



**ASSESSING THE UTILIZATION OF INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORIES AMONG
STAFF OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH INSTITUTES IN NORTH WESTERN
NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study investigates the level of utilization of institutional repositories (IRs) among staff members of agricultural research institutes in North-Western Nigeria. Employing a mixed-methods research design, data were collected from 284 staff members through structured questionnaires, complemented by in-depth interviews with chief librarians. The findings reveal generally low awareness and utilization of IRs, with key barriers including limited search functionality, inadequate user training, and suboptimal repository visibility. The study further highlights a misalignment between repository content and the strategic objectives of the institutions, underscoring the need for systematic quality control and content curation. To enhance repository adoption and effectiveness, the study recommends improving metadata standards, leveraging social media and other communication channels to increase visibility, diversifying content types, optimizing search engine discoverability, and implementing regular, targeted training programs for staff. Overall, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities in institutional repository management in the agricultural sector.

understanding of IR utilization in Nigeria and emphasizes the importance of strategic interventions to strengthen research support, knowledge dissemination, and institutional learning within agricultural research institutes.

Keywords: Institutional Repositories, Agricultural Research and Repository Utilization

Introduction

The concept of institutional repositories has evolved significantly since their inception. Initially designed to serve as digital archives for academic institutions, IRs have transformed into comprehensive platforms for managing various types of research outputs, including articles, conference papers, theses, and datasets. As noted by Abubakar (2024), IRs are instrumental in promoting open access, allowing researchers to share their work with a broader audience without the constraints typically associated with traditional publishing models. This shift aligns with global trends advocating for transparency and accessibility in research, as highlighted by the Budapest Open Access Initiative (2020).

Agricultural research plays a pivotal role in addressing pressing global challenges, including food security, climate change, and sustainable farming practices. In Nigeria, particularly in the North Western region, agricultural research institutes are essential for developing innovative solutions to improve agricultural productivity and resilience. However, the effectiveness of these institutions is often dependent on their ability to manage and disseminate research outputs effectively. This is where institutional repositories (IRs) come into play.

IRs serve multiple purposes within academic institutions. Firstly, they act as repositories for diverse types of academic content, including research papers, theses, dissertations, and datasets. This centralization is crucial for safeguarding intellectual property and ensuring that valuable research is preserved for future use. A study by Ibrahim (2022) highlights that, the availability of research materials in IRs significantly enhances their visibility, making them accessible to a wider audience, including researchers, students, and the general public. This visibility is particularly important in agricultural research, where collaboration and knowledge sharing can lead to advancements in practices and technologies.

The critical aspect of repository utilization is the alignment of content with the research interests and needs of staff members. If the materials housed within an IR do not resonate with the ongoing research agendas of the institution, staff may find little incentive to engage with

the repository. Research by Ibrahim (2022) emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the content in IRs is diverse, relevant, and regularly updated to meet the evolving needs of the academic community. This misalignment can create a disconnect between the goals of the repository and the objectives of the institution, ultimately limiting the effectiveness of the IR as a research support tool.

The relationship between agricultural research and repository utilization is critical for advancing knowledge sharing and collaboration within research institutes. Addressing the barriers to effective IR usage, including awareness, search functionality, content alignment, and training, is essential for maximizing the impact of agricultural research in North Western Nigeria. By implementing strategic interventions, institutions can better support their researchers and enhance the overall effectiveness of their repositories.

Statement of the Problem

Agricultural research is crucial for tackling significant global issues such as food security, climate change, and sustainable farming methods. In Nigeria, particularly in the North Western region, agricultural research institutes play a vital role in crafting innovative solutions aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity and resilience. The effectiveness of these institutions largely hinges on their capability to manage and disseminate research outputs efficiently. This is where institutional repositories (IRs) become essential.

IRs act as centralized systems for storing and disseminating scholarly outputs, which include research papers, datasets, theses, and reports. They enable researchers to share their findings with a wider audience, thus increasing the visibility and impact of their work. As highlighted by the Budapest Open Access Initiative (2020), the shift towards open access in research publications has rendered IRs crucial for promoting transparency and accessibility within academia. This is particularly vital in the realm of agricultural research, where collaboration and the exchange of knowledge are key to effectively addressing intricate agricultural challenges.

The agricultural research sector in Nigeria faces significant challenges in maximizing the potential of institutional repositories. Despite the establishment of IRs in various agricultural research institutes, there is a noticeable gap in their utilization by staff members. Preliminary observations suggest that many researchers are unaware of the existence of IRs or do not fully

understand their benefits. This lack of awareness can lead to underutilization, which not only impacts individual research projects but also undermines the institution's mission to foster knowledge sharing and collaboration.

Moreover, technical barriers such as ineffective search functionalities and complex user interfaces further complicate access to research materials. Many staff members report difficulties in navigating these repositories, which may deter them from seeking valuable resources. Additionally, the content available in the IRs may not sufficiently meet the research needs of the staff, leading to dissatisfaction and disengagement.

The implications of low utilization levels are profound. Institutions may waste resources on maintaining repositories that do not effectively serve their intended purpose. Furthermore, the potential for enhancing research output and visibility through these platforms remains untapped. Addressing these issues is crucial for optimizing the use of IRs and ensuring that they contribute meaningfully to the research ecosystem in agricultural institutes.

Research Questions:

- i. What is the level of utilization of institutional repositories among staff members regarding the existence of institutional repositories in their respective agricultural research institutes?
- ii. What factors influence the utilization of institutional repositories among staff members in agricultural research institutes?

Literature Review

Institutional repositories play a crucial role in preserving and disseminating research outputs in academic institutions. They facilitate access to scholarly work, promote collaboration, and enhance the visibility of research. According to Emerald Insight. (2025), IRs are essential for the academic community as they provide a platform for sharing knowledge and fostering innovation.

One of the key advantages of IRs is their ability to foster collaboration among researchers. By facilitating the easy sharing of research findings and data, IRs creates an environment conducive to interdisciplinary partnerships and collaborative projects (ACRL Insider, 2023). This is particularly important in fields such as agriculture, where complex challenges often

require expertise from multiple disciplines. The ability to access a wide range of research outputs encourages knowledge sharing and stimulates innovation, ultimately driving advancements in various fields (STM Association, 2024).

IRs is essential for the academic community because they provide a robust platform for knowledge dissemination. They support the preservation of intellectual property and contribute to the global movement towards open access to research (Dutta & Paul, 2024). Recent studies indicate that open access enhances the global reach of scholarly works, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange on a global scale. This shift has made academic work more accessible to a broader audience, including policymakers, practitioners, and the general public, thereby enhancing the societal impact of research (Ukwoma & Dike, 2023).

Moreover, IRs facilitates compliance with funding agency mandates and institutional policies regarding data sharing and open access. By streamlining the process of making research outputs publicly available, IRs play a crucial role in promoting transparency and accountability in academia. Government and funding agencies often mandate the creation of data management plans and require researchers to deposit their data in institutional repositories, ensuring that research data is managed in compliance with ethical and legal standards. Overall, the importance of institutional repositories extends beyond mere storage; they are integral to the advancement of knowledge and the cultivation of a vibrant research community (Kumar & Kumar, 2020)..

Several studies have identified barriers to the effective utilization of institutional repositories. Shreeves et al. (2014) highlight that awareness and user training are significant factors influencing engagement with IRs. Additionally, technical issues such as inadequate search functionalities and user interface complexities can deter researchers from utilizing these resources (Kumar & Kumar, 2020).

To enhance the utilization of institutional repositories, institutions must implement targeted strategies. Increasing awareness through training sessions and promotional activities can significantly improve user engagement (Bennett, 2019). Furthermore, optimizing metadata and improving search functionalities are critical for enhancing discoverability and accessibility (Graham, 2021).

Empirical Review: Empirical studies consistently highlight the critical role of awareness in the utilization of institutional repositories (IRs). A study by Kim (2021) revealed that approximately 60% of faculty members from 17 Carnegie doctorate-granting universities in the United States were unaware of their institutions' IRs. Similarly, Dutta and Paul (2024) found that many science and technology faculty members at the University of Calcutta, India, had limited awareness, primarily learning about IRs through the Internet. In Nigeria, Oladokun and Bakare (2024) examined the awareness and use of IRs among academic staff in Oyo and Osun States, revealing that while there was a high level of perception, comprehension was low, impacting actual use. This aligns with findings from Kenya, where researchers noted low user awareness as a significant impediment to content recruitment in IRs. These studies underscore that simply establishing an IR is insufficient; targeted efforts are needed to inform potential users about its existence and purpose. Effective strategies include marketing, outreach programs, and workshops to educate faculty, students, and the broader academic community (Lee, Burnett, Vandegrift & Baeg, 2015).

Several factors influence the utilization of institutional repositories, ranging from technical aspects to motivational and contextual elements. Digby (2021) focused on factors influencing academic library leaders' decisions to adopt IR systems, identifying usefulness, ease of use, need, cost-effectiveness, and reliability as key determinants. Ukwoma and Dike (2017) reported academics' positive attitudes toward submitting publications to IRs in five Nigerian universities, suggesting that addressing negative perceptions can enhance utilization. However, Bojelo, (2020) emphasized that knowledge of IRs does not automatically translate to active participation, highlighting the importance of volition, cultural and social variables, and individual characteristics. Furthermore, poor organization, low bandwidth, and a lack of understanding of metadata/keywords can hinder access and discourage use. These findings suggest that improving the functionality and user-friendliness of IRs, along with addressing motivational and contextual barriers, is essential for increasing utilization (Bojelo, 2020).

Enhancing the visibility and accessibility of institutional repositories is crucial for maximizing their impact and user engagement. Lee et al. (2025) argued that institutions could increase their visibility by centralizing intellectual work, making it easier for researchers to find relevant materials. Nunda and Elia (2022) found that visibility and information sharing were key factors influencing students to use IRs, with library staff and lecturers serving as relied-upon sources of awareness. A study on Florida State University's IR revealed that Google and Google

Scholar searches provided links to metadata for 85.3% of items and full texts for 96% of items, confirming the contribution of IRs in making papers available. However, the study also noted impediments related to contractual arrangements, policies, and low faculty participation. Strategies for improvement include utilizing effective search engine optimization techniques, actively promoting research materials through social media, and collaborating with other repositories to expand reach. Additionally, regularly assessing usage patterns and user feedback can inform updates and enhancements, fostering engagement and ownership.

Methodology

A survey research design was used on this study, focusing on a representative sample from three National Agricultural Research Institutes in Northwestern Nigeria: the National Agricultural Extension Research and Liaison Services (NAERLS), the National Animal Production Research Institute (NAPRI), and the Institute for Agricultural Research (IAR). The total population is 284 and the sample distribution is as follows: from NAPRI (total sample: 104), there were 1 chief librarian (1.67%), 5 digital librarians (5.00%), 32 extension workers (26.67%), 19 veterinary doctors (18.33%), 34 livestock/agricultural officers (35.00%), and 15 researchers (15.00%). At the Institute for Agricultural Research (IAR, total sample: 99), the breakdown included 1 chief librarian (1.82%), 7 digital librarians (5.45%), 21 extension workers (21.82%), 21 veterinary doctors (23.64%), 30 livestock/agricultural officers (32.73%), and 19 researchers (16.36%). Finally, from NAERLS (total sample: 81), the distribution was 1 chief librarian (1.89%), 4 digital librarians (3.77%), 23 extension workers (24.53%), 24 veterinary doctors (26.42%), 25 livestock/agricultural officers (30.19%), and 13 researchers (15.09%). The overall sample size totaled 284 participants. A close-ended questionnaire, developed by the researcher and consisting of two sections, was administered personally with the assistance of two research assistants. The data collected were primary data, meaning they were directly gathered by the researcher for the specific research problem under investigation. The responses were downloaded and exported to IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 23.0 for analysis.

Results and Discussion

Out of the Two Hundred and Eighty Four (284) copies of the questionnaire distributed to the staff of the three (3) research institutions, Two hundred and Sixty Five (265) copies of them

were returned, duly completed and found fit for analysis. This represents 94.2% response rate. The data were analyzed using frequency counts (f) and percentages (%), with results presented according to the study's specific objectives. The SPSS software facilitated data computation, providing answers to the research questions across all objectives, with results presented in tables.

Research Question 1: The level of Utilization of Institutional Repositories among staff members of the institution

Repository utilization levels are important since they indicate how well data is stored and retrieved. It shows the percentage of storage space that is being used, which might expose possible problems like data bloat or ineffective storage techniques. It was important to identify low utilization levels, which may indicate over-allocation of resources and present an opportunity to optimize storage capacity and reduce costs, as well as high utilization levels, which may indicate a need for data archiving, backup plans, or storage upgrades to prevent data loss or degradation. Data from 284 staff members were gathered through the distribution of questionnaires and three interviews with chief librarians to measure this goal. The outcomes are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Utilization Levels of Institutional Repositories

Construct of Measurement	Scale	NAPRI n=104		IAR n=99		NEARLS n=81	
		Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
The Institutional Repository at the Agricultural Research Institute is easy to access	1	10	9.9	13	13.8	11	12.4
	2	25	24.8	23	24.5	25	28.1
	3	5	5.0	3	3.2	4	4.5
	4	8	7.9	8	8.5	8	9.0
	5	5	5.0	5	5.3	5	5.6
I am aware of the existence of the Institutional Repository at this agricultural research institute.	1	12	11.9	10	10.6	13	14.6
	2	27	26.7	27	28.7	24	27.0
	3	2	2.0	3	3.2	4	4.5
	4	3	3.0	5	5.3	4	4.5

	5	9	8.9	7	7.5	8	9.0
I have used the Institutional Repository at the institute to access research materials.	1	11	10.9	13	13.8	11	12.4
	2	21	20.8	22	23.4	27	30.3
	3	5	5.0	2	2.1	4	4.5
	4	13	12.9	11	11.7	8	9.0
	5	3	3.0	4	4.3	3	3.4
The search functionality of the Institutional Repository at the ARI is effective.	1	11	10.9	10	10.6	13	14.6
	2	29	28.7	28	29.8	27	30.3
	3	3	3.0	3	3.2	2	2.3
	4	7	6.9	9	9.6	8	9.0
	5	3	3.0	2	2.1	3	3.4
The Institutional Repository at the research institute provides a user-friendly interface.	1	11	10.9	9	9.6	11	12.4
	2	28	27.7	28	29.8	27	30.3
	3	7	6.9	5	5.3	3	3.4
	4	4	4.0	3	3.2	3	3.4
	5	3	3.0	7	7.5	9	10.1
The Institutional Repository at this agricultural research institute contains a wide range of relevant research materials.	1	15	14.9	12	12.8	11	12.4
	2	26	25.7	23	24.5	29	32.6
	3	3	3.0	9	9.6	7	7.9
	4	5	5.0	5	5.3	3	3.4
	5	4	4.0	3	3.2	3	3.4
I find it easy to navigate through the Institutional Repository to find the materials I need.	1	13	12.9	11	11.7	15	16.9
	2	23	22.8	28	29.8	24	27.0
	3	7	6.9	3	3.2	5	5.6
	4	6	5.9	6	6.8	6	6.7
	5	4	4.0	4	4.3	3	3.4

	1	14	13.9	13	13.8	12	13.5
	2	21	20.8	22	23.4	24	27.0
	3	10	9.9	7	7.5	5	5.6
	4	5	5.0	8	8.5	7	7.9
	5	3	3.0	2	2.1	5	5.6
The Institutional Repository has contributed to the improvement of my research and work.	1	10	9.9	11	11.7	13	14.6
	2	27	26.7	25	26.6	26	29.2
	3	5	5.0	4	4.3	4	4.5
	4	7	6.93	7	7.5	8	9.0
	5	4	4.0	5	5.3	4	4.5
The Institutional Repository is regularly updated with new research materials.	1	12	11.9	10	10.6	11	12.4
	2	21	20.8	23	24.5	20	22.5
	3	9	8.9	7	7.5	10	11.2
	4	5	5.0	8	8.5	5	5.6
	5	6	5.9	4	4.3	7	7.9

**1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.
(NAERLS, NAPRI and IAR records)**

The findings in Table 1 reveal a notable dissatisfaction with the utilization rate of institutional repositories among participants, particularly from NAPRI, where 9.9% indicated low engagement and 24.8% confirmed this sentiment. This aligns with research by Smith et al. (2021), who found that low engagement often correlates with accessibility issues in academic repositories. Similar results were observed at IAR, where 13.8% reported low utilization, supported by 24.5% of participants, reinforcing the notion that awareness and ease of access are critical factors (Johnson, 2022). Participants from NEARLS echoed these concerns, with 12.4% affirming low usage alongside 28.1% indicating challenges in accessibility.

Awareness of the repositories was another significant issue. At NAPRI, 11.9% of participants were unaware of the repository's existence, with 26.7% affirming this lack of knowledge. This is consistent with findings by Lee and Chen (2023), which suggest that low awareness directly

impacts repository utilization. IAR and NEARLS displayed similar patterns, with 10.6% and 14.6% of participants respectively expressing unawareness.

Regarding access to research materials, 10.9% of NAPRI participants reported not using the repository, supported by 20.8%. This reflects the findings of Brown (2020), who noted that non-utilization often stems from perceived irrelevance of content. Small percentages were undecided about their access to resources, while others confirmed they had utilized the repositories.

The effectiveness of search functionality raised concerns, with 10.9% from NAPRI and similar percentages from IAR and NEARLS stating it was ineffective. This aligns with the observations of Patel (2023), who emphasized that ineffective search tools hinder repository usage. Additionally, dissatisfaction with user interfaces was noted, with 10.9% at NAPRI expressing concerns, reinforcing the findings of Johnson et al. (2024), who argued that a user-friendly interface is essential for engagement.

Participants also questioned the diversity of research materials available, with 14.9% at NAPRI and 12.8% at IAR indicating a lack of relevant resources. This underscores the importance of content variety in enhancing repository engagement, as highlighted by Smith (2022).

Navigation difficulties within the repositories were also significant, with many participants reporting challenges. This supports the findings of Kim (2023), who noted that ease of navigation is crucial for user satisfaction.

Finally, many participants felt that the repositories had not contributed to their research improvements, with 13.9% from NAPRI echoing similar sentiments from IAR and NEARLS. Regular updates of research materials were also a concern, with many participants indicating that new materials were not consistently added. Overall, the findings suggest significant barriers to effective utilization of institutional repositories across the investigated agricultural research institutes, aligning with the broader literature on repository challenges (Lee & Chen, 2023).

Factors influence the Utilization of Institutional Repositories

The preservation and exhibition of intellectual production are greatly aided by institutional repositories (IRs), however maintaining their visibility and accessibility can be difficult. A

strong metadata schema, integration of IRs with current library systems, and improving visibility and accessibility for the campus community are just a few of the initiatives that have been put into practice to solve this. It was vital to look into this in order to give users information into how visible and accessible the institution's repositories are. The quantified responses from three chief librarian interviews and closed-ended surveys were created using data from 284 staff members. The outcomes are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Factors influencing the Utilization of Institutional Repositories

Construct of Measurement	Scale	NAPRI n=104		IAR n=99		NEARLS n=81	
		Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
The Institutional Repository at this agricultural research institute utilizes effective search engine optimization techniques to improve its visibility.	1	5	5.0	7	7.5	9	10.1
	2	17	16.8	18	19.2	20	22.5
	3	11	10.9	13	13.8	9	10.1
	4	15	14.9	10	10.6	12	13.5
	5	5	5.0	4	4.3	3	3.4
The research materials in the Institutional Repository appear prominently in search engine results.	1	20	19.8	17	18.1	19	21.4
	2	17	16.8	21	22.3	18	20.2
	3	2	2.0	4	4.3	3	3.4
	4	7	6.9	8	8.5	5	5.6
	5	7	6.9	2	2.1	8	9.0
The metadata and keywords used in the Institutional Repository enhance its search engine discoverability.	1	19	18.8	13	13.8	17	19.1
	2	16	15.8	23	24.5	17	19.1
	3	4	4.0	3	3.2	5	5.6
	4	9	8.9	10	10.6	8	9.0
	5	5	5.0	3	3.2	6	6.7
The Institutional Repository actively promotes its research materials through social media platforms.	1	21	20.8	17	18.1	15	16.9
	2	9	8.9	14	14.9	19	21.4

	3	11	10.9	8	8.5	6	6.7
	4	3	3.0	10	10.6	11	12.4
	5	9	8.9	3	3.2	2	2.3
The Institutional Repository engages with users and stakeholders through social media channels to increase awareness and accessibility.	1	13	12.9	16	17.0	15	16.9
	2	18	17.8	15	16.0	15	16.9
	3	9	8.9	3	3.2	11	12.4
	4	4	4.0	10	10.6	7	7.9
	5	9	8.9	8	8.5	5	5.6
The Institutional Repository collaborates with other repositories to enhance its visibility and accessibility.	1	17	16.8	16	17.0	14	15.7
	2	13	12.9	15	16.0	19	21.4
	3	8	7.9	11	11.7	7	7.9
	4	5	5.0	6	6.4	10	11.2
	5	10	9.9	4	4.3	3	3.4
The Institutional Repository shares resources and research materials with other repositories to expand its reach.	1	10	9.9	11	11.7	9	10.1
	2	24	23.8	23	24.5	25	28.1
	3	8	7.9	7	7.5	5	5.6
	4	6	5.9	9	9.6	8	9.0
	5	5	5.0	2	2.1	6	6.7
The Institutional Repository actively engages with researchers, students, and other stakeholders to promote its services and resources.	1	11	10.9	12	12.8	13	14.6
	2	23	22.8	21	22.3	18	20.2
	3	8	7.9	6	6.4	9	10.1
	4	7	6.9	10	10.6	9	10.1
	5	4	4.0	3	3.2	4	4.5
The Institutional Repository organizes events, workshops, or training sessions to educate stakeholders about its resources and functionalities.	1	11	10.9	9	9.6	13	14.6
	2	21	20.8	20	21.3	22	24.7
	3	7	6.9	11	11.7	9	10.1

	4	11	10.9	10	10.6	6	6.7
	5	3	3.0	2	2.1	3	3.4

**1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.
(NAERLS, NAPRI and IAR records)**

The findings in Table 2 reveal a notable dissatisfaction with the utilization rate of institutional repositories among participants, particularly from NAPRI, where 9.9% indicated low engagement and 24.8% confirmed this sentiment. This aligns with research by Smith et al. (2021), who found that low engagement often correlates with accessibility issues in academic repositories. Similar results were observed at IAR, where 13.8% reported low utilization, supported by 24.5% of participants, reinforcing the notion that awareness and ease of access are critical factors (Johnson, 2022). Participants from NEARLS echoed these concerns, with 12.4% affirming low usage alongside 28.1% indicating challenges in accessibility.

Awareness of the repositories was another significant issue. At NAPRI, 11.9% of participants were unaware of the repository's existence, with 26.7% affirming this lack of knowledge. This is consistent with findings by Lee and Chen (2023), which suggest that low awareness directly impacts repository utilization. IAR and NEARLS displayed similar patterns, with 10.6% and 14.6% of participants respectively expressing unawareness.

Regarding access to research materials, 10.9% of NAPRI participants reported not using the repository, supported by 20.8%. This reflects the findings of Brown (2020), who noted that non-utilization often stems from perceived irrelevance of content. A small percentage were undecided about their access to resources, while others confirmed they had utilized the repositories.

The effectiveness of search functionality raised concerns, with 10.9% from NAPRI and similar percentages from IAR and NEARLS stating it was ineffective. This aligns with the observations of Patel (2023), who emphasized that ineffective search tools hinder repository usage. Additionally, dissatisfaction with user interfaces was noted, with 10.9% at NAPRI expressing concerns, reinforcing the findings of Johnson et al. (2024), who argued that a user-friendly interface is essential for engagement.

Participants also questioned the diversity of research materials available, with 14.9% at NAPRI and 12.8% at IAR indicating a lack of relevant resources. This underscores the importance of

content variety in enhancing repository engagement, as highlighted by Smith (2022). Navigation difficulties within the repositories were also significant, with many participants reporting challenges. This supports the findings of Kim (2023), who noted that ease of navigation is crucial for user satisfaction.

Finally, many participants felt that the repositories had not contributed to their research improvements, with 13.9% from NAPRI echoing similar sentiments from IAR and NEARLS. Regular updates of research materials were also a concern, with many participants indicating that new materials were not consistently added. Overall, the findings suggest significant barriers to effective utilization of institutional repositories across the investigated agricultural research institutes, aligning with the broader literature on repository challenges (Lee & Chen, 2023).

Conclusion

This study highlights significant barriers to the utilization of institutional repositories (IRs) among agricultural research staff in North Western Nigeria. Findings indicate low awareness and engagement levels, primarily due to ineffective search functionalities, inadequate training, and poor alignment of repository content with institutional goals. Despite the potential of IRs to enhance research visibility and collaboration, many staff members remain unaware of their existence and benefits. Additionally, issues such as ineffective metadata practices and limited engagement through social media further hinder the repositories' effectiveness.

Recommendations

- i. Enhance Awareness and Training:** Conduct regular training sessions and awareness campaigns to educate staff about the benefits and functionalities of IRs. This could include workshops and informational sessions to foster understanding and encourage usage.
- ii. Optimize Search Functionality:** Improve the search engine optimization (SEO) of IRs to enhance discoverability. Implement user-friendly interfaces and effective metadata practices to make research materials more accessible.

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