

Original Article

AWARENESS OF CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCES BY UNDERGRADUATES IN UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

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ABSTRACT

Background. This study investigated the awareness of creative commons licences on internet content use by undergraduates of the University of Benin. The study was set out to examine the level of awareness of creative commons licences and the level of comprehension of creative commons licences by undergraduates of University of Benin.

Methods. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population was 31,158 undergraduates, while the sample size was 379, and the technique adopted was the simple random sampling. The instrument for collecting data was the structured questionnaire, and data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results and discussion. Findings showed a high level of awareness of creative commons licences; as well as high comprehension about creative commons licences.

Conclusions. The research concluded that with the awareness and comprehension of creative commons, undergraduates should be able to apply the principle of fair use. The research recommended that there is a need to ensure that undergraduates constantly update their knowledge of creative commons and strive to adhere to the limit permissible by the different creative commons licences when using articles over the internet.

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Introduction

The contents found on the internet are accessed almost freely without restrictions, such that the issue of responsible use cannot be taken with levity, because, as noted by¹ internet misuse, overuse and abuse is rampant. That is not to say the internet is used only for the wrong intentions². This is particularly true as evident in the COVID-19 era where humans' freedom of movement was restricted, and the internet was the only way of rescue for humans to communicate. This is just one of the numerous benefits the internet and its contents bring to bear for humans to use. The internet is an invaluable technology. In using the internet responsibly, undergraduates must strive to ensure they uphold the

fair use doctrine on copyrighted articles that have creative commons licences. Copyright laws usually create an 'all rights reserve' law for content creator and researchers when they create any new work. However, Misra (2020) averred that with creative commons, there is a balance between 'all rights reserve' and 'fair use' for noncommercial users of the creator's contents without having to first seek an outright permission to use the copyrighted work.

Licences of creative commons allow content creators to hold on to certain copyrights and the same time allows others to copy, distribute, and make certain use of their works. The copyright owner can adopt any of the available options of creative commons licences given below.

Table 1: Types of Creative Commons Licences

CC0	Allows licensors to waive all rights and place a work in the public domain.
CC BY (Attribution)	Allows others distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon your work, even commercially, as long as they credit you for the original creation. This is the most accommodating of licences offered, and it is recommended for maximum dissemination and use of licensed materials.
CC BY-SA (Attribution-Share Alike)	Allows others remix, adapt, and build upon your work even for commercial purposes, as long as they credit you and license their new creations under the identical terms.
CC BY-ND (Attribution-No Derivs)	Allows others reuse the work for any purpose, including commercially; however, it cannot be shared with others in adapted form, and credit must be provided to you.
CC BY-NC (Attribution-Non Commercial)	Allows others remix, adapt, and build upon your work non-commercially, and although their new works must also acknowledge you and be non-commercial, they don't have to license their derivative works on the same terms.
CC BY-NC-SA (Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike)	Allows others remix, adapt, and build upon your work non-commercially, as long as they credit you and license their new creations under the identical terms.
CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivs)	This license is the most restrictive of our six main licences, only allowing others to download your works and share them with others as long as they credit you, but they can't change them in any way or use them commercially.

Objectives of the Study

- i. Examine level of awareness of creative commons licences by undergraduates of University of Benin;
- ii Determine the level of comprehension of creative commons licences by undergraduates of University of Benin.

Literature Review

The aim of copyright is to protect the rights of authors and creators, thus preventing others from unauthorized reproduction or exploitation of their works. Ironically, ³⁻⁶noted that copyright laws also include limitations on these exclusive rights. One of such limitations is the concept known as 'fair dealing'. It allows other people certain privileges to use a copyrighted work without the express permission of the author. A copyright disclaimer is a declaration made by individuals who use a copyright works, specifically by reproducing them. By the inclusion of a copyright disclaimer, the people attest that the reproduction has legal protection. The disclaimer also furnishes relevant information on the source of copyright works from which the content was taken (Copyright Office, 1957).

The main reason of incorporating a copyright disclaimer into a

reproduction is to show to the readers or viewers that the reproduction has not violated the copyright of the original work. It functions as a notification that the people using the copyrighted material have taken necessary precaution to show that their use of the copyright work is within the boundaries of the law⁷. By adding a copyright disclaimer, the people acknowledge their duties towards respecting copyright laws and their intention to prevent any possible violation. This disclaimer, as noted by⁸, helps to clarify that the reproduced work is being used in a lawful manner, either through obtaining proper permissions, utilizing fair use provisions, or other legally acceptable means.

Copyright protections automatically apply to original work as soon as it is

created and fixed in a tangible form, such as writing it down or saving it on a computer. In many countries, including the United States, and India, the author needs to register a work or include a copyright symbol (©) to have copyright protection⁹ However, it is generally recommended to include a copyright notice or disclaimer to clarify to others that the work is protected by copyright. By including a copyright disclaimer that can provide evidence of ownership of the work and potentially discourage infringement, it helps establish a record of rights and can be useful in legal proceedings if someone infringes upon a copyrighted work. It also informs others about the permissions or restrictions associated with the work, such as whether it can be used, copied, distributed, or adapted without consent (Copyright Office, 1957).

The duration upon which copyright protection is bestowed depends on the application of the copyright laws and

jurisdictions⁹⁻¹⁰opined that in several countries, even the United States of America, a copyright protection lasts for the life time of the author and an additional period of 70 years after the death of the author. But in India, it is 60 years after the death of the author; but in the case of multiple authors, the term of number of years starts counting after the death of the last author. However, it is important to note that copyright laws can differ between countries; this depends on the rules and jurisdictions. Upon the expiration of the copyright term, the work is typically thrown back in the public domain, where it can be used by anyone without permissions or restrictions.

The use of Creative Commons (‘CC’) licences is expected to facilitate access to public sector information. Giri and Shakya¹¹ opined that copyright forms the cornerstone of all CC licences and it is a useful tool to leverage downstream actions, in terms of

attribution and non-commercial uses, while promoting access and dissemination. For Davis, et al. (2019), the interests of the Australian Government and the Creative Commons movement are well aligned in relation to open access and public sector information. As it stands, the default position on licensing government materials or publicly funded research is that public sector information should be released free of charge under a Creative Commons ‘BY’ licence¹²⁻¹⁴; Solomon and Obaseki, 2018). Similarly, the guidelines on licensing public sector information for Australian

Government entities expressly recommends the use of the most recent CC licence (CC-BY-4.0), including the attribution international licence¹⁵⁻¹⁶

Methodology

The cross sectional descriptive survey research design is adopted for this work. The study population is the 31,158 undergraduates of University of Benin as gotten from the Office of the Registrar, as at March, 2024. The sampling techniques adopted for this study is the simple random sampling technique, while the sample size was calculated using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Table of Sample Size Determination.

Table 2: Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Table of Sample Size Determination

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	110	86	300	169	950	274	4500	354
15	14	120	92	320	175	1000	278	5000	357
20	19	130	97	340	181	1100	285	6000	361
25	24	140	103	360	186	1200	291	7000	364
30	28	150	108	380	191	1300	297	8000	367
35	32	160	113	400	196	1400	302	9000	368
40	36	170	118	420	201	1500	306	10000	370
45	40	180	123	440	205	1600	310	15000	375
50	44	190	127	460	210	1700	313	20000	377
55	48	200	132	480	214	1800	317	30000	379

60	52	210	136	500	217	1900	320	40000	380
65	56	220	140	550	226	2000	322	50000	381
70	59	230	144	600	234	2200	327	75000	382
75	63	240	148	650	242	2400	331	100000	384
80	66	250	152	700	248	2600	335		
85	70	260	155	750	254	2800	338		
90	73	270	159	800	260	3000	341		
95	76	280	162	850	265	3500	346		
100	80	290	165	900	269	4000	351		

Thus, the sample size for the study is 379.

The reliability of the adapted instrument was tested using a pilot survey with undergraduates of Federal University Lokoja, with a Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of 0.84; and data The reliability of the adapted instrument was tested using a pilot survey with undergraduates of Federal University Lokoja, with a Cronbach's

was analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

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Results and Discussions

Table 3: Research Question 1: Examine level of awareness of creative commons licences by undergraduates of University of Benin.

Awareness of Creative Commons Licences: <i>I am aware that ...</i>	VH (%)	H (%)	L (%)	VL (%)	Mean	S.D.
creative commons licences give room for the creation of new knowledge	95 (30.5%)	204 (65.6%)	12 (3.9%)	0 (0%)	3.27	0.5232
creative commons licences make it easier for content creators to maintain their copyrights while allowing	124 (39.9%)	175 (56.2%)	12 (3.9%)	0 (0%)	3.36	0.5555

others to legally share and reuse their content						
creative commons licences makes content creators unable to have control over their contents	142 (45.6%)	115 (37%)	54 (17.4%)	0 (0%)	3.28	0.7429
with creative commons licences, content creators give permission to use their work ahead of time	124 (39.9%)	109 (35%)	78 (25.1%)	0 (0%)	3.12	0.7935

Source: Researchers' Field Survey Result (2024)

Criterion Mean: 2.5

For awareness of creative commons licences, there are four items; and the means and (standard deviations) for the items are: 3.27 (0.5232), 3.36 (0.5555), 3.28 (0.7429) and 3.12 (0.7935) respectively. All the means clearly show that they are above the criterion mean of 2.5. Thus, the means and standard deviations showed that undergraduates of University of Benin have high awareness of creative commons licences.

Undergraduates of University of Benin demonstrated that they have a high level of awareness of creative commons licences. This is because responses from the research showed that undergraduates of University of Benin have high level of awareness of

creative commons licences. This implies that undergraduates of University of Benin are aware of creative commons licences. The findings are in agreement with those of Utama and Susanty (2023) who showed in their research that legal experts as well as content creators are aware of the possible future projections of property ownership as driven by artificial intelligence; they see both opportunities and challenges in the automated development and protection of creative works. Also Spichtinger (2022) showed that awareness of creative commons licences is on the increase, as people are more aware of the existence of these licences.

Table 4: Research Question 2: Determine the level of comprehension of creative commons licences by undergraduates of University of Benin.

Comprehension on Creative Commons Licences <i>I understand that ...</i>	VH (%)	H (%)	L (%)	VL (%)	Mean	S.D.
there are copyright privileges to content creators	247 (79.4%)	62 (19.9%)	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.3%)	3.78	0.4420
there are copyright infringements when online contents are used with acknowledgement	181 (58.1%)	127 (40.8%)	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.3%)	3.7	2.3506
content creators can monetize royalty, free or creative commons contents when the license agreement grants them the right to use it commercially	163 (52.4%)	148 (47.6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.52	0.5002
any creative commons license without the NonCommercial designation can be sold	142 (45.6%)	115 (37%)	54 (17.4%)	0 (0%)	3.28	0.7429

Source: Researchers' Field Survey Result (2024)**Criterion Mean: 2.5**

For comprehension of creative commons licences, there are four items, and their means and (standard deviations) are: 3.78 (0.4420), 3.7 (2.3506) and 3.52 (0.5002) respectively. This showed that undergraduates of University of Benin

have high comprehension about creative commons licences.

Undergraduates of University of Benin have a high level comprehension of creative commons licences. This is so because results showed that

undergraduates of University of Benin have high comprehension about creative commons licences. This implies that undergraduates of University of Benin understand what the creative commons licences are and what they represent. These findings negate those of Thampapillai (2021) who reported that content creators and content users alike are not fully aware of the consequences in law and policy of using creative commons licences online on a mass scale. The implications of this little or no knowledge of creative commons licences are that content creators may not know when there is an infringement on their rights and content users may not know when they infringe on the rights of content creators.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored the level of awareness of undergraduates of University of Benin about creative commons licences. As these

undergraduates are highly aware of the existence of creative commons licences and are also aware of the meanings and implications of these creative commons licences. It is hoped that they will be conscious of the implications and use intellectual contents with creative commons judiciously, and ensure they uphold the principle of fair use when they use information resources over the internet.

Thus, the study recommends that undergraduates should always strive to consciously update their knowledge about the laws regarding creative commons licences, copyright and fair use doctrines, and learn about the requirements and exceptions that creative commons licences bestow on them as regards use of copyrighted articles over the internet; and that undergraduates should strive to adhere to the limits permissible by the different creative commons licences when they use copyrighted articles over the internet

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