

**Information Retrieval Skills and Use of Online Legal Information Resources among Legal Practitioners in Ogun State, Nigeria.**

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**Abstract**

In today's digital age, Legal practitioners heavily depend on online legal information resources to enhance legal research and support legal activities. However, it has been observed that many legal practitioners lack effective information retrieval skills to efficiently navigate and extract relevant information through these information resources. This study therefore examined the influence of information retrieval skills on the use of online legal resources among legal practitioners in Ogun State. The study adopted a survey research method with questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. The study population consist of 699 legal practitioners drawn from all the five branches of Nigeria Bar Association in Ogun State. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan table which resulted in a sample of 242. The data collected was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found that the level of use of online legal information resources (mean=2.63) information retrieval skills (mean = 2.56) is moderately high among the respondents. The test of hypothesis showed that information retrieval ( $Adj.R^2 = 0.528$   $p = 0.000$ ) has significant influence on the use of online legal information resources. The study concluded that the use of online legal resources by legal practitioners will provide extensive access to legal materials which will in turn promote quick dispensation of justice and enhance lawyer's productivity. It therefore recommended the need for comprehensive training programs and continuing education by the law libraries to enhance lawyers' information retrieval skills.

**Keywords:** Legal practitioners, Information retrieval skills, Legal information

**Word Count:** 250

## **Introduction**

The use of online legal information resources is highly important for legal practitioners as they provide them with unlimited information resources needed for legal research. The technology revolution sweeping across the world is also affecting the legal profession with information resources that were previously in print now appearing in electronic format through various databases such as LexiNexis, Westlaw, HeinOnline, Law Pavillion and several others. All of these resources have been created to facilitate easy access to the needed legal resources for legal practitioners.

Legal practitioners include lawyers, magistrates and judges who play active role in interpreting the law of the land and ensure that everyone's rights are upheld and offenders are punished according to the dictates of the law and accordance with their offenses. A key issue in the legal profession is that all cases must be proven 'beyond reasonable doubt'. This means that a lawyers who wishes to win a case must provide an impeccable argument backed by legal fact and supported by legal precedence (Setyawan, & Kurniawan, 2022). As a result of this, research is an integral aspect of the job of legal practitioners. They have to go through volumes of legal materials to find appropriate laws and statutes, useful arguments and precedence that can help their cases. In the fast pace world in which we now live, online information resources have come to solve the challenges inherent in the use of physical law resources. It is therefore expected that legal practitioners would make use of the online resources to effectively discharge their duties.

Given the various advantages that have been attributed to the use of online information resources, it is expected that legal practitioners would make frequent use of the resources for various purposes, especially in the context of their professional pursuits. However, the reverse seems to be the case. The low level of use among legal practitioners could be due to information retrieval skills

Information retrieval skill is the ability to efficiently browses, identify and retrieve necessary literature using manual or computerized methods, in order to meet specific information needs. The phrase 'information retrieval skill' is a product of the digital age as it is a skill closely attached to the use of technology. It refers to the technical abilities and knowledge needed by information users to utilize information retrieval technologies to locate relevant resources and separate them from those that are unnecessary. Retrieving information from many sources is referred to as information retrieval (Anyim, 2020).

As a result, legal practitioners should be familiar with how to determine whether or not the information they get on the internet is of any use to them. The efficiency of legal practitioners and the level of productivity will be enhanced if they have access to comprehensive, effective, and up-to-date information retrieval abilities (Ferdows, 2014). Ferdows (2014) emphasized the significance of information retrieval abilities for legal practitioners as the stepping stones of legal research activities. It is thus critical for all legal practitioners, to become well-versed in information retrieval techniques in order to make the most of available research resources.

Information retrieval skill in the online environment is a combination of various skills and practices such as; searching, chaining, browsing, accessing, gathering, and organizing of retrieved information (Famaren & Tofi, 2021). Searching is the process where an individual goes about searching for information, which is a process that requires the information seeker to apply personal knowledge, skill or personal information infrastructure to solve a problem. Searching is the most recognized aspects of information retrieval and to which many are familiar and which they often term 'information retrieval'. In reality, searching is the basic step in information retrieval.

Rubin, & Rubin, (2020) suggest that information retrieval skills depend on user education, access to a library, and the length of time devoted to seeking information by the user. Legal practitioners are expected to use their knowledge to move from searching to chaining. This is the process of building on already found information resources to find more relevant ones (Rubin, & Rubin, 2020). This method is effective with highly relevant articles. Skilled information users obtained a wealth of information resources on a given subject by reviewing the bibliography of a relevant article to locate preceding works to read and cite. Researchers can do backward chaining through the references in an existing work or forward chaining through the works that have cited the work under consideration. Other constructs of information retrieval skills are; browsing, accessing, gathering, and organizing of retrieved information

Browsing is an important and commonly practiced information retrieval strategy. Browsing is basically a causal exploration of available information with the expectation of 'stumbling' on something useful. For the searcher going through a collection of gathered or available information, browsing is more open-ended than guided searching or chaining. Browsing has become even more relevant in the digital age with the web having a significant influence on what and how researchers explore, as well as the speed at which they may navigate through online resources from several sources. Another element of information retrieval process is accessing

Access comes after the needed information have been "discovered" either, through direct search or browsing or chaining. Once they see the information need, researchers want immediate access to the items. The next stage is to access that material. However, those with the required skills to access the materials often show more level of independence than others and they are also able to retrieve more relevant information than others. Scholars across a wide range of disciplines have taken to use of the ease and efficiency of full-text digital library information when it is accessible (Nieminen, Uma, Pal, Laitala, Lappalainen, & Varghese, 2020). Accessibility is important as it determines the ability of the researcher to collect the information resources. The whole essence of the information retrieval process is to build personal collections that will remain easily accessible to the researcher over the long term. This is done through information gathering (Uma, et al, 2020). Researchers are often seen as collector and, despite the ubiquity of online resources, they crave convenience and assurance that the information resources they found useful will remain accessible to support sustained consultation for the present and future information needs. Researchers have confirmed that scholars in all fields of human endeavor are used to keeping personal collections consisting mostly of printed books and journals. Each scholar will develop a collection based on their disciplines and the works they are currently involved in. There is a difference between information gathering in the printed era and the digital information era

While researcher gather collection during the printed era, through published works, complimentary copies of books and journals and through direct, purchase, things are different in the online environment (Famaren, & Tofi, 2021). With the advent of online information resources, the gathering process is different<sup>17</sup>. It requires downloading electronic version of books, journals and other information resources from external databases onto personal devices such as laptops, desktops, external drives and other storage devices. Gathering information in this way would therefore fail to yield the expected result unless the scholar knows how to properly organize information resources.

The need for information organisation skills as part of the information retrieval process is a direct fallout of the information explosion created by information and communication technology. It is inevitable that continuous retrieval of information on a particular subject will result in a sizable body of information resources obtained from different information systems with different file naming conventions. Without proper organizational skills and techniques, the information resources are often unusable as they are all lumped together with no way of knowing which is which. Some may even be stored on different location on the scholars' devices. This makes it

imperative for scholars to devise organisational systems and tools for storing and managing information resources obtained online.

Accordingly, management of information was one of the activities proposed an extension of Ellis's model of scholarly information seeking process. As the online information resources are private collection of individuals, it is difficult to have a uniform method of organization. Nonetheless, researchers have examined the most common methods of organizing personal information resources among various scholars (Odede, & Zawedde, 2018). Most of the studies that have examined the organization of personal collections have been focused on the humanities or the social sciences. It was often found that many scholars are still clinging to printed information resources due to fear of computer failure, lack of technological skills, and computer storage space limitations (American Library Association).

The incidence of lack of or low information retrieval skills is likely to have a negative impact on the legal research and overall knowledge of legal practitioner. This is why researchers have shown interest in understanding the factors affecting the use of online legal information resources among legal practitioners. However, while several factors such as awareness, ICT skills and others have been explored, no study has investigated the information retrieval skills as factor in the use of online legal information resources. This study therefore will fill the gap in knowledge created by investigating the influence of information retrieval skills on the use of online legal information resources among legal practitioners in Ogun state, Nigeria.

Law as an information-based profession depends largely on timely and accurate information. Judges and magistrates need information to make judicial decisions. Lawyers on the other hand, equally need information to argue their cases in court and to carry out other legal activities such as litigation, drafting of legal documents, legal advisory and research etc. However, the fast and quick information needed for speedy justice delivery can only be accessed through online legal information resources. To this end, the researcher noticed that despite the huge benefits online information resources have to offer, lawyers still depend on printed information resources. This is attributed to lack of effective information retrieval skills among lawyer. Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine the influence of information retrieval skills on the use of online legal information resources among Legal practitioners in Ogun State, Nigeria by providing answers to following research questions:

1. What is the level of use (frequency and purpose) of online legal information resources by legal practitioners in Ogun State?

2. What is the level of information retrieval skills among legal practitioners in Ogun State

### **Hypothesis**

1. Information Retrieval skills do not have significant influence on use of online legal information resources by legal practitioners in Ogun State.

### **Literature Review**

Online information resources are domiciled in digital information systems. Even the most accessible information system requires some basic skill from the information seeker. The possession of such skills may make it easier for information seekers to continue using a particular information system. Researchers have thus examined the role of information retrieval on the use of digital information resources. A study examined the factors affecting the use of online information resources in Nigeria to determine the influence of information retrieval skills on the use of electronic resources among information professionals in Southwest region of Nigeria found that information retrieval skills of the users have a significant influence on the use online resources among the respondents(Onyebinama, Anunobi, &Uzochukwu, 2020).

The importance of information retrieval skills to the effective utilization of online information resources was demonstrated in a study conducted in Kenya. This study employed a mixed methodology design, which enabled the researcher to collect and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously, resulting in a mixed technique. Conclusions were drawn from the pooled data, and extrapolations were made. The study population included librarians, research supervisors, and postgraduate students. Participants were chosen for the study using both systematic and purely random sampling techniques. The research instruments which is a questionnaire was administered separately on the different categories of respondents. The results of the study showed that graduate student's scholarly information management was directly related to their level of information retrieval skills. In addition, the data showed that there is a statistically significant connection between the information retrieval skills and the use of online information resources. (Imam, Oyeleye, & Remilekun, 2019).

In a related study, researchers conducted a comparative analysis of information retrieval strategies by groups of professional. The study is a survey research which focused on legal practitioners in the United Kingdom (UK). The researchers used a structured questionnaire to collect data, from a sample of professionals such as legal practitioners, recruitment experts, and healthcare information specialists. The study found that there is a commonality between the requirements

and difficulties of these professions. In particular, apprehension regarding the use of relevance ranking, a continued penchant for constructing queries as Boolean expressions, and the requirement to manage, organize, and reuse search tactics and results.

The study also found that legal practitioners are more advanced in information retrieval skills than the other professionals as they took less time to retrieve specific information than others. The finding also shows that difficulties in retrieving information often discouraged people from continuous use of online information resources (Russell-Rose, Chamberlain, & Azzopardi, 2018). The implication of this is that the information retrieval skills of professionals can determine the level of use of online resources.

Researchers in Namibia also examined the use of online information resources by law lecturers at the University of Namibia (UNAM). The study's goals were to ascertain how well they were aware of and how they felt about the plethora of electronic resources (e-resources) available to them, as well as the difficulties they encountered when trying to use them. The population of the study included all law lecturers in the institutions. A questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide were utilized for both quantitative and qualitative data collection. The study found that majority of the law professors were familiar with the available online information resources in the library albeit some were not aware of the newly subscribed international law databases. The results also showed that professors used e-resources for research, publishing, and teaching, but that they had trouble using them due to a lack of training and poor searching skills (Leonard, Hamutumwa, & Mnubi-Mchombu, 2020). The author concluded that understanding the influence of information retrieval skills and other challenges on the use of online information resources can help librarians to develop appropriate intervention.

Researchers have also observed that the research output of law professors is likely to be affected by the accessibility and utilization of numerous legal information resources, both online and offline. The ability to exploit many avenues of information retrieval increases the potential for idea sharing and synthesis. A study examined the use of online information resources by law educators in Nigeria. The descriptive survey methodology was used for the study. The study sample consisted of five hundred and seventeen law lecturers who were chosen using a multistage sampling process from a population of nine hundred and five at institutions across Nigeria's six political regions. Quantitative data for the study was gathered using a self-created questionnaire. The study found that some lecturer make use of online information resources on daily, weekly, monthly quarterly basis. Although a few of them reported that they never used online information

resources. This can be due to lack of awareness or information retrieval skills. The study finding confirmed that frequent use of information resources is positively correlated to research productivity (Uluocha, & Iyabo, 2014). The implication is that those who are unable to retrieve adequate and relevant information resources may be less productive. The effect of information retrieval skills on the use of information resources is not limited to professionals as it was also found to affect students.

The various purposes for which legal practitioners use online information has been outlined by researchers. Researchers in an India state examined the use of online information resources by lawyers and reported that lawyers have various specializations such as handling Civil Cases, Criminal Cases, and corporate litigation among others. The study also shows that the legal practitioners are heavily reliant on the use of information which they use for purposes such as; fact checking, tracing laws and statutes, preparing legal briefs etc (Kumar, & A. Kumar, 2020).

This is further affirmed by the findings of a study which examined the purpose of using law information sources among law students in Nigeria universities. The study found that students use the information resources available for the purpose of conducting research for assignments, term papers and in preparation for examinations. Yet another study focused on the use of legal information resources by law lecturers' in Nigerian universities. The findings of the study showed that the lectures use law reports, legal periodicals, legislation and statutes, indexes and abstracts, law book, non- legal materials, reference materials, etc, for teaching and research (Nwokike, & Osisianwo, 2020)

In this age that online information resources like as e-journals, electronic law reports, legislation, statutes, and precedents are available through the internet in the digital era, legal practitioners can access up-to-date legal material at any time and from any location. Nonetheless, they may be unable to take advantage of this opportunity if they are unaware of the resources' existence or lack the necessary abilities to access them. While online information resources are abundantly available, legal practitioners needs information retrieval skills in order to effective make use of these resources.

Researchers from northern Nigeria examined various challenges affecting the use of legal information resources by postgraduate students in Federal universities in Northern Nigeria. The study was conducted utilising a cross-sectional survey design and a quantitative research methodology. A total of 1,348 advanced Information was gathered through the use of a questionnaire. The study found that although the students were aware of the usefulness of electronic tools and online legal databases, the often face challenges such as inadequate



infrastructure for accessing materials electronically, insufficient computers, and intermittent power supply. In addition, some of them also lack the necessary information retrieval skills to make use of the online resources. As a result, they rely on hardcopy legal information resources were. The study indicates that the quality of legal researches and academic excellence in the legal profession may be negatively impacted since postgraduate law students in federal institutions of northern Nigeria have not fully enjoyed the huge electronic legal information resources (Umar & Sokari, 2020).

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for this study consisted of legal practitioners who are registered members of the Ogun State chapter of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA). The legal practitioners are from five zones (Branches) of the Ogun state NBA, namely, Ota Branch (230), Abeokuta Branch (270), Ilaro Branch (57) Sagamu Branch (57) and Ijebu-Ode (85). The total population therefore amount to 699 legal practitioners. The sample size for the study is 242 legal practitioners. This is obtained from the sample size table developed by Krejcie and Morgan. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics such as simple frequency counts and mean scores.

### **Data Presentation and analysis**

The gender distribution shows that out of a total of 235 respondents, there are 141 males, accounting for 60% of the total respondents. On the other hand, the female population consists of 94 individuals, making up 40.0% of the total respondents. This indicates that there are more males than females. In term of work experience. The results showed that 89 respondents, constituting 37.9% of the total respondents has between 1 to 4 years of work experience; 52 (22.1%) respondents have between 5 to 9 years of work experience; 48 (20.4%) have work experience of 10 to 15 years while 46 (19.6%) of the respondents have a work experience of exactly 16 years and above. Self Employed were 105 respondents representing 44.7% of the total respondents. Furthermore, 90 (38.3%) respondents indicated that they work with the state legal system; 25 (10.6%) indicated private law firm while 15 (6.4%) of the group Corporate Organisations.

## Presentation of Research Questions

### Research Question 1: What is the Frequency of Use of Online Legal Information Resources by Legal Practitioners in Ogun state

Table 1: Showing the Frequency of Use of Online Legal Information Resources by Legal Practitioners in Ogun state

Item	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Mean
West Law	44 (18.72%)	52 (22.13%)	47 (20.00%)	92 (39.15%)	2.93
Others	48 (20.43%)	52 (22.13%)	63 (26.81%)	72 (30.64%)	2.76
Biblio Online	59 (25.11%)	57 (24.26%)	49 (20.85%)	70 (29.79%)	2.70
Legalpedia	50 (21.28%)	56 (23.83%)	65 (27.66%)	64 (27.23%)	2.64
Law Pavilion	69 (29.36%)	48 (20.43%)	62 (26.38%)	56 (23.83%)	2.63
Search Engines	62 (26.38%)	58 (24.68%)	50 (21.28%)	65 (27.66%)	2.63
Quick Law	51 (21.70%)	70 (29.79%)	60 (25.53%)	54 (22.98%)	2.61
Criminal Justice Abstract	59 (25.11%)	65 (27.66%)	48 (20.43%)	63 (26.81%)	2.59
Lexis Nexis	47 (20.00%)	78 (33.19%)	52 (22.13%)	58 (24.68%)	2.51
ProQuest	49 (20.85%)	61 (25.96%)	68 (28.94%)	57 (24.26%)	2.51
Kluwer Arbitration	57 (24.26%)	39 (16.60%)	70 (29.79%)	69 (29.36%)	2.49
Aggregate mean					2.63

Decision rule 0.00 - 1.99 = very low, 2.00 - 2.50 = low, 2.51 – 2.99 Moderate, 3.00 – 3.49 = high, 3.50-4.00= very high.

Table above shows the results of the use of online legal information resources by legal practitioners in Ogun state measured by frequency of use. The West Law database is most frequently used as 44 (18.72%) indicated that they always use it, 52 (22.13%) of the respondents often use it while 47 (20%) sometimes and 92 (39.15%) of the respondents rarely use the database. On average, the use of Westlaw has a mean score of 2.93 which also indicates a high frequency of use. The same is true for BiblioOnline as 59 (25.11%) of the respondents always use the database; 57 (24.26%) often use it, 49 (20.85%) sometimes use and 70 (29.79%) rarely make use of Biblio Online. On average, the use of BiblioOnline has a mean score of 2.70 which also indicates a high frequency of use. Another frequently used database is Legalpedia as 50 (21.28%) of the respondents always use the database. In the same vein, 56 (23.83%) of the

respondents often use it, 65 (27.66%) sometimes use it while 64 (27.23%) of the respondents indicated that they rarely make use of the Legalpedia database. On average, the use of Legalpedia among the respondents has a mean score of 2.64 which also indicates a high frequency of use.

The same is true for Law Pavilion as 69 (29.36%) of the respondents always use the database while 48 (20.43%) often use it. On the other hand, 62 (26.38%) of the respondents use it sometimes while 56 (23.83%) of them rarely make use of the databases. On average, the use of Legalpedia among the respondents has a mean score of 2.63 which also indicates a high frequency of use. Another online resources with a mean score of 2.63 is the search engine. Many legal practitioners prefer the search engine as 62 (26.38%) of them reported that they always use search engines, 58 (24.68%) often make use of search engines for research while 50 (21.28%) sometimes use and 65 (27.66%) rarely make use of search engines. Further online legal resource used include Quick Law. 51 (21.70%) reported that they always use the database while 70 (29.79%) of the respondents often use it.

Meanwhile, 60 (25.53%) sometimes use while 54 (22.98%) of them rarely make use of the database. On average, the use of Quick Law databases among the respondents has a mean score of 2.61 which indicates a high frequency of use. Furthermore, 59 (25.11%) of the respondents indicated that they always make use of Criminal Justice Abstract databases; 65 (27.66%) often use it, 48 (20.43%) sometimes use while 63 (26.81%) rarely use the database. On average, the use of Criminal Justice Abstract databases among the respondents has a mean score of 2.59 which indicates a high frequency of use. The least frequent used databases is however Kluwer Arbitration as 57 (24.26%) indicated that they always use it, 39 (16.60%) of the respondents often use it 70 (29.79%) and 69 (29.36%) rarely make use of it. On average, the use of the Kluwer Arbitration database among the respondents has a mean score of 2.49 which indicates a low frequency of use. However, the overall mean score for frequency of use is 2.63 indicating a high frequency of online legal resources use among the respondents.

**What is the Purpose of Use of Online Legal Information Resources by Legal Practitioners in Ogun state.**

**Table 2: Purpose of Use of Online Legal Information Resources by Legal Practitioners in Ogun state.**

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
I use online legal information resources:					
To access statutes, acts, and decrees	80 (34.0%)	110 (46.8%)	30 (12.8%)	15 (6.4%)	3.36
To conduct case background research	75 (31.9%)	115 (48.9%)	30 (12.8%)	15 (6.4%)	3.34
To keep abreast of general information	85 (36.2%)	110 (46.8%)	25 (10.6%)	15 (6.4%)	3.32
To locate potential witnesses and experts	85 (36.2%)	100 (42.6%)	30 (12.8%)	20 (8.5%)	3.26
To search for case laws	91 (38.7%)	103 (43.8%)	26 (11.1%)	15 (6.4%)	3.24
To keep abreast of new developments in the jlegal system	90 (38.3%)	105 (44.7%)	25 (10.6%)	15 (6.4%)	3.24
To prepare for conferences and seminars	95 (40.4%)	95 (40.4%)	30 (12.8%)	15 (6.4%)	3.20
To better understand complex legal issues	105 (44.7%)	90 (38.3%)	20 (8.5%)	20 (8.5%)	3.18
To prepare legal documents and correspondence	83 (35.3%)	89 (37.9%)	25 (10.6%)	18 (7.7%)	3.16
Aggregate Mean					3.26

Decision rule 0.00 - 1.99 = very low, 2.00 - 2.50 = low, 2.51 – 2.99 Moderate, 3.00 – 3.49 = high, 3.50-4.00= very high.

Table 2 above presents data on the purpose of use of online legal resources among the respondents. 80 (34%) of respondents strongly agree that they use online law resources to access statutes, acts, and decrees, 110 (46.8%) agree, 30 (12.8%) disagree, and 15(6.4%) strongly disagree. On average, the use of law resources to access statutes, acts, and decrees has a mean of 3.36. Results also indicated that 75 (31.9%) of respondents strongly agree that they use online law resources to conduct case background research, 115 (48.9%) agree, 30 (12.8%) disagree, and 15 (6.4%) strongly disagree. On average, the use of law resources to access statutes, acts, and decrees has a mean of 3.36. Furthermore, 85 (36.2%) of respondents strongly agree that they use online law resources to locate potential witnesses and experts, 100 (42.6%) agree, 30 (12.8%) disagree, and 20 (8.5%) strongly disagree. On average, the use of use online law resources to locate potential witnesses and experts has a mean of 3.26.

In addition, 91 (38.7%) of respondents strongly agree that they use online law resources to search for case laws, 103 (43.8%) agree, 26 (11.1%) disagree, and 15(6.4%) strongly disagree. On average, the use of law resources to search for case laws has a mean of 3.24. Results also indicated that 90 (38.3%) of respondents strongly agree that they use online law resources to keep abreast of new developments in the legal system, 105 (44.7%) agree, 25 (10.6%) disagree, and 15 (6.4%) strongly disagree. On average, the use of law resources to keep abreast of new developments in the judiciary has a mean of 3.24. In the same vein, 95 (40.4%) of respondents strongly agree that they use online law resources to prepare for conferences and seminars, 95 (40.4%) agree, 30 (12.8%) disagree, and 15 (6.4%) strongly disagree. On average, the use of use online law resources to prepare for conferences and seminars has a mean of 3.20. Majority of the respondents, 105 (44.7%) also strongly agree that they use online law resources to better understand complex legal issues, 90 (38.3%) agree, 20 (8.5%) disagree, and strongly disagree respectively. On average, the use of use online law resources to better understand complex legal issues has a mean of 3.18. Also, 83 (35.3%) strongly agree that they use online law resources to prepare legal documents and correspondence, 89 (37.9%) agreed, 25 (10.6%) disagreed, and 18 (7.7%) strongly disagreed. On average, the use of use online law resources to prepare legal documents and correspondence, has a mean of 3.16. Overall, the aggregate mean for the purpose of use of online legal resources among the respondents is 3.26 indicating a highly level usage.

Table 3: Level of Information Retrieval Skills Among Legal Practitioners in Ogun State.

Direct Search	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean
I can use Boolean operators to restrict and expand my information search	53 (22.6%)	50 (21.3%)	52 (22.1%)	80 (34.0%)	2.58
I can filter search results by specifying the year of publication, language, location, etc.	50 (21.3%)	49 (20.9%)	52 (22.1%)	84 (35.7%)	2.59
Chaining					
"I search the reference of a relevant article to get more relevant articles	53 (22.6%)	51 (21.7%)	51 (21.7%)	80 (34.0%)	2.62
I use Google Scholar to check for other studies that have cited the article I find useful	46 (19.6%)	52 (22.1%)	48 (20.4%)	89 (37.9%)	2.43
I can follow a useful link from a relevant information resource to get more information	50 (21.3%)	49 (20.9%)	52 (22.1%)	84 (35.7%)	2.59
Browsing					
I use truncation techniques (such as \$, *, +) to search when I am not sure of what I am searching for	54 (23.0%)	48 (20.4%)	51 (21.7%)	82 (34.9%)	2.55

Use of search engines such as Yahoo, Google, Alta Vista, and Google Scholar, etc.	47 (20.0%)	57 (24.3%)	49 (20.9%)	82 (34.9%)	2.64
<b>Information Assessment</b>					
I usually pay attention to the site or database I am getting information from	52 (22.1%)	51 (21.7%)	51 (21.7%)	81 (34.5%)	2.68
I consider the reputation of the author of information I download from the internet	50 (21.3%)	54 (23.0%)	51 (21.7%)	80 (34.0%)	2.58
<b>Information Gathering</b>					
I can easily download information resources from online databases or save web pages if found useful	48 (20.4%)	49 (20.9%)	53 (22.6%)	85 (36.2%)	2.64
Storing information on alternative devices (e.g., flash drive/USB, external hard drive)	52 (22.1%)	51 (21.7%)	51 (21.7%)	81 (34.5%)	2.68
I can transfer information resources from one computer device to another	52 (22.1%)	49 (20.9%)	53 (22.6%)	81 (34.5%)	2.66
<b>Information Organisation</b>					
I can rename documents I download from the internet for easy access later	52 (22.1%)	51 (21.7%)	51 (21.7%)	81 (34.5%)	2.68
I can create folders to store downloaded information resources based on subject or title	45 (19.1%)	49 (20.9%)	47 (20.0%)	94 (40.0%)	2.34
I can use reference management applications such as Mendeley to organize information resources	42 (17.9%)	58 (24.7%)	35 (14.9%)	100 (42.6%)	2.18
Aggregate Mean					2.56

Decision rule 0.00 - 1.99 = very low, 2.00 - 2.50 = low, 2.51 – 2.99 Moderate, 3.00 – 3.49 = high, 3.50-4.00= very high.

Table 3 above presents data on the information retrieval skills of the respondents. The data presented in the Table above shows that 53(22.6%) of the respondents reported that they can use Boolean operators to restrict and expand information search, 50 (21.3%) agreed to this while 52 (22.1%) disagreed and 80 (34.0%) strongly disagreed with the statement. On average, the responses on being able to use Boolean operators to restrict and expand information search has a mean of 2.58. Also, 50 (21.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they can filter search results by specifying the year of publication, language, location, 49 (20.9%)agreed to this while 52 (22.1%) disagreed and 84 (35.7%) strongly disagreed with the statement. On average, the responses on being able to filter search results by specifying the year of publication, language, location has a mean of 2.59. The data also shows that 53(22.6%) of the respondents reported that

they usually search the reference of a relevant article to get more relevant articles, 51 (21.7%) of the respondents agreed to this while another 51 (21.7%) disagreed and 80 (34.0%) strongly disagreed with the statement. On average, the responses on being able to usually search the reference of a relevant article to get more relevant articles has a mean of 2.62. Also, 46 (19.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they use Google Scholar to check for other studies that have cited the article they find useful, 52 (22.1%) agreed to this while 48 (20.4%) disagreed and 89 (37.9%) strongly disagreed with the statement. On an average, the responses on being able to they use Google Scholar to check for other studies that have cited the article they find useful has a mean of 2.43.

The responses also show that 50 (21.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they can follow a useful link from a relevant information resource to get more information, 49 (20.9%), 49 (20.9%) agreed to this while 52 (22.1%) disagreed and 84 (35.7%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. On average, the responses on being able to follow a useful link from a relevant information resource to get more information has a mean of 2.59. The data also shows that, 54 (23.0%) of the respondents reported that they use truncation techniques (such as \$, \*, +) to search when they are not sure of what they are searching for, 48 (20.4%) of the respondents agreed to this while 51 (21.7%) disagreed and 82(34.9%) strongly disagreed with the statement. On average, the responses on being able to use truncation techniques (such as \$, \*, +) to search when they are not sure of what they are searching for has a mean of 2.55.

In addition, 47 (20.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they can use search engines such as Yahoo, Google, Alta Vista, and Google Scholar, etc., 57 (24.3%) agreed to this while 49 (20.9%) disagreed and 82 (34.9%) strongly disagreed with the statement. On average, the responses on being able to they use they can use search engines such as Yahoo, Google, Alta Vista, and Google Scholar, etc., has a mean of 2.64. Furthermore, 52(22.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they usually pay attention to the site or database I am getting information from, 51 (21.7%) agreed to this. Another 51 (21.7%) disagreed and 81 (34.5%) strongly disagreed with the statement. On average, the responses on being able to they use they usually pay attention to the site or database they are getting information from, has a mean of 2.68.

The results also showed that, 50(21.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they can consider the reputation of the author of information they download from the internet, 54 (23.0%) agreed to this while 51 (21.7%) disagreed and 80 (34.0%) strongly disagreed with the statement. On average, the responses regarding the ability to know the reputation of the author of information

downloaded from the internet has a mean of score of 2.58. Similarly, 48 (20.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they can easily download information resources from online databases or save web pages if found useful, 49 (20.9%) agreed to this meanwhile, 53 (22.6%) disagreed and 85 (36.2%) strongly disagreed with the statement. The average mean of 2.64 shows a moderate ability to download resources from online data bases. More so, regarding Storing information on alternative devices (e.g., flash drive/USB, external hard drive) a mean score of 2.68 shows a moderate level of storage skill. Furthermore, a mean score of 2.66 depicts a moderate level of information transfer skills. The overall mean score of 2.56 indicates a moderate level of information retrieval skill.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study results have provided clear answers to the research questions. For instance, the first research question examined the frequency of online legal information resources use among the legal practitioners. The study found a moderate level frequency of use of online legal information resources among legal practitioners in Ogun state. This can be seen in the proportion of those who are regular users of online legal information resources compared to those who rarely use it.

In analysing the second research question which is on the purpose of use of online legal information resources among legal practitioners, the study also found that legal practitioners in Ogun state mostly make use of online legal information resources for obtaining information, researching and to keep abreast of latest development in the legal profession. The study finding has shown that legal practitioners have come to see online resources as veritable source of information as they are always seeking for factual information. The use of online resources for all key legal activities and research could also be due to various advantages that have been identified in previous studies.

In finding answer to the third research question, the study also found a moderate level of information retrieval skills among legal practitioners in Ogun State. However, there were deficiencies on the side of the respondents particularly in the area of information retrieval.

### **Conclusion**

Legal practice is an age-old profession that is steeped in great traditions. One thing that is undisputable is the fact that effective legal practice depends on relevant, timely and abundant information resources. While legal practitioners are renowned for their willingness to invest in physical information resource, the emergence of information and communication technology has



open a new vista in legal information management. Access to a global body of information resources is capable of enhancing the productivity of legal practitioners, entrench justice and stimulate national development. It is therefore encouraging that legal practitioners who are often seen as being sentimental towards printed materials are now acquiring and developing information retrieval skills which facilitate effective use of online legal information resources. It is certain that with the continue exposure to online legal information resources and the technologies that enable their effective access and utilization, legal practitioners in Nigeria can compete effortlessly with their counterparts across the world.

### Recommendation

1. There is need for comprehensive training programs and continuing education by the law libraries to enhance lawyers' information retrieval skills at the university and at the law school.
2. Legal practitioners should be trained and retrained so as to be equipped with necessary Information retrieval skill which has become the survival skill in the digital age. More so, legal practitioners should be deliberate about acquiring necessary competences

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