

Lawyers' knowledge, perception and application of information and communication technologies in Nigerian judicial practice

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to determine the knowledge and use of ICTs among lawyers from North Central Nigeria. The study had three objectives which were converted to research questions. The researcher applied a descriptive survey as the design of the study while the population was made up of all the lawyers who were members of the Nigerian Bar Association from North Central Nigeria. The sample size was made up of 385 lawyers while questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The result of the study showed thus: there is low knowledge level of ICT among lawyers within the study area, majority of the respondents had positive attitudes towards ICTs; although most of the respondents reported that they use ICTs. Additional result showed that as high as 54% reported that their extent of use of ICTs for judicial use was low. The study makes recommendations on how to promote knowledge acquisition on ICTs tools among lawyers.

Keywords: 1.ICTs, 2.lawyers, 3.judicial practice; 4.practice, 5.Nigeria

Introduction

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have been regarded as useful working tools for the 21st century society. They have been found useful in almost all spheres of human life. Tasks that were hitherto done without recourse to ICTs are now largely carried out through ICTs-assisted tools. Spheres of life like the economy, security, education, media practice, agriculture, health, commerce, governance among others now deploy ICT tools to function effectively. Ekwueme and Yare (2019) corroborate that ICTs are gradually taking over almost every services that were once done manually. They are now useful tools for task execution in almost all spheres of human existence. Abubakar (2019) says that technology has become an inevitable need in the day-to-day life of the society and the more societies come to know about technological development, the more they are able to take advantage of it. Other scholars. Anaehobi, (2007); Attama and Owalabi, (2008) Adamali, Coffey, and Safdar (2006); Chiwetalu, (2003); Ijatuyi and Adebayo, (2006); Nworgu, (2007); Okon and Bassey, (2008) share a similar view regarding the instrumentality of ICTs in contemporary society. Olusanya and Oleyede (2003) say ICTs were first called IT (information technology) until recently when it was thought that the communication component ought to be highlighted because of its significance. It was then that the concept transformed to Information and Communication Technologies ICTs. According to Marcelle (2000), information and communication technologies appeared as a combination of information technologies (IT) and communication technologies (CT) and presently involve a variety of computer and Internet technologies and related software and applications.

ICTs, according to the **World Bank Group (2019)** include the infrastructure – wire transmitters, computers – and the information technology, i.e., the application and content that travel through these infrastructure. They include the different types of technologies powering communication and information exchange among the peoples of the world at tremendous speed. They are driven by the convergence of computers, telecommunications and traditional media. Scholars (e.g., Ladokun, Osunwole & Olaoye, 2013; Ibikunle & Binpe, 2014) agree that ICT tools are cardinal for information exchange in the contemporary world.

ICTs support digitization of data. With such digitalization, different types of data, regardless of origin, can be manipulated and integrated on the basis of their common informational structure. Digital technology is not new, but the new media revolution really began in the 1990s with the emergence of compression technology, which made it possible to compress, store, manipulate and transmit digital information in previously unheard of quantities (ILO, 2000).

Consequent upon the important role of ICTs in task execution, its knowledge, perception and eventual use are interesting areas of research among 21st century scholars. These three variables are now important considerations in testing the intellectual sagacity of people and professionals. Knowledge of ICTs is important because people may not form perception over something they have little or no knowledge of. Madanda, Kabonesa, and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo (2007) say that knowledge of ICTs enables users to access a number of IT-based services and helps to ensure success in the labour market. It also provides a considerable return to the society. Besides, the individual's knowledge is also affected by attitudes. Aral, Bütün-Ayhan, Ünlü, Erdoğan & Unal, (2006); Aydın, (2007); Teo, Chai, Hug & Lee, (2008) in examining ICTs use have found that ICTs knowledge plays a role in determining eventual use. Mid-Pacific ICT Center (2014) identified four comments by which users may have knowledge of ICTs. They are: ICT/Digital Literacy; ICTs Infrastructure and support applied technologists; specialized business and industry uses of ICT; and ICTs Research and development scientists (Mid-Pacific ICT Center, 2014). Cano (2005) lists other measures of ICTs knowledge such as knowledge of computer systems, operating system, search Internet, communication and networking, word process, image process, database, entertainment, online process, attitudes, technological platforms and Web 2.0 tools. Chen, Castillo and Ligon (2015) identify three broad dimensions of knowledge of ICTs as basic knowledge, advanced knowledge and multimedia knowledge. Basic ICTs knowledge include: knowledge of computer systems, use of the operating system, search Internet, communication and networking, word processing and use of spreadsheets. Advanced ICTs knowledge include: image processing, use of database, technological platforms and Web 2.0 tools. The multimedia knowledge include: entertainment and learning with ICTs and online procedures. In this study, the classification of Chen, Castillo and Ligon (2015) will be used. {1} basic knowledge, {2} advance knowledge {3} multi-media knowledge.

How users perceive innovations in technologies has also been regarded as an important factor that determines actual use. In this regard, Fred D. Davis, Jr. was among the early scholars to examine user perception of technology. He did this using the Technological Acceptance Model. The model hypothesized that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness will influence attitudes to new technologies and attitude to new technologies will influence eventual use (Davis, 1986). Surendran (2012) says that TAM is one of the most popular research models to predict use and acceptance of information systems and technology by individual users. The perception that lawyers have of ICTs is worth investigating because it could influence their attitudes and eventual use.

Lawyers are important persons in any society. This is because they play critical roles in enforcing human rights through the interpretation of relevant sections of the law. The legal system is fundamental for maintaining stability and order in the society (Owoeye, 2011). Lawyers defend the rights of others as well as ensure that justice is served at all times. Owoeye, (2011) says that lawyers in any civilized society settle fundamental human rights, disputes and clashes. He adds that a legal practitioner in Nigeria is a barrister as well as a solicitor whose primary duties are: advocacy, litigation, counseling, preparation of legal document, among others. A lawyer defends his client(s) in the court of law by applying the principles of law to the evidence available and by providing relevant facts. Lawyers enlighten the public of their constitutional rights and ensure that people are not deprived of their fundamental human rights such as freedom of association, speech, opinion,

religion (Owoeye, 2011). It is perhaps, because of the important roles lawyers play that the Nigerian judicial system is over-burdened with cases.

Nigerian laws also make provisions for justice delivery. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) in section 6 provides that the judicial powers of the Federation shall be vested in the courts established for the Federation to which this section relates. These courts are: The Supreme Court of Nigeria, The Court of Appeal, The Federal High Court, The National Industrial Court, The High Court of the FCT Abuja, The High Court of the States, The Customary Court of Appeal of the FCT, The Shariah Court of Appeal of the FCT, The Customary Court of Appeal of the States, and The Shariah Court of Appeal of the States. Judicial power is therefore the power of a court to decide and pronounce judgments and carry it into effect between any parties before it. The responsibilities captured here are enormous as it involves the resolution of disputes involving social and moral questions of great importance to the society. The public therefore expects an effective judicial system that can meet the demands of modern democratic society (Doma, 2016). Dele (2008) avers that it is widely believed that the efficacy of any judicial system is gauged by its capacity to provide timely and appropriate justice to parties in a dispute. Lawyers are critical stakeholders in Nigerian judicial system. Their perception, knowledge and application of ICT tools will play a critical role in making their jobs faster. It is against this background that this study sought to ascertain lawyers' knowledge, perception and application of Information and communication technologies in their Judicial practice.

Objectives of the study

This study sought to achieve the following:

1. To ascertain the knowledge level of ICTs among lawyers in North Central Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the attitude to ICTs among lawyers from North Central Nigeria.
3. To ascertain the extent of use of ICTs for judicial practice among lawyers from North Central Nigeria.

Review of Empirical Studies

Here, the researcher examined empirical studies that are relevant to the current. In doing so, attention was paid to the objectives of the current study. The first study to be reviewed was that of a Coker (2014) who did a study to determine the use of ICTs among legal practitioners in Ibadan metropolis and to determine how often the lawyers used ICTs for their information needs and to ascertain the extent to which they were satisfied with the services provided by ICTs. The researcher deployed survey research design for the study with questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The findings revealed that due to lack of awareness, majority of the lawyers were yet to take advantage of the huge potential benefits that can be derived from using ICTs. The study revealed that legal practitioners used some ICTs more than others; for instance, mobile phones and computers were the most frequently used ICTs. Furthermore, young legal practitioners embraced ICTs more than the older lawyers. In addition, about 75.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that the application of ICTs in the legal profession would go a long way in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the profession. The major problems and constraints identified to the use of ICTs among lawyers are the unfavorable economic situation of the country, excessive cost of procurement of ICTs facilities and inadequate infrastructure such as telecommunication and electric supply. This study is relevant to the current study because it examined ICTs use among layers. The issue is that the researcher did not pay attention to knowledge of ICTs.

Babalola and Azubuike (2018) conducted a study wherein they examined the influence of gender, age, ICT competence and awareness of Electronic Information Resources (EIRs) on the use of EIRs in legal research by lawyers in Lagos State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to: determine the level of awareness of e-resources among lawyers in Lagos State; ascertain the lawyers' use of various electronic information resources; find out how competent the lawyers are at using ICTs; determine the relationship between awareness and use of electronic information resources lawyers in Lagos State; determine the joint effect of age, gender and ICT competence on lawyers' use of e-resources; ascertain the relative influence of age on the use of e-resources by lawyers in Lagos

State; determine the relative influence of ICT competence on lawyers' use of electronic information resources and find out the influence of gender on lawyers' use of electronic information resources in Lagos State

The researchers made use of descriptive survey as the design of the study. Stratified sampling technique was used to select 226 lawyers from a population of 377. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The data was analysed with frequency and percentage distribution, correlation and multiple regression. Findings showed that the majority (>70%) were aware of most of the listed legal EIRs and also utilized them. However, not all could rate themselves highly competent at using ICTs for some of the listed tasks. Awareness and use of information resources had a significant, positive relationship ($r = .82, p < .05$). ICT competence ($\beta = .63, t = 6.51, p < .05$) and age ($\beta = -6.01, t = -3.28, p < .05$) significantly influenced the use of EIRs while gender did not ($\beta = -6.78, t = -3.72, p > .05$). The study recommends that the law firms should ensure continuous training in the use of ICTs and law librarians should find innovative ways of keeping lawyers abreast of new EIRs. This study is related to the current study because it examined the role of ICTs in the legal profession. Less attention was paid on knowledge and use of ICTs among layers for their practice.

Kim and Seo (2015) explore the information-seeking behavior among lawyers and its impact on their law practice. This study seeks to find out reasons for studying the applicability of prior analyses to attorneys' practices in recent times. This study performed surveys and interviews with 21 practical attorneys in South Korea who were grouped by their experience, period and the size of their law firms. The researchers found that the attorney's experience and the size of law firms as variables also make an impact on the behavior of an attorney related to the use of ICTs. In fact, this study further finds that the attorneys prefer digital information in online database and formal information like statutes or case laws. In addition, this study suggests that certain behaviour such as meaningful use of informal information in difficult situations result in improper information, adversely impacting the information-seeking behavior among attorneys.

Ramachandrappa (2017) conducted a study wherein he examined the status of e-resource and Internet use pattern of practicing lawyers. Survey method was used as the design of the study with questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The sample was made up of 617 lawyers. The result of the study showed that a majority (88.01%) of the respondents opined that Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have made the information-seeking and gathering process easier for them and 11.99% of them opined that ICT has made this difficult. 64.34% lawyers use the Internet daily, 18.15% lawyers use once in a week, 8.27% lawyers use once in a fortnight, 6.32% respondents visit once in a month and the remaining 2.92% are rarely use the Internet. Although this study has provided evidence regarding the views of the respondents on ICTs, knowledge and perception were not tested.

Singh and Mann(2015) conducted a study on information seeking behaviour of lawyers of the High Court of Punjab and Haryana. The researchers utilized descriptive survey with questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. The study revealed that under the influence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) a majority of respondents are using Internet to access information. At the same time, the significance of print format has not declined as three-fourth of the respondents prefers both print as well as e-resources to find the required information. The study concluded with the need for library professionals to adopt a pro-active approach in meeting the information requirements of law professionals.

Muzzammil and Ansari (2019) carried out a study with the purposes to know the use of electronic information resources among the lawyers of Delhi High Court Bar Association. Design/methodology - A survey research design was used for the study with questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. It is found that the most frequently used among the e-resource is journals with a percentage of 84.69. To keep updating knowledge is the main purpose of using the electronic information resources i.e.38.27%. The users of the library give preferences to e-resources for keeping them up-to-date with subject knowledge and to keep abreast with current information for consulting documents. The main purpose of using e-resources is to find relevant information in the area of specialization. The main problems faced by the library users in accessing the e-resources is lack of knowledge. Although this study offers insight into the use of ICTs in judicial practice, less attention was paid to knowledge of ICTs.

Anyim (2020) carried out a study to ascertain knowledge and use of information retrieval tools by lawyers at Miyetti Law, Abuja. Three research questions were framed for the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 30 lawyers who were all studied without sampling as the population size was manageable. The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire. The data collected for the research questions were analyzed using frequency, percentage and mean. The result revealed that, lawyers are aware of various information retrieval tools available in the library which include indexes, search engines, shelf guides and OPAC but lack awareness on the availability of bibliographies and abstracts. Result also revealed that lawyers have high level of knowledge on the use the information retrieval tools and utilize them to a great extent in locating information in the library. It was recommended that lawyers should be sensitized further on the uses of other information retrieval tools in the library including abstract and bibliography. Law libraries should evaluate their lawyers' information retrieval skill from time to time as to know where the help of librarians are needed. Law libraries should also conduct SWOT analysis to discover why the information resources are underutilized.

Hossain and Haque (2013) did a study to determine the level of using information and computer technology (ICT) and acceptance of new technology by lawyer in Bangladesh in their professional and personal purpose. The researchers utilized descriptive survey with questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The study reveals that in Bangladesh most of the lawyers use computer and Internet for their professional purpose due to the field of judiciary system requires the use of computers to support in information processing, decision making and records keeping. The study reveals most of the times lawyer are using ICT for their professional life. The reasons are unavailability of high speed and wireless connections, lack of computer knowledge, high cost at start-up and unwillingness of them. The success of information and communications technology (ICT) applications in legal practice is profoundly dependent on the level of computer use by lawyer. But the scenario is changing gradually. Majority of the lawyers are interested to accept the new technology for their professional capability enhancement and serve to the nation. This questionnaire-based study assessed the level of computer and internet use by lawyer in Bangladesh is low satisfactory but perception of lawyer for accepting new technology is positive both in their personal and professional arena.

Fombad and Moahi (2005) did a study to examine the perceptions held by lawyers of ICT and whether these had any bearing on the adoption and use levels of information and communication technology (ICT) by lawyers in Botswana. The objectives of this study were to identify the range of ICT used in the law firms; determine how they were being used and establish their level of usage. The study also investigated the factors that promote or inhibit the adoption and use of ICT. The survey research design was used for the study. All the 114 partners in the 59 law firms in Gaborone, the capital city, were included in the survey. Semi structured questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The study revealed that law firms are still at early stages of adoption and use of ICT. The lawyers appear to be positively inclined towards Rogers (1995) attributes of an innovation though they remain low adopters. However, lawyers' perception towards ICT was not the overriding factor that determined the adoption and use of ICT in the law firms. The lack of in-house expertise, high cost of ICT consultants, the lack of interest and skills in ICT, lack of information about appropriate software, and limited financial resources were other major factors that determined the adoption and use of ICT. The firm size, high cost of legal systems, dissatisfaction with ICT consultants, and lack of time for training also determined the adoption and use pattern of ICT.

Nathalie, Elaine and Nancy (2019) examined the impact of ICT on the working conditions, stress and psychological distress experienced by lawyers, based on a qualitative study. Twenty-two (22) interviews were conducted with the aim of gaining a deep understanding of this issue. A thematic content analysis of the interviews revealed that factors related to ICT appear to contribute to the overall stress (technostress and other stress) experienced by lawyers, in turn leading to psychological distress. Moreover, the growing permeability between the different spheres of life caused by ICT and their particular characteristics has increased the workload of lawyers and accelerated their pace of work. Participants also identified frequent technological problems, as well as clients' misinformation on the Internet, as risk factors.

Martin and Omrani (2015) did a study to analyse the links between ICT use, innovative work practices and firm performance, employee-level analyses. Using data from the European Working Condition Survey (EWCS), the

study investigates the relationships between use of the Internet and computers and positive attitudes among employees (social support, job satisfaction, extra effort) in the European context. Their empirical results were based on data for more than 9500 employees from 16 European countries in 2005, and more than 14 000 in 2010. Among the different effects of ICT use, based on the results for the 2005, 2010 and the pooled 2005–2010 sample, and in a within-cohorts change analysis, they found that Internet use is positively related to employees' job satisfaction and extra effort. They found that computer use is not related to employees' behaviours. They also reported that most of the innovative work practices considered are positively related to employees' positive attitudes.

Ramírez, Lázaro and Silvia(2014) did a quantitative, non-experimental, and cross-sectional descriptive study to analyze the perceptions and attitudes of attorney teachers, from the Southern Professional Institute (IPReS) of the Federal State University of Morelos (UAEM), towards the new information and communication technologies (ICTs). The investigation was conducted by the method of survey and gathering information through the application of teachers' Attitudes Questionnaire to Computers derived from the instrument "Teachers' Attitudes Toward Computers" of Christensen and Knezek (1996) to the total teachers with a law degree who work at the institute. The dimensions involved in the questionnaire were: liking/utility, email, frustration/anxiety, learning/productivity, and negative impact. The results projected in the study reflected that teachers have a positive attitude (medium to favorable) with respect to computers and emails. In addition, the results showed the absence of teachers' feelings of anxiety, nervousness, or fear towards using computers.

Theoretical Framework

The researchers made use of technological determinism theory. Technological determinism (TD), simply put, is the idea that technology has important effects on our lives. This idea figures prominently in the popular imagination and political rhetoric, for example in the idea that the Internet is revolutionizing economy and society. TD has also had a long and controversial history in the social sciences in general and in organization studies in particular. Critics of TD argue variously that technology itself is socially determined, that technology and social structures co-evolve in a non-deterministic, emergent process, or that the effects of any given technology depend mainly on how it is implemented which is in turn socially determined. The theory was propounded by McLuhan in 1960.

Basic Precepts

1. All technology is communication, an extension of ourselves that allows us to reach further through time and/or space. The sacrifice we make for this enhancement is an unnoticed auto-amputation that, combined with and Narcissistic desire and a bit of virtual phantom limb syndrome, forces us to both marvel at our feat and simultaneous experience strong senses of detachment and, eventually, conflict. "Every new technology necessitates a new war," said McLuhan.
2. These extensions mirror the human body: vehicles extend our feet, machines extend our hands, radio extends our voices, etc. Electricity began a new age, wherein humanity stopped simulating without and began replicating that which is within—the central nervous system. Computers are a great example of this, as they (much like our brains) take basic inputs and, in parallel structuring, create complex patterns of understanding and interaction.
3. All media is, to some degree, "hot" or "cool." This temperature-based metaphor applies to the level of audience/user interactivity with a given medium. Hot media are very "hands off"; people cannot touch them (they're hot!) and experiencing them makes a person more or less a passive audience member. Most television and film easily fall into this category. However, something like animation is a bit "cooler" because it takes imagination to bridge the gap between abstract lines and some version of reality... and, of course, a medium like video games is practically ice-cool as it approaches pure interactivity—between the user and the content, between the user and the medium and, in multiplayer games, between each user.
4. No one can fully understand a medium until it is no longer than dominant medium, and is seen through the lens of the new dominant medium. It is only once a new medium usurps the previous dominant medium that we are

able to examine the older medium's patterns and effects. "And it is only on those terms, standing aside from any structure or medium, that its principles and lines of force can be discerned."

Methodology

This study used survey research method to achieve its aim. It was decided that survey was best for the study because it is usually the most appropriate when a researcher seeks to describe, explore or explain a phenomenon. The population of this study was all the active practicing lawyers from North Central Nigeria who are registered members of the Nigerian Bar Association. The total population of members of the study is 3,939. The sample size of this study was 385 lawyers.

To derive a manageable sample size from the population (N=3,939) the Cochran formula (1963, p.75) was used. With 95 percent level of confidence (confidence interval - $\pm 5\%$), population estimate of 50% (.5) and a permitted margin of error at .05 (5 percentage points), the Cochran Equation '1' yields a representative sample for population that are large. The sampling technique for this study was multi-stage. It was decided that multi-stage was most appropriate to enable the researcher to follow a scientific procedure in drawing a sample for the study.

Stage I

The researcher considered the six states as clusters. The clusters are Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Niger, Nasarawa and Plateau

Stage II

The researcher adopt purposive sampling to select the state capitals in each of the states. The reason is there are more lawyers in the state capitals than elsewhere in the state.

Stage III

At this stage, the researcher sampled for the individual respondents. To do this, the researcher will adopt snowball sampling to select registered lawyers. To achieve this, initial registered lawyers were identified and requested to recommend other members. The process continued until the entire desired sample were selected. The instrument of data collection for this study was a questionnaire. The researcher used questionnaire because it is capable of generating quantitative data which were used to achieve the study goals. The researcher administered the instrument of the study with the aid of four research assistants who were lawyers. The lawyers were briefed on how to administer the instrument. To determine the validity of the instrument, copies of the questionnaire with the study objectives were given to three experts in mass communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka for validation. The researcher requested that they validate and evaluate the logicity of the items, clarity, appropriateness, language as well as relevance. In the end, their comments were adhered to in producing a final copy of the instrument. To determine the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach Alpha was used to ascertain the homogeneity of items on the sections. Therefore, a pretest of 20 copies of the instrument was administered to lawyers in Enugu. The result of the study showed an overall reliability figure of .73, an indication that the instrument was reliable. The researchers made use both descriptive and inferential statistics for the analysis of data for this study. In doing so, simple percentage, mean and standard deviation were used. Therefore, descriptive statistics was used to answer the research questions while Chi-Square test of independence (X^2) was used to test the hypotheses of the study. All analyses were done with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.

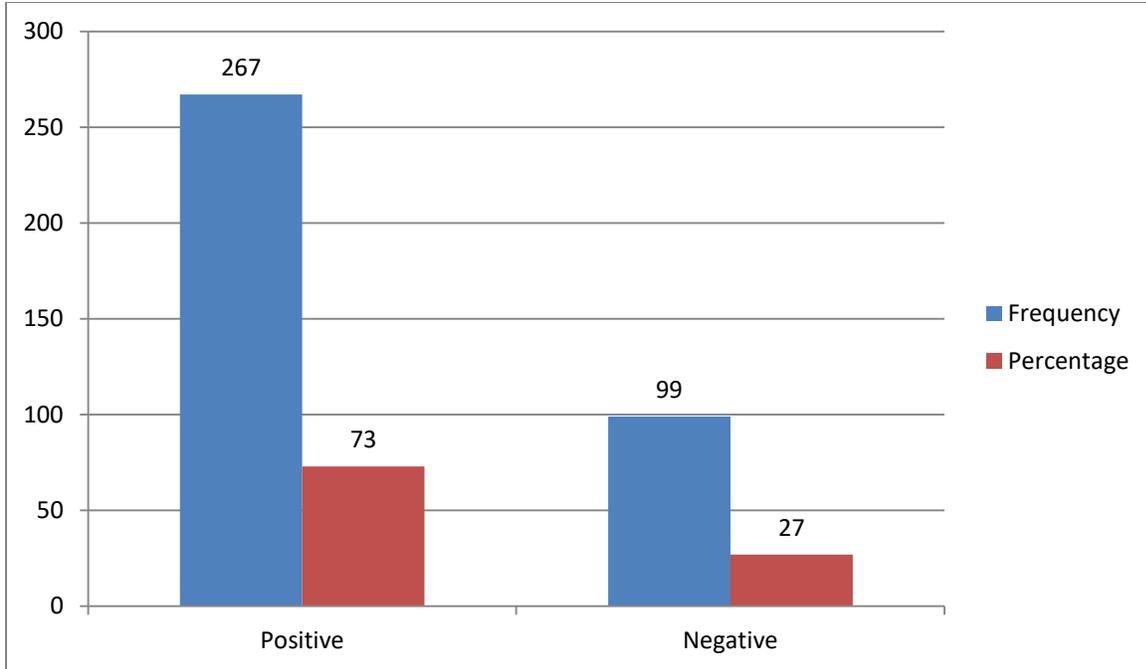
Results

A total of 385 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents out of which 366 copies were returned and found useful. This number represents a return rate of 95% return rate. The attrition rate for the study was 5%, which was insignificant to affect the outcome of the study.

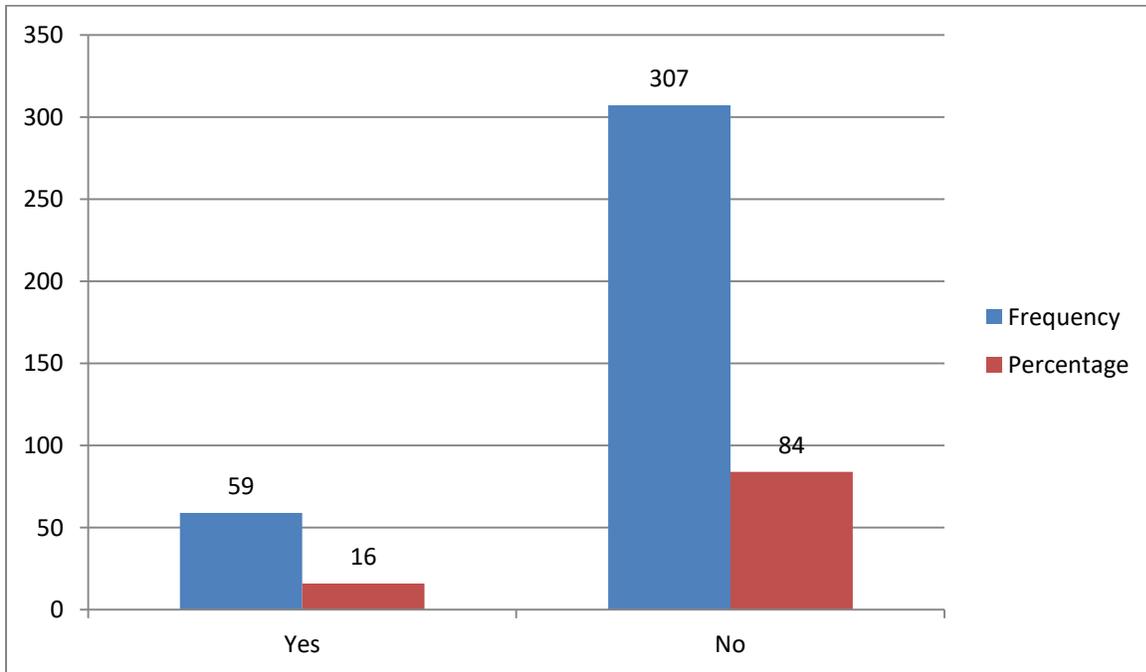
Table 1: Knowledge of ICTs

S/N	Item statements	Mean	SD	Decision
Basic ICTs knowledge				
1	knowledge of computer systems	2.0	.33	Rejected
2	Use of the operating system	2.3	.45	Rejected
3	Search of Internet	2.1	.21	Rejected
4	Communication and networking	2.4	.34	Rejected
	Word processing	2.1	.56	Rejected
29	Use of spreadsheets	2.3	.55	Rejected
30	Advanced ICTs knowledge			
31	Image processing	2.2	.56	Rejected
32	Use of database	2.3	.32	Rejected
33	Technological platforms	2.4	.23	Rejected
34	Web 2.0 tools like social media	2.0	.45	Rejected
35	Multimedia knowledge			
36	Entertainment and learning with ICTs	1.0	.54	Rejected
37	Online procedures	2.0	.23	Rejected

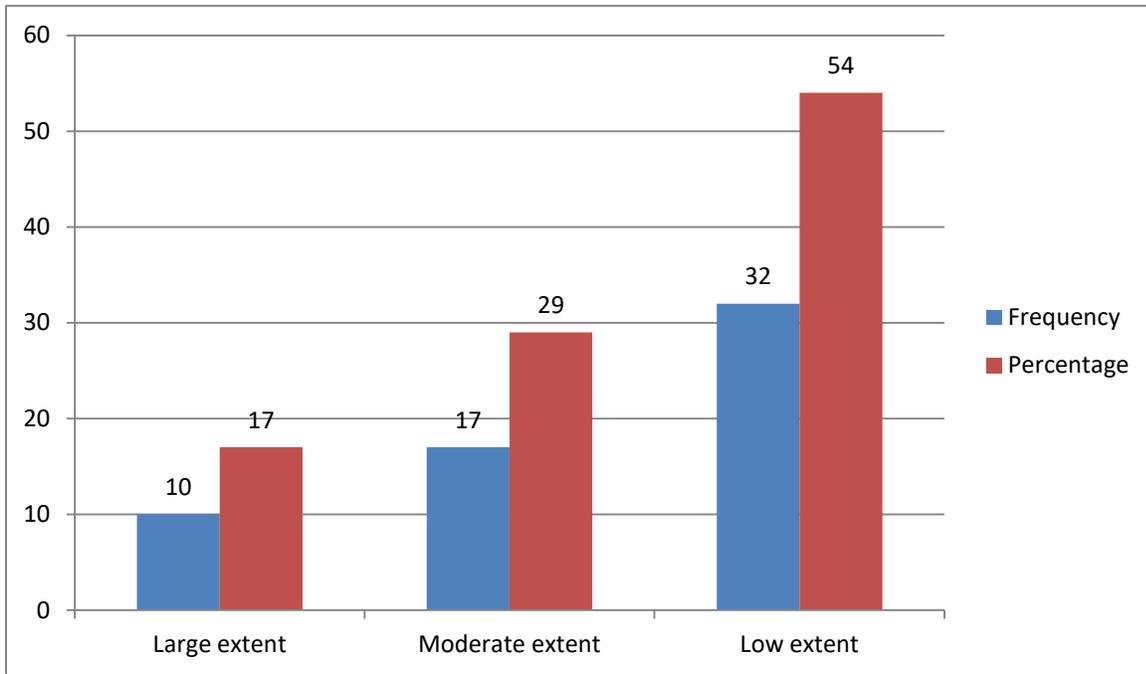
The researcher computed the table to determine the knowledge of ICTs tools among the respondents who took part in the study. It was found that the respondents lacked basic, advanced and multimedia knowledge of ICTs. The implication here is that the respondents significantly lacked knowledge of ICTs.



In the chart above, the researcher determined the attitudes of the respondents regarding ICTs. The result of the study showed that majority of the respondents agreed that they have positive attitude regarding ICTs while only few of them reported negative attitude.



The researchers plotted the chart above to determine the use of ICTs for judicial practice among the sample. The result as presented in the chart above showed that majority of the respondents reported that they do not utilize ICTs in their judicial practice. Only few of them reported using ICTs for their judicial practice.



In the chart below, the researcher determined the extent of use of ICTs for judicial practice. The result of the study showed that very few of the respondents reported large extent. Majority of the respondents reported low extent.

Discussion of findings

In this study the researcher examined the knowledge and use of ICTs for judicial practice among lawyers in North Central Nigeria. There were three objectives of the study In the first objective, the researcher determined the knowledge level of ICTs among lawyers in North Central Nigeria. The result of the study showed majority of the study showed that majority of the respondents reported low level of knowledge of ICTs. The result of this study has extended the studies of Coker (2014);Babalola and Azubuike (2018) who examined the use of ICTs among lawyers without looking at knowledge level. Examining knowledge level of lawyers is important because it will be difficult for people to make use of ICTs if they do not have knowledge of such ICTs tools. ICTs are very sophisticated and requires training, practice and consistency. According to Abubakar (2015)knowledge of ICTs is essential for people to be able to harness the full potential that new technologies offer. Silverstone (2013) notes that training and practice are needed for people to acquire ICTs skills.

In the second objective of the study, the researcher determined the attitude to ICTs among lawyers from North Central Nigeria. The result of the study showed that majority of the respondents had positive attitudes towards ICTs (see Figure 9).This result is similar to that of previous studies (Anyim 2020; Fombad & Moahi 2005) that have found that lawyers as important working tools. The attitudes of lawyers to ICTs is important because it will play a significant role in determining their eventual use. Davies (1986) in his technology acceptance model argues that attitudes towards new technology is an essential factor in the study of new technology utilization. When lawyers have negative attitudes to new technologies, it will serve as a solid foundation towards encouraging them to adopt and use ICTs in their legal practice.

Finally, in the third objective, the researcher ascertained the extent of use of ICTs for judicial practice among lawyers from North Central Nigeria. The result of the study showed that although most of the respondents reported that they use ICTs, as high as 66% indicated their frequency of use was low. Additional result showed that as high as 54% reported that their extent of use of ICTs for judicial use was low. The challenges that limit lawyers from utilizing ICTs for judicial practice include: Lack of ICTs infrastructure; limited knowledge of ICTs; Lack of

legal backing in Nigerian laws; Poor interest on the part of lawyers; Lack of funding of ICTs in Nigeria. The result of the study further showed that demographic features like gender and age significantly impact on the use of ICTs among lawyers. In particular, it was found that male lawyers are likely to make use of ICTs for judicial practice than their female counterparts. Also, younger lawyers in their 30s make use of ICTs than their counterparts who are older. This addition has extended previous studies (Nathalie, *et al.*, 2019; Martin & Omrani 2015). By linking demographic characteristics with the use of ICTs among lawyers. This aspect is yet to receive significant attention in literature.

Conclusion/Recommendations

The conclusion in this study is that there is low knowledge level of ICTs among lawyers from North Central Nigeria, such awareness is yet to be transferred into knowledge of ICTs. This is so because there is currently low level of knowledge of ICTs among lawyers. Another conclusion to be drawn from this study is that lawyers recognize that ICTs can be effective working tools. However, they face challenges when it comes to acquiring both ICTs skills and facilities. Another important conclusion to be drawn from this study is that demographics such as age and gender play a significant role in determining the use of ICTs among lawyers.

Recommendation

Based on the result of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. The Nigerian Bar Association should make arrangement for the training of lawyers on ICTs tools so that they will be able to apply it in their practice.
2. Greater attention should be paid to female lawyers during training programmes because the result of the study showed that they are less likely to make use of ICTs when compared to their male counterparts.
3. Greater attention should be paid to lawyers who are above forty years because the result of the study showed that they are less likely to make use of ICTs when compared to their younger counterparts.
4. There is the need for learning contents on ICTs designed for lawyers to be simplified as much as possible considering the fact that most of the respondents reported that ICTs tools are difficult to understand.

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