities	46	25.6
Social Sciences	43	23.9
Total	180	100
Cadre		
Graduate Assistant	9	5
Assistant Lecturer	11	6.1
Lecturer II	17	9.4
Lecturer I	38	21.2
Senior Lecturer	47	26.1
Associate Professor	40	22.2
Professor	18	10
Total	180	100

Demographic information obtained from the respondents (Table 1) include age, level of education, discipline and cadre. Among the respondents, 46.7% were male while 53.3% were female. The age distribution shows that the majority of respondents fall within the age range of 41–50 years (25.6%), followed closely by those aged 51–60 years (22.2%) and 60 years and above (20%). Respondents aged 31–40 years constitute 20%, while 12.2% makes up the youngest age group,

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21–30 years. In terms of educational qualifications, most of the respondents (47.8%) hold a Master's degree, 36.1% were PhD holders, while 16.1% only had a Bachelor's degree.

The disciplinary distribution shows that respondents are spread across various academic fields. The Humanities (25.6%) and Social Sciences (23.9%) represent the largest groups, followed by Applied Sciences (22.8%). Pure Sciences account for 14.4%, while Engineering and Technology make up 13.3%. With regard to academic rank, the largest group of respondents are Senior Lecturers (26.1%), followed by Associate Professors (22.2%), Lecturer I (21.2%), and Professors (10%). Lower academic cadres such as Lecturer II (9.4%), Assistant Lecturer (6.1%), and Graduate Assistant (5%) make up a smaller portion of the sample.

Table 2 Level of Awareness and Use of Institutional Repositories

S/N		SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1	I am aware that my university has an institutional repository	20.2	36.7	32.2	13.9
2	I have accessed the institutional repository of my university	31	33.8	18.8	16.4
3	I use the institutional repository for research purpose regularly	30.5	25.7	19.1	24.7
4	I have deposited my research output(s) in the institutional repository	29.7	34.2	16	20.1
5	I was formally introduced to the institutional repository by the university	32.2	20.4	21	26.4

SA= Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

The results indicate that frequent usage and formal orientation are still weak issues, although a sizable percentage of respondents are aware of and have used their institutional repositories. It is significant that academic researchers, who are important stakeholders in repository construction and consumption, have a lower awareness rate (56.9%) than anticipated. Although initial access to the repository is widespread, consistent engagement is limited, as evidenced by the fact that only 56.2% of users consistently utilize it. Although the fact that 63.9% of researchers have deposited work in the repository is positive, it also emphasizes the necessity of increased publicity to make sure that all researchers are aware of the advantages of submission, including the influence on their own citations and the university's webometric ranking. Importantly, the data indicates a communication and training deficit, as nearly half of the respondents were not formally introduced to the institutional repository.

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This could limit the repository's usefulness as a tool for academic visibility and institutional ranking by impeding both use and worth evaluations. These findings corroborate the submission of Nunda and Elia (2019) that the awareness of institutional repositories among university staff, especially lecturers, is limited, consequently resulting in a low probability of regarding them as a medium of communication or channel of disseminating their own research studies. The findings also lends some credence to that of Yang and Li (2015) who discovered a somewhat low knowledge (27%) of institutional repository among staff and students of Texas A&M University (TAMU).

Table 3 Perception of Researchers on Role of Institutional Repositories

S/N		SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1	Institutional repositories make my research more visible to a global audience	30.5	36.3	15.5	17.7
2	Uploading my work in the repository improves accessibility for students and researchers	27.5	31	18.4	23.1
3	Open access provided through the repository benefits the wider academic community	31.3	31.4	18.9	18.4
4	The repository has helped increase citations of my work	30.3	29.2	22.1	18.4
5	I believe institutional repositories enhance the university's research profile	27.8	31.5	25.6	15.1

* SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

The data obtained from Table 3 suggests that there is a general positive perception of institutional repositories and their contributions to enhancing research accessibility, visibility, and institutional reputation among researchers. Most respondents affirm that institutional repositories benefit the academic community as a whole as well as individual researchers. Nonetheless, a substantial number of researchers are still not satisfied, especially about the repository's contribution to enhancing accessibility and citation metrics. This disparity in impression could be caused by low repository participation, deficient feedback mechanisms, or a lack of institutional oversight and marketing of the repository's advantages.

Researchers may underestimate the impact of the repository, for instance, if they have not kept track of how many times their work has been read or referenced. Additionally, the data indicates that some respondents do not yet fully connect institutional repositories to webometric performance or institutional visibility, underscoring the need for improved orientation and awareness campaigns that clarify how repository usage positively impacts the university's worldwide academic impact. These findings slightly align with the study of Fasae and Adekoya (2021) where a positive perception and significant use of institutional repositories were reported

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among respondents. The findings also supports the assertion of Chukwueke (2020) that the contribution of institutional repositories towards the visibility of a university's scholarly output depends largely on the establishment and correct supervision of institutional repositories, as well as affective propagation of its numerous advantages.

Table 4 Relationship between Institutional Repository Usage and Webometric Ranking

S/N		SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1	Institutional repositories contribute to the web visibility of my university	30	27.2	23.8	19
2	I understand how webometric rankings are influenced by research visibility	34.1	26	20.5	19.4
3	There is a clear link between repository usage and university ranking	28.4	27.1	22.9	21.6
4	I believe greater repository use by staff can improve the university's position in rankings	30.6	31.6	20.5	17.3
5	My university emphasizes repository use as a strategy to improve webometric ranking	30.7	28.5	19.5	21.3

* SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Most respondents agree that institutional repositories are essential in enhancing their institutions' online prominence, which is consistent with the primary findings of studies like Asadi (2019) and Kakai (2018), which found a significant relationship between institutional repository development and higher institutional ranking. It is noteworthy that a large percentage (60.1%) of respondents seem to understand the function of webometric ranking algorithms and the significance of research visibility. However, a significant minority (about 40%) lacks clarity, which emphasizes the necessity of focused sensitization, particularly with regard to the beneficial relationship between repository contributions and international institutional standards. While many academics agree that increasing repository participation by staff can improve rankings, their perceptions of whether their universities actively promote this technique vary.

This suggests that there may be some disconnect between university administration and academic personnel in terms of their web visibility strategy. Institutions need to make sure that this objective is well-communicated and backed by guidelines, instruction, and rewards if they really want to use repositories for ranking. These findings are also in consonance with the findings of Lee and Stvilia (2017) and Sanni (2018) who found that effective use of institutional repositories can enhance the reputation, worth, visibility and image of an institution.

Table 5 Challenges of Using Institutional Repositories

S/N		SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1	Insufficient budgetary allocation	28.7	31.8	21.5	18
2	Inadequate knowledge	28.5	30.4	22.9	18.2
3	Copyright and intellectual property concerns	26.3	22.5	25.7	25.5
4	Technical difficulties	31.6	26.4	22.4	19.6
5	Inadequate qualified personnel	30.9	29.4	19.2	20.5
6	Cost of training	29.7	27.2	23.5	19.6
7	Low publicity within the university community	32.5	28.2	18.7	20.6
8	Others				

* SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

A wide range of institutional, technological, and knowledge-related difficulties that researchers encounter when using institutional repositories are revealed by the data presented in Table 5. More than half of the respondents concur that these difficulties exist, according to a consistent pattern found in the majority of the items. The commonly reported obstacles are low publicity (60.7%), lack of financing (60.5%), lack of trained staff (60.3%), technological challenges (58%), and inadequate knowledge (58.9%).

These findings corroborate those of Anunobi & Mbadugha (2011) and Oladokun (2015), who noted identical obstacles in Nigerian academic settings. Because of these structural and systemic flaws, scholars are less likely to use institutional repositories to their full potential, which lowers the university's reputation and academic influence. Remarkably, opinions on intellectual property and copyright were divided. This shows that some researchers are wary about intellectual property issues, but others are either unconcerned about the legal protections provided by the repository or don't know enough to be concerned. Furthermore, over 50% of the participants identified the expense of training as a challenge. This demonstrates that priorities or cost may be a limiting issue even in cases where training programs are offered.

CONCLUSION

In line with the insights gathered, this study concludes that although researchers at the chosen universities generally view institutional repositories as useful resources for raising research visibility and webometric rankings, obstacles like low awareness, technical difficulties, a lack of funding, and inadequate training prevent optimal use. Institutional efforts to encourage and support the use of repositories are still minimal, despite the fact that many academics recognize their beneficial effects. To fully utilize institutional repositories' potential to improve academic performance and visibility for both individuals and institutions, it is imperative to strengthen infrastructure, increase publicity, and offer focused training.

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