

AWARENESS, KNOWLEDGE OF COPYRIGHT AND DIGITAL PUBLISHING: A SURVEY OF DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN FACULTY OF EDUCATION, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA

OGUCHE, David

Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, FCT-Abuja

ogucheed@gmail.com

&

EZEH, Rose Uloma

Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies,

University of Lagos Campus, Akoka – Yaba, Lagos

ezehtrose@gmail.com

Abstract

The study was carried out to investigate the awareness, and knowledge of copyright and digital publishing among doctoral students in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. Three (3) research objectives and research questions guided the study. Survey research design was adopted for the study using an online questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. The population of the study comprised 190 doctoral students from the faculty of education. Out of the 190 questionnaires distributed to the doctoral students, only 167 were returned and found useful for analysis. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics by the use of SPSS version 25. The majority 152(91%) of the doctoral students are aware of copyright law but their knowledge of copyright is rather low 121(72%). The study also revealed that a good number of doctoral students are less aware of the various Creative Commons licenses that impede their digital publishing. Plagiarism, piracy, indiscriminate photocopying, and counterfeiting were the major ways in which copyright is being infringed by doctoral students in the Faculty of Education at ABU, Zaria. The study advocates for a copyright unit to be set up in the entire university to handle copyright matters to facilitate copyright knowledge and compliance in the faculty and entire Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Keywords: Awareness, Knowledge, Copyright, Digital Publishing, Doctoral Students

Introduction

The rise of digital technologies has significantly transformed the landscape of academic publishing, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. With the increasing availability of information and the ease of access provided by the internet, the issue of copyright awareness and compliance has become more pressing, especially in academic institutions. Copyright laws, are designed to protect intellectual property, play a crucial role in safeguarding the rights of creators

while promoting fair use for educational and research purposes. However, many researchers, including doctoral students, often lack adequate knowledge about copyright laws and digital publishing practices, leading to inadvertent or intentional copyright violations (Charbonneau & Priehs, 2014).

The principal law governing copyright in Nigeria is the Nigerian Copyright Act Cap. C.28, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2010, enacted in 1988 and modified in 1992 and 1999 and recodified in 2010. Section 1, sub section 1 of the Copyright Act listed out works eligible for copyright protection in Nigeria to include; Literary works, Musical works, Artistic works, Cinematograph, Sound recordings and Broadcast. Copyright laws in Nigeria have evolved, but challenges remain, especially in the digital realm. The Nigerian Copyright Act, though comprehensive, has not fully adapted to the complexities brought about by digital publishing and online content creation. As a result, doctoral students may find themselves navigating copyright issues without sufficient guidance or understanding. This gap in knowledge is critical because doctoral students, who are at the forefront of research and publication, must be equipped with the knowledge to not only protect their own works but also respect the intellectual property of others (Hemen & Ole, 2015).

The issue of copyright infringement is exacerbated by the widespread use of digital resources in academic research. Many doctoral students, despite being aware of the existence of copyright laws, struggle with understanding the nuances of these laws, particularly in relation to digital publishing. Studies have shown that a significant proportion of students are unaware of the specific provisions of copyright laws, including their rights as creators and the limitations placed on the use of others' works (Nwakaego, 2020). This lack of knowledge contributes to common infringements such as plagiarism, unauthorized photocopying, and the misuse of digital content.

This study aims to investigate the level of awareness and knowledge of copyright laws and digital publishing among doctoral students in the Faculty of Education at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. By understanding their knowledge gaps, the study seeks to provide recommendations for improving copyright awareness and reducing infringement within the academic community. The findings will also contribute to the broader discourse on intellectual property rights in Nigeria's higher education institutions, where the rapid growth of digital publishing necessitates a re-examination of copyright compliance and enforcement (Isiakpona, 2012).

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study are stated below, to:

1. Assess the level of awareness and knowledge of copyright law among doctoral students in faculty of education, ABU, Zaria

2. Investigate the extent of Copyright law infringement by doctoral students in faculty of education, ABU, Zaria
3. Find out the perception of doctoral students in faculty of education, ABU, Zaria on digital publishing

Research Questions

The study has the following research questions:

1. What is the level of awareness and knowledge of copyright law among doctoral students in faculty of education, ABU, Zaria?
2. What is the extent of Copyright law infringement by doctoral students in faculty of education, ABU, Zaria?
3. What is the perception of doctoral students in faculty of education, ABU, Zaria on digital publishing?

Literature Review

Copyright refers to the legal rights that creators have over their literary and artistic works. It gives authors exclusive rights to exploit their works for a certain period of time and prevents unauthorized use of their creations (WIPO, 2021). according to Okedara (2020), Copyright is a proprietary right conferred by law that allows the owner of a work to control its use, reproduction, and distribution. Copyright law is a fundamental aspect of intellectual property that protects the rights of creators, ensuring that they retain control over the use of their works. In academic settings, particularly among doctoral students, awareness and knowledge of copyright laws are essential to maintaining academic integrity and promoting proper dissemination of scholarly work. However, numerous studies have shown that despite the critical role of copyright, knowledge of these laws remains limited among students, including those at advanced academic levels like doctoral candidates.

Copyright Awareness and Knowledge in Academic Environments

Awareness of copyright law varies significantly among students in higher education, with many lacking sufficient understanding of how these laws apply to their academic work. According to Nwakaego (2020), a study conducted at the University of Ibadan revealed that while many students were aware of the existence of copyright laws, their knowledge of the specifics was limited. This knowledge gap extends to issues such as fair use, plagiarism, and digital rights management. Ahmadi and Sonkar (2015) opined that doctoral student, despite their advanced level of study, often struggle with these concepts, leading to frequent infringements. Isiakpona (2012) supports these findings, noting that undergraduate students at the University of Ibadan were aware of copyright, but their understanding of how these laws affect the use of literary

materials was poor. This suggests that merely being aware of copyright is insufficient; there needs to be a concerted effort to educate students on the complexities of copyright law, especially in relation to digital publishing and the use of electronic resources.

Copyright Infringement among Students

Copyright infringement in academic settings often occurs through acts of plagiarism, piracy, and unauthorized photocopying. McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield (2001) as cited in Opeke and Ekejuba (2021) argued that many students are aware that quoting someone else's work verbatim requires citation, but they are less certain about the need to credit ideas that are paraphrased or presented in a different form. This ambiguity leads to frequent copyright violations, often unintentionally.

Photocopying is one of the most common forms of copyright infringement in Nigerian universities. Chukwu (2020) found that students in tertiary institutions frequently resort to photocopying entire books and journals because it is cheaper than purchasing them. This practice is exacerbated by the limited availability of learning resources and the high cost of academic materials. Similarly, Aboyade, Aboyade, and Ajala (2015) identified photocopying and piracy as the primary ways copyright is infringed in Nigerian universities. This shows a clear need for better regulation and awareness initiatives within these institutions.

Digital Publishing and Copyright Challenges

The rise of digital publishing has further complicated the issue of copyright in academia. As more academic works move online, understanding how copyright applies to digital content is increasingly important. Digital publishing provides opportunities for wider dissemination of research, but it also introduces new challenges regarding copyright protection. Korlety and Tetey (2015) found that students at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology were generally unaware of how copyright laws applied to digital resources, making them vulnerable to infringement claims. The Copyright Act of 1988, amended in 1992 and 1999, provides some protection for digital works. However, as Hemen and Ole (2015) note, the law does not sufficiently address the unique challenges posed by digital technologies. This has led to a situation where digital works, such as e-books and online journals, are often unprotected or inadequately protected, resulting in widespread infringement.

The lack of awareness of Creative Commons (CC) licenses, which allow authors to retain some rights while permitting certain uses of their works, further complicates digital publishing. Muneja and Ndenje-Sichalwe (2016) highlight that students are often unaware of the flexibility that CC licenses provide, which can encourage open access publishing while protecting authors' rights. In a similar vein, Nwakaego (2020) found that most students did not understand the concept of licensing and were unaware of how they could use CC licenses to legally share their research.

The Role of Universities in Promoting Copyright Awareness

Universities play a critical role in educating students about copyright laws and promoting adherence to intellectual property rights. Studies have shown that institutions with robust copyright policies and awareness programmes experience lower rates of infringement. For example, Charbonneau and Priehs (2014) argue that partnerships between academic libraries and copyright agencies can significantly improve copyright awareness and compliance among students. In the context of Nigerian universities, creating copyright awareness programmes and integrating copyright education into the curriculum could help mitigate the high rates of infringement observed among students.

While awareness of copyright laws exists among doctoral students in Nigerian universities, the depth of knowledge is often lacking, leading to frequent infringements, particularly in the context of digital publishing. Universities must take an active role in educating their students about copyright laws and promoting legal alternatives, such as Creative Commons licenses, to encourage compliance and enhance the quality of scholarly work.

Research Methodology

This study employed a survey research design to investigate the awareness and knowledge of copyright and digital publishing among doctoral students in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria. The population for this study comprised 190 doctoral students in the various departments within the Faculty of Education at ABU, Zaria enrolled in the faculty at the time of the study. A census sampling technique was employed for this research, wherein all 190 doctoral students were invited to participate in the study. The main instrument for data collection was a structured online questionnaire designed using Google Forms. For reliability, a pilot study was conducted with 20 doctoral students from different faculty within the university to test the questionnaire's consistency. The pilot data were analyzed, and the instrument was found to have a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating a high level of internal consistency and reliability. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Responses were entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 25 for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores were used to summarize the demographic information and respondents' awareness and knowledge of copyright law and digital publishing. Cross-tabulations were used to identify relationships between variables such as department and level of copyright awareness. In addition, the study employed inferential statistics, such as chi-square tests, to determine whether significant relationships existed between the demographic characteristics of respondents and their level of knowledge of copyright law. The results were presented in the form of tables, charts, and graphs for easy interpretation.

Data Analysis

Section A: Demographic data

Fig. 1 indicates that a total number of one hundred and ninety (190) doctoral students of the faculty participated in the online survey. Out of this number, only 167 (88%) of the responses were found useful for analysis. Table 1 further shows the distribution of respondents by department/course

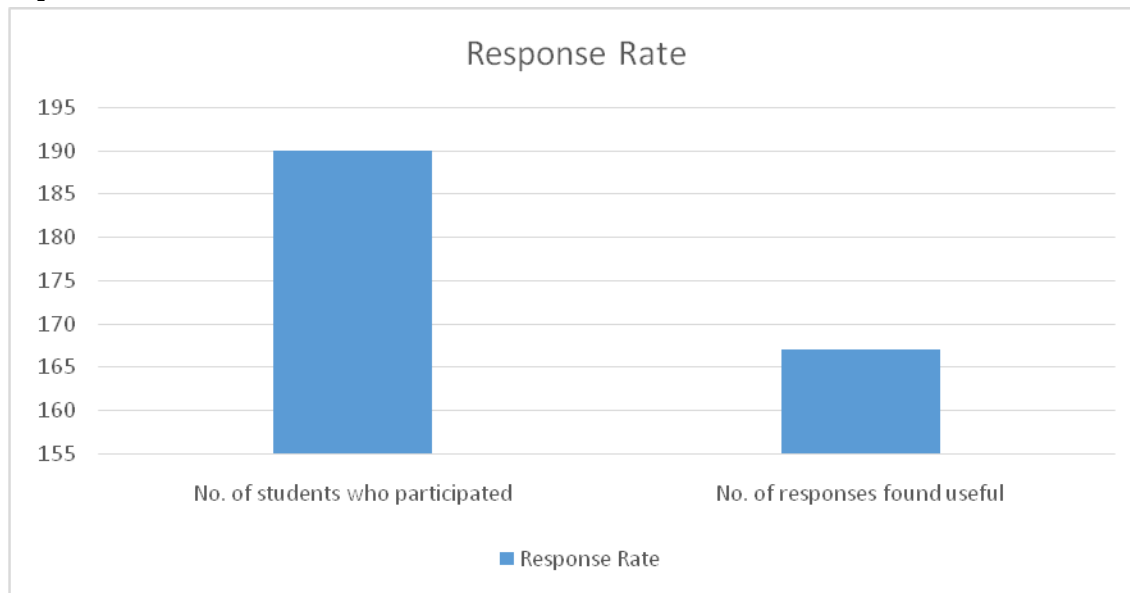


Fig. 1: Response rate of the questionnaire

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by department

Department/Course	Frequency		Percentage (%) of Useful Responses
	No. of Respondents	No. of Useful Responses	
Admin & Planning	36	30	17.9%
Curriculum & Instruction	22	20	11.9%
Instructional technology	8	8	4.8%
Human Kinetics	25	21	12.6%
Science Education	30	25	15.0%
Social Studies	11	8	4.8%
Islamic Religious Studies	7	7	4.2%
Christian Religious Studies	7	7	4.2%

Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)	7	7	4.2%
Business Education	6	6	3.6%
Home Economics	3	3	1.8%
Library & Information Science	9	9	5.5%
Educational Psychology	6	5	2.9
Guidance & Counselling	13	11	6.6%
Total	190	167	100

Table 1 indicates the distribution of responses by department/course of study. It is glaring that the highest responses were provided by doctoral students from Admin & Planning 30(17.9%) as well as Science Education 25(15.0%) while Educational Psychology 5(2.9%), Business Education 5(2.9%) and Home Economics 3(1.8%) provided the least responses that were useful for analysis.

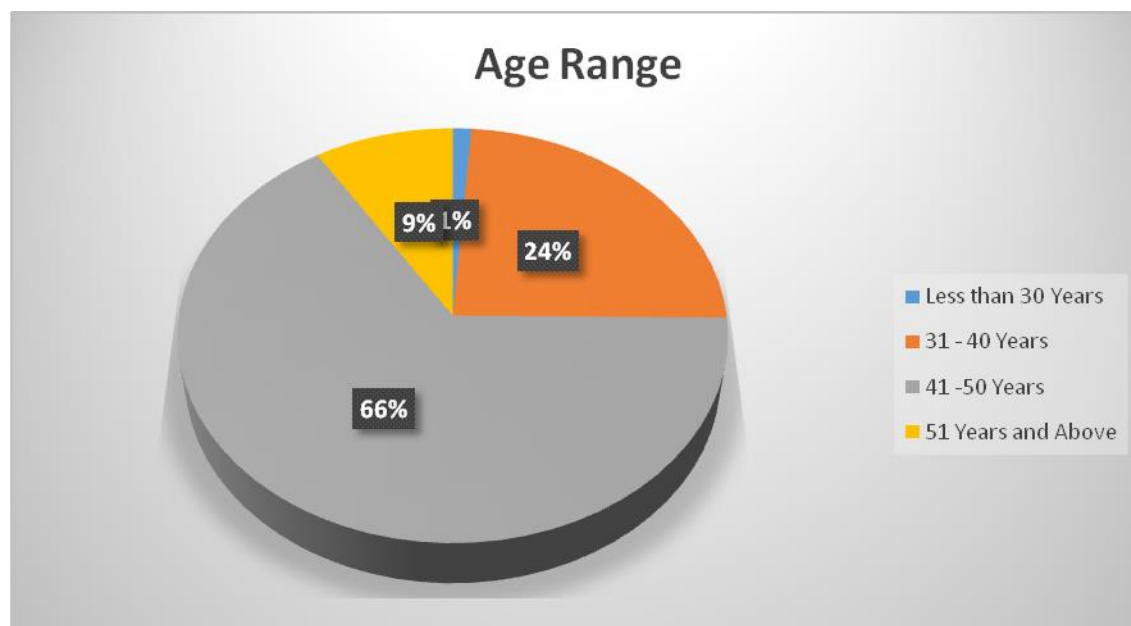


Fig. 2: Age Range of Respondents

The largest group of respondents (65.9%) was aged between 41 and 50 years, followed by those aged 31 to 40 years (23.9%). Only a small proportion of respondents were under 30 years (1.2%)

or over 51 years (9%). This suggests that the majority of doctoral students in this survey are in their mid-career age group.

Research Question 1: *What is the level of awareness and knowledge of copyright law among doctoral students in faculty of education, ABU, Zaria?*

In this section, the respondents' level of awareness and knowledge of copyright was examined using the scale 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agreed, 5 = Strongly Agree respectively.

Table 2: Level of awareness and knowledge of copyright law

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agreed	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Awareness of copyright					
I am aware that copyright exist	109 (65.3%)	43 (25.7%)	4 (2.4%)	2 (1.2%)	11 (6.6%)
I am aware that there are national, regional and international laws on copyright	78 (46.7%)	25 (14.9%)	26 (15.5%)	15 (8.9%)	23 (13.7%)
I am aware of the existence of Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC)	158 (94.6%)	6 (3.6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (1.8%)
I am familiar with copyright laws	30 (17.9%)	27 (16.2%)	62 (37.1%)	40 (23.9%)	8 (4.8%)
Knowledge of copyright					
I am aware that copyright grants economic and moral rights	31 (18.6%)	18 (10.8%)	60 (35.9%)	16 (9.6%)	42 (2.1%)
One of the exceptions to copyright infringement is fair dealing	39 (23.4%)	24 (14.4%)	58 (34.7%)	9 (5.4%)	37 (22.1%)
Plagiarism is a form of copyright infringement	26 (15.6%)	35 (20.9%)	29 (17.7%)	20 (11.9%)	57 (34.1%)
Copyright protects the expressions of ideas	20 (11.9%)	26 (15.6%)	29 (17.4%)	42 (25.1%)	50 (29.9%)
The unauthorised use of copyrighted material is known as copyright infringement	30 (18.0%)	20 (11.9%)	30 (18.0%)	29 (17.7%)	58 (34.7%)
Fair dealing is a legal doctrine that allows the public to make limited use of copyrighted work without permission	20 (11.9%)	18 (10.8%)	60 (35.9%)	39 (23.4%)	30 (18.0%)

From the Table 2 above, the responses show a relatively high level of general awareness of the existence of copyright, but there is a notable gap in detailed knowledge of specific copyright laws and provisions. A large majority of respondents (65.3% strongly agree, 25.7% agree) are aware that copyright exists, suggesting a basic level of copyright awareness among doctoral students. This high awareness level aligns with expectations for the doctoral students who frequently engage in research and academic writing. Despite the high general awareness of copyright, only 46.7% strongly agree and 14.9% agree that they are aware of specific national, regional, and international copyright laws, while 23% of respondents are undecided or unaware of such laws. It can therefore be concluded that while over 90% of respondents are aware of copyright, more than 60% lack understanding of its legal principles, such as fair dealing, copyright infringement, and protection scope.

Research Question 2: *What is the extent of Copyright law infringement by doctoral students in faculty of education, ABU, Zaria?*

The extent of infringement on copyright law by doctoral students in the faculty of education ABU, Zaria was determined in this section using the scale 1 = Very Low Extent, 2 = Low Extent, 3 = Undecided, 4 = High Extent, 5 = Vey High Extent.

Table 3: Extent of infringement on copyright law

	Very High Extent	High Extent	Undecided	Low Extent	Very Low Extent
Copyright is regularly violated by doctoral students	15 (9.0%)	100 (60.0%)	20 (11.9%)	5 (2.9%)	2 (1.2%)
There is high level of copyright infringement among Doctoral students	58 (34.7%)	39 (23.4%)	37 (22.1%)	9 (5.4%)	24 (14.4%)
The different methods of copyright violation among doctoral students include:					
a. Plagiarism	98 (58.7%)	38 (22.8%)	26 (15.6%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (2.9%)
b. Piracy	60 (35.9%)	9 (5.4%)	65 (39.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
c. Indiscriminate photocopying	78 (46.7%)	58 (34.7%)	57 (34.1%)	2 (1.2%)	4 (2.4%)
d. Counterfeiting	39 (23.4%)	26 (15.6%)	109 (65.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
e. Others	30 (18.0%)	20 (11.9%)	58 (34.7%)	29 (17.7%)	30 (18.0%)

Table 3 shows the extent of infringement on copyright by the respondents. Majority of the respondents 115 (69%) indicated that copyright is regularly being violated at a very high extent and high extent respectively. As per the level of copyright infringement, 24(14%) and 9(5%) indicated very low extent and low extent respectively While the majority 58(35%) and 39(23%) respectively indicated high extent and very high extent. That means that copyright infringement among doctoral students in the faculty of education, ABU, Zaria is very high.

The different methods of copyright infringement as indicated by the respondents include: plagiarism, piracy, indiscriminate photocopying, counterfeiting. Many of the respondents 136(81%) agreed that plagiarism and indiscriminate photocopying are the major ways used to infringe on copyright. While 69(41%) and 65(39%) of the respondents view piracy and counterfeiting respectively as actions by which infringement are carried out by doctoral students.

Research Question 3: *What is the perception of doctoral students in faculty of education, ABU, Zaria on digital publishing?*

In this section, the study sought to know the perception of the doctoral students on digital publishing.

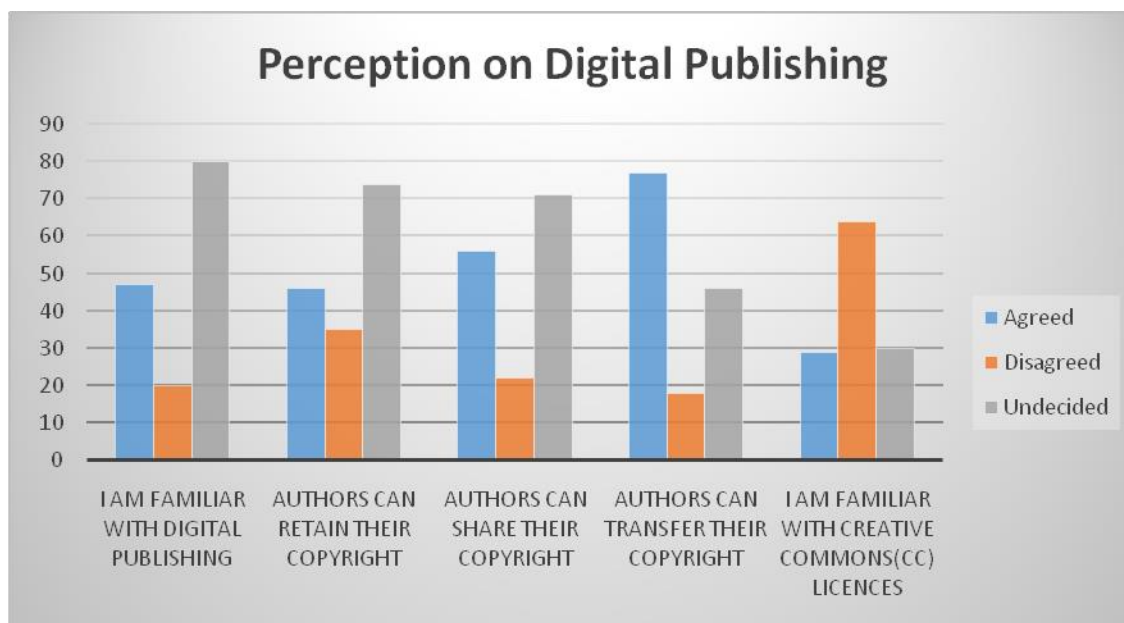


Fig. 3 Perception of Doctoral Students on Digital Publishing

Figure 3 shows the perception of doctoral students on digital publishing. 47(28%) of the respondents affirmed their familiarity with digital publishing while 20(11%) disagreed. The fact that majority 80(48%) are undecided shows that doctoral students of the faculty are not very familiar with digital publishing. Concerning copyright transfer, 77(46%) of the respondents

agreed that authors can transfer their rights in digital publishing. On the contrary, 18(10%) disagreed to the statement “Authors can transfer their copyright”.

Discussion of findings

It is a fact that developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) have facilitated easier ways of accessing information resources and reproducing them which has consequently led to the great problem of copyright infringement or copyright violation. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the doctoral students are aware of copyright law but their knowledge on the subject is very low. The study also helped the researchers to reach a conclusion that copyright is relevant in digital environment. This is in agreement with Charbonneau and Priehs (2014) who remarked that copyright awareness is essential in academic and scholarly environment where scholars use the work of others to create their own works

The study found a significant level of copyright law infringement among doctoral students in the Faculty of Education, ABU, Zaria with a majority of respondents indicated that copyright is regularly violated at a very high or high extent. It was also found that plagiarism was a major method of infringement while indiscriminate photocopying is a prevalent practice among the doctoral students. This is in agreement with the findings of Aboyade, Aboyade and Aala (2015) which revealed plagiarism and piracy as as the main avenues through which copyright is regularly being violated by users. The high level of copyright infringement suggests a potential compromise of academic integrity and ethical research practices among doctoral students. Also, widespread infringement increases the risk of legal actions against the institution or individuals, potentially damaging its reputation. The prevalence of practices like plagiarism and indiscriminate photocopying indicates a lack of adequate knowledge or training on intellectual property rights among students which translates to educational gaps. These findings suggest a need for stricter enforcement of copyright policies within the institution to reduce violations and promote compliance.

On the perception of doctoral student on digital publishing, it was discovered that only a few respondents affirmed familiarity with digital publishing, while majority were undecided. This finding agrees with Muneja and Ndenje-Sichalwe (2016) which revealed that there is high level of ignorance, and different levels of perception on intellectual Property Right even by the right owners. The lack of familiarity with digital publishing suggests that students may not fully understand modern publication practices, which could hinder their ability to publish research effectively in digital formats. The split opinions on copyright transfer also highlight the need for educational programs to clarify how intellectual property rights function in digital publishing. Another implication of this finding is that the lack of awareness could prevent students from leveraging digital publishing platforms to disseminate their research widely and enhance their academic visibility.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The current study was undertaken to investigate the level of awareness and knowledge of copyright and digital publishing among doctoral students in the faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Copyright laws need to be addressed and firmly enforced within faculty of education, ABU Zaria. Arising from the finding of this study, the following is recommended:

1. There is need to set up a unit in the entire university to handle copyright matters in order to facilitate copyright awareness, knowledge and compliance in the faculty and entire Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. This unit should liaise with the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) to plan and execute programs such as seminars/lectures, conferences, film shows, etc. that will enlighten the students and improve their awareness and knowledge of copyright and the consequences of the infringement on copyright.
2. Empowering the doctoral student through various grants and financial aid will aid in alleviating copyright infringement because part of the reasons why most students get involved in fraudulent activities such as plagiarism and counterfeiting is poverty. Also to reduce the rate of illegal photocopying, commercial photocopying operators should be asked to pay royalties for excessive photocopying.
3. A course on Digital Publishing and Intellectual Property Rights/Copyrights Basics should be made compulsory for the doctoral Programme of the university
4. The faculty and university should take proactive measures such as implementing sanctions/penalties, proper sensitization, thorough monitoring, awareness campaigns, etc. This will go a long way to improve copyright compliance

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