USE OF ELECTRONIC RESOURCES BY STUDENTS FOR INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the use of electronic resources by postgraduate students of University of Ilorin and Kwara State University, Nigeria. Five research questions were raised in order to find out the use of e-resources for achieving intellectual freedom. Sample of 362 students in twelve faculties of two universities were randomly surveyed. Data collected using questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results indicate that lion's share of students are aware that e-resources are very good in writing academic papers, newspapers are the highly preferred print material, internet resources highly preferred, majority agreed e-resources encourage intellectual freedom and power outage is the major challenge in the use of e-resources.

Keywords : ***Intellectual Freedom, Intellectuals, E-resources, Electronic Resources, E-journals, E-books, Awareness, Utilization, Postgraduate students, Academic library, University of Ilorin, Kwara State University, Kwara, Nigeria.***

1. Introduction

Print resources were the only means of information in the last century. Advancement of Information Technology paved the way for use of electronic information sources. Electronic resources are defined as 'sources that are made available in electronic form which may be photographs, databases, full text articles, pictures, books, images, music, journals and other multimedia. These resources are delivered via laptops, phones, tablets, with the help of internet (Usman and Fadanku, 2018). Thus electronic resources are more important for the academic community in the present year.

Electronic information is a motivating factor to students because it provides opportunity to acquire, download, transmit, process and disseminate information on any subject. Advancement in ICT has brought terrific progress in university education. E-resources does not replace print resource but it only complement the print resources.

The American Library Association Code of Ethics (2009) demonstrates the relationship between information access and information ethics; its preamble states that LIS professionals are explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom to access information. The first principle of this Code of Ethics includes "equitable access" which brought about the concept of intellectual freedom.

According to ALA, intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction (ALA, 2016). Based on ALA definition, it can be inferred that intellectual freedom is a mutually inclusive concept in which an individual have the right to receive and at the same time send out information. Similarly Oltman (2017) defines intellectual freedom as a concept that provides free ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause or movement may be explored'.

Usman and Fadanku (2018) explains that intellectual freedom is a concept in librarianship which means freedom to think or believe what one will, freedom to express one's thoughts and beliefs in unrestricted manners and means, and freedom of access information and ideas regardless of the content or view points of the author(s) or the age, background, or beliefs of the receiver.

Inorder to ensure that students and academics have needed information at their disposal, the National Universities Commission (NUC) subscribed to a number of international and local journals which is accessible in Nigerian universities through URL link (www.nigerianvirtuallibrary.com).

Digital resources and web access in libraries add another element to the idea of intellectual freedom as user empowerment. Collection exist outside the library and sometimes more than that inside the library also. Librarians have less control over information in these circumstances and Graham (2013) pointed out that neutrality is even less of a feasible stance when there is so much information to evaluate and librarians must increasingly act as 'information advisors'. The effect of the internet on intellectual freedom in the library is further explored by Kajberg (2011) who writes from a progressive perspective about Library 2.0.

2. Review of Literature

There are a number of studies on the use of electronic resources by various type of academia in literature. Out of which a few recent selected studies on its use by postgraduate students are reviewed here in reverse chronological order.

The purpose of this study reported by Kimanga and Namanda (2021) establish the relationship between awareness and utilization of electronic resources by postgraduate students of Pan African Christian University Library, Nairobi, Kenya. Using a public university library in Ghana, this study written by Armah and Cobblah (2021) assessed the barriers or constraints students encountered in accessing electronic resources.

The article by Chandani (2020) contributes to the professional discussion of prison library in the context of intellectual freedom with a survey of prison libraries in Sri Lanka. The study by Barna and Tabar (2020) in their study addresses how the use of computer monitoring affects the morale and performance of faculty members and students for intellectual and free inquiry. Cox (2020) predicts the significant ways academic libraries will shift in terms of collections, services, spaces and operations as a result of the pandemic. The study by Obande and Abdulsalami (2020) investigated the availability, awareness and use of electronic resources by students in 'Federal University Lafia and Nasarawa State University Keffia. Mudasiru (2020) studied the factors influencing adoption of electronic information resources among postgraduate students in Nigerian universities. The aim of the collaborative study done by Ngema and Masenya (2020) is to assess the use of electronic books among the postgraduate students in the Department of Library and

Information Studies of the University of Zululand, South Africa.

Role of the library in promoting intellectual freedom has been discussed by Igwela (2019). The main objective of the study by Akuffo and Budu (2019) were to identify the type of e-resources, use, extent of e-resources and to ascertain the purpose. The study by Kwafoa (2019) investigates the use of electronic resources by postgraduate students in University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

A collaborative study by Mwantimwa and Elia (2017) compares the use of electronic information resources in selected institutions in Tanzania.

Libraries, electronic resources and its impact on intellectual freedom is described by Rubel (2014).

3. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are;

i) To find out the level of awareness of e-resources among the postgraduate students in the selected universities in Kwara state. Nigeria

ii) To determine their preferences towards print materials as well as electronic information.

iii) To ascertain the benefits of e-resources to the postgraduate students.

iv) To identify the barriers that hindered the use of e-resources.

4. Methodology

Descriptive survey design adopted. Three hundred and sixty nine questionnaires were administered to the postgraduate students in 12 faculties of two universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. They are University of Ilorin – 336 and Kwara State University – 33. Out of which 362 questionnaires returned back. Seven questionnaires were found not filled completely from University of Ilorin and therefore discarded. Response rate is 97.92%. Detailed response rate is shown in table 1. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics methods with percentile analysis.

Table 1

Response Rate of Participants

Name of Institution	Administered	Returned	Percentage Returned
University of Ilorin	336	329	97.92
Kwara State University	33	33	100.00
Total	369	362	

5. Analysis of Data

5.1. Characteristics of Respondents

According to the responses given in table 2, the frequency of male (55%) is more than those of female (45%). In terms of qualification, Masters degree students were the great majority (91.4%) than others. Almost cent percent (99.2%) are full time bonafide students, and very few part time. Those students between the age range of 26-30 years are more and the percentage of more than 36 years and above are less. Half (50.6%) of the students are married and 45.9% are single.

Table 2

Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	199	55.0
	Female	163	45.0
	Total	362	100.00
Qualification	Master's degree	331	91.4
	Ph.D	31	8.6
	Total	362	100.00
Mode of study	Part time	03	0.8
	Full time	359	99.2
	Total	362	100.00
Age	<25 years	47	13.0
	26-30 years	142	39.2
	31-35 years	87	24.0
	36-40 years	37	10.2
	41-45 years	23	6.4
	46-50 years	19	5.2
	51 years and above	7	1.9
	Total	362	100.0
Marital Status	Single	166	45.9
	Married	183	50.6
	Divorced	10	2.8
	Widowed	3	0.8
	Total	362	100.0

5.2. Awareness Level of E-resources

The statement questions on level of awareness of e-resources given in table 3 shows that lion's share (92%) of the students are aware that e-resources are good for writing scholarly papers and scholarly work. Similarly a great majority (86.5%) opined that e-resources can be used to preserve knowledge. It is deduced that more than 3/5th (69.1%) of the post graduate students are aware of the availability of electronic materials present in their university library. More than half (58.8%) are using academic databases like JSTOR, HINARI, Science Direct etc.

But the percentage of students using institutional repository are less than half (45.3%) only. But only a very less percentage (7.2%) are aware of the existing e-resources.

Table 3

Awareness Level of E-resources

Statements	Yes	No	Not sure
Are you aware that e-resources are very good for writing academic papers and scholarly work?	333 (92.0%)	15 (4.1%)	14 (3.9%)
Can e-resources be used to preserve knowledge?	313 (86.5%)	15 (4.1%)	34 (9.4%)
Are you aware that your university library has some electronic material?	250 (69.1%)	95 (26.2%)	17 (4.7%)
Have you ever used academic databases like JSTOR, HINARI, Science Direct etc.?	213 (58.8%)	101 (27.9%)	48 (13.3%)
Have you ever used an institutional repository before?	164 (45.3%)	128 (35.4%)	70 (19.3%)
All academic databases requires subscription.	64 (17.7%)	226 (62.4%)	72 (19.9%)
Do you think you know all the existing e-resources?	26 (7.2%)	285 (78.7%)	51 (14.1%)

5.3. Awareness Level of Print Resources

The preference of various print resources on a measurement of Highly prefer, Prefer and Not prefer is shown in table 4. The result shows that newspapers are highly preferred by 26.2% and preferred by 61.9%. Textbooks are highly preferred by 24.6% and preferred by 70.7%. Then comes the print journals highly preferred by 17.7% and preferred by 75.4%. Magazines are last in the list. Here 10.8% of them highly preferred and 75.4% preferred.

Table 4

Preference Level of Various Types of Print Resources

Print Materials	Preference Level	Frequency	Percentage
Newspapers	Highly Prefer	95	26.2
	Prefer	224	61.9
	Not prefer	43	11.9
	Total	362	100.0
Textbooks	Highly prefer	89	24.6
	Prefer	256	70.7
	Not prefer	17	4.7
	Total	362	100.0
Print Journals	Highly prefer	64	17.7
	Prefer	273	75.4
	Not prefer	25	6.9
	Total	362	100.0
Magazines	Highly prefer	39	10.8
	Prefer	273	75.4
	Not prefer	50	13.8
	Total	362	100.0

5.4. Preference Level of E-resources

The analysis given in table 5 shows the preference level of e-resources such as internet resources, search engines, e-books, online databases, e-journals, institutional repositories and CD-ROMs. It is found that internet resources are highly preferred by 39.8% and preferred by 55.8%. Search engines comes next, in which highly preferred are 35.4% and those preferring are 57.5%. Next in order are the e-books. Here highly preferred are 30.1% and preferred 64.1%. Online databases are highly preferred by 29.6% and preferred by 61.3%. E-journals comes next in position, with highly preferred 28.7% and preferred 66%. Institutional repositories are highly preferred by 18.2% and preferred 58.6%.

Table 5

Preference Level of E-resources

Type of E-resources	Preference Level	Frequency	Percentage
Internet resources	Highly prefer	144	39.8
	Prefer	202	55.8
	Not prefer	16	4.4
	Total	362	100.0
Search engines	Highly prefer	128	35.4
	Prefer	208	57.5
	Not prefer	26	7.2
	Total	362	100.0
E-books	Highly prefer	109	30.1
	Prefer	232	64.1
	Not prefer	21	5.8
	Total	362	100.0
Online databases	Highly prefer	107	29.6
	Prefer	222	61.3
	Not prefer	33	9.1
	Total	362	100.0
E-journals	Highly prefer	104	28.7
	Prefer	239	66.0
	Not prefer	19	5.2
	Total	362	100.0
Institutional Repository	Highly prefer	66	18.2
	Prefer	212	58.6
	Not prefer	84	23.2
	Total	362	100.0
CD-ROM	Highly prefer	46	12.7
	Prefer	226	62.4
	Not prefer	90	24.9
	Total	362	100.0

5.5. Benefit of E-resources

It is deduced from the results given in table 6 that most of them (43.4%) strongly agree and half of them (50.8%) agreed that e-resources encourage intellectual freedom because they can quickly get information online and can also publish research papers without any restriction. Next benefit reported by most of them (40.9%) who strongly agreed and 52.2% agreed on the statement that e-resources give more broader coverage of information without any limit. Another 2/5th (40.6%) strongly agreed and 56.1% agreed on the benefit that e-resources are very good for research in academic writings. More than 1/3rd strongly agreed that some e-resources are the best tool to conserve knowledge and those agreed are 60.2%.

Table 6

Opinion on the Benefit of E-resources

Statements	SA	A	D	SD
E-resources encourage intellectual freedom because I can quickly get information online and also publish my academic papers without any restriction	157 (43.4%)	184 (50.8%)	17 (4.7%)	4 (1.1%)
E-resources give more broader coverage of information without any limit	148 (40.9%)	189 (52.2%)	18 (5.0%)	7 (1.9%)
E-resources are very good for research and academic writings	147 (40.6%)	203 (56.1%)	8 (2.2%)	4 (1.1%)
Some e-resources are the best tool to conserve knowledge	128 (35.4%)	218 (60.2%)	7 (1.9%)	9 (2.5%)
I personally like e-resources because it is excellent for personal reading and personal development	122 (33.7%)	222 (61.3%	16 (4.4%)	2 (0.6%)

Keys: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

5.6. Barriers in Using E-resources

E-resources are not without challenges and these barriers are outlined in table 7. More than half (51.7%) strongly agreed on the barrier that a power outage is one of the challenges that hinder free flow of e-resources use, 42.8% of them agreed. Slow data network and wireless networks do hinder free flow of using online resources, strongly agreed by 49.2% and agreed by 45%. The third barrier is that 'reading some electronic resources is time consuming, therefore they prefer print materials stated by 14.6% (Strongly Agreed) and 36,7% of them agreed. Many e-resources are closed access of which they prefer looking for other means than subscribing for it stated by 26% (Strongly agreed) and 54.1% of them agreed. Rest of the statements are given in table 7.

Table 7

Barriers in the Use of E-resources

Statements	SA	A	D	SD
A power outage is one of the challenges that hinder my free flow of e-resources usage	187 (51.7%)	155 (42.8%)	13 (3.6%)	7 (1.9%)
Slow data network and wireless networks do hinder free flow of using online resources.	178 (49.2%)	163 (45.0%)	10 (2.8%)	11 (3.0%)
Reading some electronic resources is time consuming, I prefer print materials	53 (14.6%)	133 (36.7%)	134 (37.0%)	42 (11.6%)
Many e-resources are closed access of which I prefer looking for other means than subscribing for it.	94 (26.0%)	196 (54.1%)	60 (16.6%)	12 (3.3%)
Some online resources are time consuming and at time causes distraction.	82 (22.7%)	164 (45.3%)	92 (25.4%)	24 (6.6%)
Since closed access information material exists in some e-resources are like an infringement on intellectual freedom right.	72 (19.9%)	148 (40.9%)	109 (30.1%)	33 (9.1%)
I think I need additional searching skills to be able to use online e-resources very well.	64 (17.7%)	190 (52.5%)	71 (19.6%)	37 (10.2%)
ICT infrastructures to access e-resources are not adequate in my university	58 (16.0%)	185 (51.1%)	96 (26.5%)	23 (6.4%)
I find it challenging to use some online databases because I don't know what it is all about	54 (14.9%)	118 (32.6%)	121 (33.4%)	69 (9.1%)
Reading some electronic resources is time consuming, I prefer print materials	53 (14.6%)	133 (36.7%)	134 (37.0%)	42 (11.6%)
Most of the e-resources like e-books need gadgets before one could access it of which I can't boast of any gadget at the moment.	36 (9.9%)	71 (19.6%)	210 (58.0%)	45 (12.4%)

6. Major Findings

i) Lion's share (92%) of the students are aware that e-resources are very good in writing academic papers and scholarly work and great majority (86.5%) opined that e-resources will help in preserving knowledge.

ii) Among the print materials, newspapers are highly preferred (26.3%) and preferred are 61.9%. Textbooks are the second preferred item.

iii) Among the e-resources, internet resources are highly preferred (39.8%) and preferred are 55.8%.

Search engines are the next preferred e-resource.

iv) More than 2/5th (43.4%) strongly agreed and half of them (50.8%) agreed that e-resources encourage intellectual freedom because it can quickly access information online and also publish their academic papers. The other benefit is that e-resources give more broader coverage of information without any limit is also noticed.

v) Major challenge in the use of e-resource is the power outage which hinder free flow of e-resources usage. Next is the slow data network and wireless network which is a hinder in the free flow of use of online resources.

7. Conclusion

The dire need for research at postgraduate level of academia is the reason for the depth of awareness of e-resources discovered in this study. In relation to this Ahmed and Panda (2013) also added that majority of the faculty members are aware and using e-resources. Availability of hard copy materials has proven to be a challenge over the years. The knowledge of cloud storage must have informed the high percentage of agreeing to e-resources preserving knowledge as documents can be easily uploaded and retrieved.

There are no limits to resources available through electronic media, both free and subscribed. The 'yes' response in this study by the respondents shows that a lot of postgraduates are properly utilizing the various types of e-resources. The study also showed that a large percentage of students still prefer printed materials. This result is in contrast to the study by Shukla and Mishra (2011) that researchers prefer to use e-resources than print ones and are using on daily basis.

In addition e-resources are very good for research and academic writings discovered in this paper is related to the study by Adeleke and Nwalo (2017) where e-resources encourage intellectual freedom through access of information without restriction. The benefits and challenges of electronic resources have been shown in the findings of this study, the benefits encourage intellectual freedom while the challenges are infringement on right to intellectual freedom of students.

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