

**CLASS DIFFERENTIALS ON UTILIZATION OF E-RESOURCE PROVISIONS TO
ENHANCE RESEARCH SKILLS AMONG ECONOMICS EDUCATION STUDENTS'
IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study focused on the differentials within class level on the utilization of e-resources provisions to enhance research skills among Economics Education students' in South East Nigeria. The design of the study is descriptive survey research design. The study adopted a purposive sampling technique in selecting four hundred and ninety seven (492) Economics Education students' from the study area. Data was collected using a validated 4-point Likert scale questionnaire titled questionnaire on influence of e-resources utilization" (QIERU) and an observational schedule on student's utilization of e-resource material (OSSUEM), Cronbach alpha was used to test for reliability and a reliability coefficient of 0.86 was established. The study developed two research questions with two hypotheses to guide the study, research questions were analysed using frequency count and simple Percentage, while Mann Whitney U test was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance, with the help of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The findings revealed that, adequate utilization of electronic resource materials have a positive influence on Economics Education students research skills and that class have an influence in the extent of Economics education student's utilization of electronic resource materials.. Based on the findings the study recommended that plagiarism software should be made available for students to conduct similarity test when writing their project, thesis and dissertations, thesis and projects to improve originality in research. Introduction of proficiency courses for effective use of library electronic resources for undergraduate students.

Keywords: Class, Utilization, E-resources, Economics Education Students,
Research Output, South East Nigeria

Introduction

Electronic resources which is often called e-resources have been defined by numerous writers and scholars based on what they perceive it to mean and how the concept is been used. Sharma (2016) conceived e-resources to mean information materials that are managed by the library and are in electronic formats among these resources which include e-books, e-journals, e-newspapers among other electronic information resources. Some of the commonly used electronic information database found in Nigerian libraries include but not limited to Science Direct, AGORA, HINARI, MEDLINE but to mention a few (Deng (2010), Ani & Edem, (2012).

Okebukola (2012:4) explained electronic resources to mean “a collection of library resources in electronic form which can be accessed and used with great ease with the aid of computer technology to encourage learning, teaching and research in the university”. Similarly, Gbaje (2017) is of the opinion that the electronic library comprises of a collection of resources which are retrieved via a computer device with access to Internet connectivity. Gbaje further stated that these resources are fully automated to serve the need of researchers, academic staff from the comfort of their offices and homes without necessarily visiting the physical library. The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA, 2015) explained that electronic resources entails materials that are retrieved from a computer system, which includes materials that are stored and retrieved with an external component like the CD-ROM which is attached to a computer. Electronic resources have been categorized into data form and programme form, the data form of electronic resources comprises of letters, numbers, images, graphics etc while the programme form of electronic resources could be in form of routine of instructions, performing certain tasks including the processing of data and programmes e.g online services and interactive multimedia (Haridasan & Khan, 2009).

Electronic resources through continuous modernization has gone through series of modification through which it can be accessed, the modernization of the electronic resources is to enable easy access and use. Rao (2011) stated that electronic library are gradually replacing the physical library through different series and stages of modernization, library users are gradually shifting their focus on the use of physical library to full utilization of e-resources because of the ease of access and convenience. Rao further stated that e-resource database are the hub of electronic information resources that are accessed and utilized via contemporary ICT gadgets in a modernized way and often stored in the cloud (database) in a more sophisticated and compacted form, which can be accessed instantly by any user at any point in time. Different scholars and researchers has given different definition of the term “electronic resources” as information materials that are retrieved by a computer device and may be useful in the area of bibliographic guides to potential sources.

Electronic resources therefore refers can be seen as soft copy documents in a digitalized form and are available to information seekers with the help of a computer system. Swain and Panda (2009) opined that the internet is the widely most used platform to access the available electronic materials through relevant library information database and other search engines such as google, Alta Vista, Bing, Yahoo, and so forth.

Most libraries would prefer operating in digital form for many reasons, including, digitalized journals are easily linked to any data base for easy access; users can access the electronic materials from their homes, office, or dormitory even if the physical library is not accessible and it save large amount of space and relatively easy to maintain. When all these advantages are taking into account, it is thus, accurate to say that it will save the library a huge amount of money and resources in cost of managing the library system (Montgomery & King 2012). Researchers such as Okiki (2012) and Tyagi (2011) have tried in a way to find out the impacts of the use of electronic resources through surveys, and other forms of transaction log analysis, as well as other research techniques to ascertain how utilization factors can determine the extent of students' use of electronic resources to enhance their academic pursuit and research skills. However, a research conducted by Sejane (2017) revealed that there is quite a non-satisfactory level of research carried out by students' in most universities across African; which was attributed to the poor accessibility and utilization of e-resources which could be traced down to non-familiarity and poor attitude of students having difficulties navigating around the e-resource materials, and partly as a result of no encouragement and emphases on effective utilization of library electronic resources on the part of the library administrators themselves.

The gradual shift from hard copy information to digital collections could have impact on library users and users' utilization in the use of the resources. Utilization of electronic information resource connote the ease of use, in other words the extent to which how well a student can make use of electronic resources without hitches. This is in terms of a user friendly interface and ease in database exploration. Utilization among other properties of an electronic resources is a multidimensional concept that refers to multiple attributes, such learning, memorability, error recovery, efficiency and user satisfaction. Since utilization form the most important aspect of utilization of the various e-resource facilities that is provided, students' are expected to equip themselves with the skill and techniques for easy access to these resources in order to enhance their and research productivity.

When students' don't have the utilization skills and technique to adequately access these information, their utilization of these resources will be very ineffective. Prangya and Rabindra (2013) concluded that the utilization impact of information and communication technology on users' behavior and attitude has been tremendous.

User perceptions of digital libraries and ease of use of electronic materials, beside other developing information system, play a central role in determining the extent to which a user can have access and make use of electronic resources. Although the most important aspects of application and information systems that are necessary to ensure a system functionality are both perceived usefulness and utilization function, but to a greater extent, the perceived ease of use (utilization) is an important factor to support user needs and tasks to adequately utilize these resources which is accompanied with a smooth user experience. Thus, the utilization function has been identified as an attribute that is critical to user acceptance of new technology to enhance their research skills.

Research skills means the techniques and ability that is involved in the process of carrying out a research. It is the extent to which a researcher has articulated well, all the vital ingredients and the use of appropriate methodology, method by which data is gathered as well as method of data analyses in carrying out research, so as to bring about the desired result that is intended. According to Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2015) research productivity involve the scientific process of gathering information through a predetermined procedures and also, the extent of its application in real life situation, which will determine the level of its skills or productivity. Okon (2014) opined that when a researcher is able to utilize current materials, been able to articulate well the statement of problem and clearly establish problems in the background and adequately able to interpret research findings among other qualities, then it is expected that the quality of the research skills can go a long way in solving societal problems and could serve as a point of reference for other researchers. Operationally, research skills in this study is the extent to which students' are able to adequately utilize current e-resource materials and systematically establish a problem in order to enhance the overall quality of their research work. With the current transformation from hard copy material to e-resource materials, student are expected to have various electronic information utilization skills in order to keep up with their academics and research productivity through the use of these resources.

Post graduate and undergraduate students of Economics Education in their pursuit for academic excellence make use of various electronic resource materials. Post graduate students make up a group of students' who are pursuing a higher degree in Economics Education at either masters level (M.Ed) or doctor of philosophy (PhD) level, while the undergraduate students are students who are pursuing a degree certificate in Economics education and have to undergo a four (4) year intensive training programme during which after completion they will be awarded a degree of bachelor of science in Economics Education (Bsc.Ed) by the institution.

Since the intensity of academic and research work carried out by both students' are different, a distinction may exist on the purpose and use of e-resources between postgraduate and undergraduate students' based on their class level. Grefseim (2016) observed that students make use of electronic resources for different purposes, this could depend on the state or circumstance in which the need for information would arise. For example, most postgraduate students needs information for their academic studies, seminar presentation and research work; while undergraduate students might be in need of electronic resources for assignment, class discussion and debate. Most at times, students' are involved in an active way of seeking for information for the purpose of fulfilling their need for course assignments, seminars, workshops, conferences or write final year research work, class discussions among other academic needs (Kakai, Ikoja-Odongo & Kigongo-Bukenya 2004). The essence of this all is to put up a qualitative research problem and findings that incorporates all the necessary ingredients that will be responsible for proffering solutions to problems of the society. To have an effective and smooth user experience with utilization of electronic information resource, computer and information literacy skills are prerequisite for both undergraduate and post graduate students to search and use of electronic resources effectively.

Since the goal of every postgraduate study is for the continual development of his intellectual ability and knowledge through training and research. Thus, it is of great importance for postgraduate students to augment their quest for effective research with the use of e-resource provisions.

Ndubuisi and Udo (2013) conducted a study concerned with motivation, challenges and strategies for using e-resources among postgraduate and undergraduate students' in South-East universities in Nigeria and the findings revealed that postgraduate students' utilize more of the electronic resources when compared with the undergraduate students, although Desta (2017) conducted another study on utilization of electronic resources by postgraduate and undergraduate students at Unisa regional center in Ethiopia, which revealed that postgraduate students are equipped with the fundamental computer skills that is needed for accessing basic electronic resources; however, most postgraduate students lack the functionality skills with respect to complex and advanced method of accessing multiple electronic resources for the purpose of conducting research, which has hindered their usage of the resources.

It is understandable that finding relevant materials in conducting research is one of the purposes which the library seek to provide with its resources. Research has helped man to probe into the unknown to find solutions to various problems of the society. Ojo (2011) opined that research has been a relevant tool to human society and useful in enabling many to widen knowledge of the world around them, identify

problems, discover relationships existing between phenomena and formulate and test theories and hypothesis. Okonofa (2010) observed that without research, teaching would be old-fashioned, monotonous and static. It is in the outcome of research that institutions of higher learning, like the universities with their faculties and departments, make relevant and solid contributions to improve the society. Okon (2014) opined that when a researcher is able to utilize current materials, articulate well the statement of problem and clearly establish problems in the background and adequately able to interpret research findings among other qualities, then it is expected that the quality of the research skills can go a long way in solving societal problems and could serve as a point of reference for other researchers.

When students seek to find out solution to problems of the society, it is not done in isolation. There must be relevant empirical studies which must serve as the foundations and building blocks for that study to have a meaningful skills. It is therefore of great importance and need that students in the quest for empirical findings embellish themselves to the use of electronic resources. This has shown to provide a large amount of evidence of various research findings in different areas of studies. Certainly, if students are to admit the challenges which teaching and learning imposes on them by adapting themselves to the current trend in the use of e-resources, this will go a long way in improving their ability to research qualitatively.

Some of the recent advancement that was established in the use of electronic resources that of immense important for having access to quality education could be seen in the recent introduction and use of Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Courseware (OCW). The OER are contents that are made available for free to students all around the globe. Recently the Indian institutions have acknowledge the importance and opportunities the use of OER bring to students at their institution and students' in other countries. Lately, the India National Knowledge Commission (NKC) has advocated for all information resources to be e-content based even as far as incorporating their curriculum and educational practices to be electronically based, where it can be accessible to every individual, this is to encourage the formation, adaptation and application of open educational resources by all institutions in their country. In addition, University Grants Commission, National association of Software and Services among other organizations are seriously advocating for these practices so as to bridge the gap between knowledge and skill (Das, 2014).

The use of OER has been in the increase for some time now in India, Which has experience a number of national institutions establishing OER portals for provision of nationwide access to the educational resources. Since English is the dominant language that is used in teaching in most schools in India, international audiences, mostly which are located in less developed country would benefit from the OER that is hosted in India. These efforts are geared towards the total development and

extraordinary improvement of the educational system through the provisions and use of e-resources. Thus, the need and importance of electronic resources in the contemporary educational system cannot be overemphasized. This has stimulated most library system to find the most efficient and effective ways in improving the current state of the library in disseminating information through electronic resource provisions.

If students are to key into this recent development and opportunities the use of this e-resources provides to them, then it is of no doubt that it will go a long way in equipping students with current and global information and also modern ways of educational practices around the world, which is capable of enhancing their research productivity. Ocheibi (2013) concluded that information is a key resource that can bring about change and improvement in the outcome of students' academic pursuit. But in a case where the information cannot be access, students' research skills might be restricted.

Studies that are available on class level as a potential factor that could influence the utilization of electronic resources which are reviewed in terms of distinctions in the use of electronic resources by undergraduate students and post graduate students. Such studies include Urhiewhu and Omah (2016) and Ozoemelem (2016). The study conducted by Urhiewhu and Omah (2016) on the levels of Electronic Information Resources Usage among Undergraduate Students' in Taraba State University Library Jalingo, Taraba State, the study applied a simple random sampling technique to draw a sample of 78 students' representing 15% of the total population of students at their undergraduate level in Taraba state university library Jalingo, Taraba state, Nigeria. The instrument for collecting data was a questionnaire. Simple percentage and frequency counts were used to analyze the data that was collected. The results from the findings showed that there is a low level of required skills in ICT proficiency among students' of Taraba state university and it hampered there utilization of the electronic resource provisions as low level of utilization was experienced. In most cases the internet through the use of Cybercafé was their major source of accessing the electronic resources as there was no internet provision on campus. It was revealed that the the post graduate students' of the Taraba state University had a higher level of the use of the resource provisions in Taraba State university library Jalingo Taraba Sate.

Urhiewhu and Omah focused on the levels of electronic information resources usage among undergraduate students in Taraba State, this study is related to the current study in terms of the class that was sampled for the study (undergraduate students). However, there is a need to assess if there is difference in terms of usage and utilization factor between undergraduate and post graduate students in relation to their research skills, which this study seek to cover.

Similarly, Ozoemelem (2016) carried out another study which was to determine use of e-resources by Postgraduate Students' of at the Department of Library Science at the Delta State University, The study adopted a descriptive survey design. A sample of both MSc and PhD post graduate students' were used with a total sample size of 78 post graduate students'. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and frequency distribution. The findings of the study revealed that because of lack of internet provisions by the university, there was inadequate utilization of electronic resource materials available on the internet. Student most at times make use of their phone to access the internet and download the necessary portable document format (PDF) file to carry out their research and other assignments.

Both studies are related in terms of the sample used, since the current study sampled post graduate and undergraduate students based on class level. However, the current study further assessed if there is difference in usage between undergraduate and post graduate students.

Research Question

1. To what extent class levels could influence Economics education students' use of e-resource materials in universities libraries
2. What is the influence of e-resource utilization on Economics education students' research skills?

Hypothesis

- Ho1: There is no significant difference in the e-resource utilization skills possesses by undergraduate and post graduate students of Economics education in South East, Nigeria.
- Ho2: There is no significant difference in the response of male and female students' of Economics education on the influence of e-resource utilization on their research skills

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to find out the disparity between class level on the utilization of e-resources materials to enhance research skills among Economics Education students in South East, Nigeria. Nworgu (2015) explained that a descriptive survey design is targeted at gathering data and analyzing the data in a systematic manner, the attributes and facts and drawing conclusion about that given population. Five (5) public university was purposefully selected on the bases that they offer Economics Education as a course of study and four hundred and ninety two (492) Economics Education students were used as the respondents for

the study. During the course of data collection there was a mortality of 74 respondents. Hence amounting the total respondents to be 418.

A researcher self-developed questionnaire and utilization schedule was used for data collection, which was titled "questionnaire on influence of e-resources utilization" (QIERU) and an observational schedule on student's utilization of e-resource material (OSSUEM). The questionnaire solicited for information on the influence of e-resource utilization on students research skills while the observational schedule on Student's utilization of e-resources elicited information on extent of student utilization of e-resource material. The questionnaire consist of two broad parts; Part A and part B. Part A is on demographic and characteristics of the respondents while part B have one cluster.

The instruments were validated by three experts. One in Social Science Education, one in library and information science and one from science education department, all in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, to ascertain the content coverage of the items in respect of the research questions. All the corrections made by the validators where effected. The instrument was trial tested and a reliability of 0.76 was established using Cronbach alpha with the help of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).The instruments was administered by the researchers and two research assistant. The data collected was analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentage While the null hypothesis was tested using Mann Whitney U at 0.05 level of significance. This means that any item with 49% and bellow respectively is not available or utilized while item with 50% or above is available or utilized.

Results

The result of this study is presented in tables under the research questions addressed in the study.

Research Question One: What is the influence of e-resource utilization on Economics education students' research skills?

Table 1: Influence of e-resource utilization on students' research skills.**Decision criteria (%: < 50 = Uninfluential; > 49 = Influential)**

S/ N	ITEM STATEMENT	Influential		Uninfluential		Decision
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
1	Adequate use of current materials in my project work.	244	63	139	36.3	Influential
2	Able to articulate well, statement of problem.	243	63.6	139	36.4	Influential
3	Acquainted with the latest referencing and citation styles and how they are used.	201	52	181	47	Influential
4	Able to relate well reviewed works related to my study.	264	68.9	119	31.1	Influential
5	Able to state and write good background to the study.	357	93.7	24	6.3	Influential
6	Reduce to a greater percentage plagiarism in my project.	154	40.3	228	59.7	Uninfluential
7	Reduces the cost of carrying out a research.	244	63.7	139	36.3	Influential
8	Able to adequately interpret research findings.	312	81.5	71	18.5	Influential
9	Enhanced the overall quality of research work.	246	64.4	136	35.6	Influential
10	Enhanced ease of tracing referenced materials via url.	357	93.7	24	6.3	Influential
11	Adequate use of relevant materials in my project.	172	44.9	211	55.1	Uninfluential

Result presented in Table 1 above shows the frequency and percentage responses of students' on the influence of e-resources utilization on their research skills. The table revealed that items 1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9 and 10 with a frequency and percentage score of 244(63%), 243(63.6%), 201(52%), 264(68.9%), 357(93.7%), 244(63.7%), 312(81.5%) 246(64.4%), and 357(93.7%) respectively were influential, while items 6 and 11 with a frequency and percentage level of 228(59.7%) and 211(55.1%) were uninfluential, respectively. This implies that utilization of e-resource materials have a positive influence on students research skills. This finding was further verified by hypothesis one.

Hypothesis one: There is no significant difference in the response of male and female students' of Economics education on the influence of e-resource utilization on their research skills.

Table 2: Mann Whitney U test of students' response on the influence of e-resources utilization on their research skills.

	U Value	Z Value	Sig. (2 tailed)	Decision
Gender	.000	-17.007	0.000	Significant

Table 2 indicates that the probability level of 0.000 is less than the set alpha level of 0.05 with a Z value of -17.007. Accordingly, the Null hypothesis of no significant difference between the response of male and female Economics Education students' on the influence of e-resource utilization on their research skills is therefore rejected. This imply that the response of male and females Economics education students on influence of e-resource utilization on research skills differs.

Research Question Two

To what extent class levels could influence Economics education students' utilization of e-resource materials in universities libraries?

Table 3: Extent of influence of class level on students' utilization of e-resource

Class Level	Number	Level of Utilization			Total Percentage
		Strong	Medium	Weak	
Post Graduate Students'	30	14(46.6%)	9(30%)	7(23.3%)	8.4%
Year 4 Students'	108	25(23.1%)	62(57.4%)	21(19.4%)	30.4%
Year 3 Students	217	12(5.5%)	138(63.6)%	67(30.9%)	61.1%

materials.

Table 3 shows that 30 out of the 355 Economics education students' representing 8.4% of the total students' used for the study were post graduate students', 108 representing 30.4% of the total students' used were year 4 students' while 217 representing 61.1% of the total students' used were year 3 students'. Accordingly, 14 representing 46.6% of the post graduate students' have a strong e-resource utilization skill while 9 representing 30% of the post graduate students' have a medium e-resource utilization skill and 7 representing 23.3% of the post graduate students' have a weak e-resource utilization skills. 25 representing 23.1% of the year 4 students' have a strong e-resource utilization skill, 62 representing 57.4% of the year 4 students' have a medium e-resource utilization skill while 21 representing 19.4% of the year 4 students have a weak e-resource utilization skill. 12 representing 5.5% of the year 3 students have a strong e-resource utilization skills, 138 representing 63.3% of the year 3 students' have a medium e-resource utilization skills while 67 representing 30.9% of the year 3 students have a weak e-resource utilization skill. The results as presented on the table above shows that post graduate are more proficient in the use of e-resource materials, followed by year 4 students and then year 3 students. This has indicated that class level have influence on the utilization of e-resource materials. This finding was further verified by hypothesis two.

Hypothesis two: There is no significant difference in the e-resource utilization skills possesses by undergraduate and post graduate students of Economics education

Table 4: Kruskal wallis H test of e-resource utilization skills possessed by different class level of Economics education.

	Chi Square	DF	Sig. (2 tailed)	Decision
Class Level	96.863	2	0.000	Significant

Table 4 indicates that the probability level of 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05 at 2 degree level of freedom. Accordingly, the Null hypothesis of no significant difference between the e-resource utilization skills possessed by post graduate, undergraduate year 4 and year 3 of Economics education is hereby rejected. This imply that students' utilization of e-resources materials differs within class level.

Discussion of Findings

The influence of e-resource usage on Economics education students' research skills

The results of this study as presented in Tables 1 show that utilization of e-resources has a positive influence on the quality of students' research skills. It revealed that among the benefits that the use of e-resources provide during research includes, students' ability to articulate well, statement of problem students, familiarity with the latest referencing and citation styles and how they are used, ability to adequately interpret research findings, ease of tracing referenced materials via url among other influential benefits. The findings was further tests by hypothesis four in table 2 which revealed that there is significant level of students' responses on the influence of e-resource utilization on students research skills. When a close attention is payed to the pattern of students' responses, even as a larger number of students feel that utilization of e-resources enhances their research skills, it is also obvious that quite a number of students who perceive that the use of e-resources has not influenced their research skills. This might be as a result of non-provision or subscription of electronic information resources and software by their respective universities for enhancing research skills.

These findings lend support to Payne and Conyers (2010) who found out that there was a positive relationship between the adequate utilization of electronic resources and students' research and academic achievement. The findings further validated Okon (2014) who opined that when a researcher is able to utilize current materials, been able to articulate well the statement of problem and clearly establish problems in the background and adequately able to interpret research findings among other qualities, then it is expected that the quality of the research skills. The finding was also confirmed by hypothesis one as presented in table 2 which revealed that there was a significant difference in the response of male and female respondents.

The extent class levels could influence Economics education students' use of e-resource materials

As regards the extent class level could influence Economics education students' utilization of e-resource material, results presented in tables 3 revealed that class level have influence on the utilization of e-resource materials. The findings revealed that post graduate students utilizes e-resource material far better than year 4 and year 3 students of economics education, similarly, the year 4 students were better user compared to year 3 respectively. Accordingly, because of students years of school experience and severity of course work and assignments that might emerge according to class level which might account for the disparity in the use of e-resources. This findings was further verified by hypothesis six in table 4 which confirmed that

there was significant difference in the extent of use of e-resources within class level among Economics education students.

The findings supported the earlier findings of Urhiewhu and Omah (2016) who found out that there is a low level of skills in ICT proficiency among students' of Taraba state university and it hampered there utilization of the electronic resource provisions as low level of utilization was experienced. On the other hand, the finding of this study ran contrary to the earlier findings of Ozoemelem (2016) who found out that because of lack of internet provisions by the university, there was inadequate utilization of electronic resource materials available on the internet by post graduate students.

Conclusion

The study concludes that students' class influences the extent of utilization of available electronic resource materials. Also, adequate utilization of electronic resource materials has a positive influence on students' research skills.

Recommendations

- Integration of relevance of electronic resource utilization in Economics education curriculum for year one and year two.
- Plagiarism software should be made available for students to conduct similarity test when writing their dissertations, thesis and projects to improve originality in research.
- Introduction of proficiency courses for effective use of library electronic resources for undergraduate students.
- Lecturers should occasionally make referral to the use of electronic materials for conducting assignments and seminar presentations among students'.

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