

**Perceived Usefulness As A Determinant of E-book Usage by Postgraduate Students in Selected Universities in Southeast, Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This examined the perceived usefulness as a determinant of e-book usage by postgraduate students in universities in South West, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was adopted using a questionnaire, as an instrument for data collection from postgraduate students across three universities in South-West Nigeria. A content-related approach of validation was conducted to ensure the validity of the instrument while Cronbach alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument which returned an  $r = 0.864$ . The population of the study comprised postgraduate students from the University of Ibadan (11,825), Ekiti State University (1,620), and Bowen University (55) respectively. The simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the three universities. Israel's(2009) sample size Model was used to arrive at three hundred and Ninety (390) respondents which represents the sample for the study. The findings from the study demonstrated that postgraduate students have a positive perception of the usefulness of e-books as they enhance academic performance effectiveness. The findings further revealed that postgraduate students can accomplish tasks very quickly, and provide up-to-date information resources. The study recommended that; university management should ensure that they subscribed to the appropriate online academic databases e.g., Ebscohost, ProQuest and ScienceDirect etc., to have access to up-to-date e-books and e-resources as a whole for the postgraduate students to have access to adequate information resources. Postgraduate students should embrace the use of electronic books for academic purposes such as using them to complement printed books, checking for the research topic and updating research work, preparing academic course work or reading, passing away leisure time (Novels and like), searching for academic information resources and many more.*

**KEYWORDS:**-E-books, Usage, Perceived usefulness, and Postgraduate Students.

### **Introduction**

As technological integration has progressed in the educational sector, a new and different approach to learning has emerged. The rapid development in technology has necessitated the development of educational digital content (Mizher and Alwreikat, 2023). The speedy progress of information, communication, and technologies (ICT) and their application to teaching and learning. Among these approaches is the emergence of electronic information resources. Electronic information resources are digital contents stored electronically in digital systems and made accessible through electronic mediums through computer networks (Eromosele, Abdulraheem, Abdulrazaq and Abubakar, 2021). The use has recently become a common tool in higher education, approved at many universities around the world for supporting and enhancing effective learning, while also encouraging lifelong sources (Muir & Hawes, 2013). As a result, books have gone through an incredible transformation - from hand-written books to printed books and finally to electronic books to support electronic information dissemination (Majid, Chenqin, Chang and Zilu, 2019). Most importantly, books are the most important medium for knowledge dissemination, personality development, and leisure reading.

Electronic information resources are said to be the electronic representation of information that can be accessed via electronic systems and computer networks (Johnson, Evensen, Gelfand, Lammers, Sipe & Zilper, 2012). Electronic information sources are becoming more and more important for the academic community (Egberongbe, 2011). Therefore, awareness of these information resources is of paramount importance to library development in the 21st century.

The National Universities Commission (NUC), a government agency in Nigeria, subscribed to several international and local online academic databases which contain E-Books and E-journals and made them accessible to Nigerian Universities through its URL link ([www.nigerianvirtuallibrary.com](http://www.nigerianvirtuallibrary.com)) on the Internet. Also, NUC, NULIB (Nigerian University Libraries Consortium), and eifl.net (Electronic Information for Libraries Network) are partnering to provide electronic resources towards teaching, learning, and research in Nigerian Universities (Okiki, 2012).

The International Digital Publishing Forum (2007) refers to an e-book as "[a] literary work in the form of a digital object, consisting of one or more standard unique identifiers, metadata, and a monographic body of content, intended to be published and accessed electronically": Similarly, the term e-book "may also refer to the hardware devices created to read e-books". In other words, the International Digital Publishing Forum uses the term e-book both for digital book content and for devices such as dedicated e-book readers.

No doubt the use of e-books is gaining pace, and the continuous availability and accessibility are making things easier and enabling learning to be well facilitated. However, the perceived usefulness of e-books is very important and highly necessary. Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which a person believes that using a particular technology will enhance his/her job performance, (Davis, 1989). It is envisaged that positive or negative perceptions of the

usefulness of e-books by the users will determine their use. Similarly, the issues of the quality of e-books as well will go a long to determining their use. However, it is unexpected that despite the e-books adoption to complement e-learning in most higher education institutions in Nigeria, empirical documentary evidence is still lacking particularly regarding perceived usefulness. It is against this backdrop that the researcher seeks to investigate the perceived usefulness as a determinant of e-book usage by post-graduate students in South-West Universities of Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Nigerian universities, it is expected that electronic information resources such as e-books and e-journals should be made available, accessible, and easy to use, and save the time of prospective researchers. Despite the relevance, flexibility, and importance of e-books; problems are attached to access and usage of e-books as a result of this, there seems to be little evidence of their increased use among postgraduate students in Nigeria. Tella, et al. (2018) reported that the major problem encountered by students with e-books is the difficulties reading on the computers or the internet, followed by the cost of an e-book reader. Also, Urhiewhu(2014) reported that the constraints encountered by students towards the accessibility of digital Information Resources are epileptic power supply, no availability of online databases, lack of formal training in Internet skills among students, slow bandwidth, network problems, and server slowness. However, there is a dearth of empirical evidence on the perceived usefulness of postgraduate students in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that the researcher seeks to investigate the perceived usefulness as a determinant of e-book usage by postgraduate students in South-West Universities of Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the perceived usefulness as a determinant of e-book usage by postgraduate students in North-Central Universities of Nigeria the specific objectives are:

1. examine the perceived usefulness of e-books by postgraduate students in South West Universities of Nigeria;
2. determine the extent to which postgraduate students utilize e-books in the South West Universities of Nigeria for their research work; and
3. identify the challenges encountered by postgraduate students while accessing and using electronic books in the South West Universities of Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions are posed;

1. What is the perceived usefulness of e-books by post-graduate students in universities In South West, Nigeria?
2. What is the extent to which postgraduate students utilize e-books in the South West Universities of Nigeria for their research work?
3. What are the challenges encountered by postgraduate students while accessing and using electronic books in the South West Universities of Nigeria?

### **Review of Related Literature**

Acquiring knowledge through electronic information resources has introduced changes to reading behaviour (Mizher and Alwreikat, 2023). The importance of reading through this medium in knowledge acquisition to human intellectual development in all spheres of life cannot be over-emphasized (Eromosele et.al.2021). It is obvious that academic libraries all over the world particularly in Nigeria are putting much effort into information resources by acquiring resources in print form and even subscribing to electronic resources; competent library professionals are suitable for the digital era (Urhiewhu, 2014). This has led to more availability of electronic information resources such as e-books that are often consulted for research work by Post Graduate Students in Nigeria. E-books have been abruptly approved all over the world in academic institutions as a learning and teaching tool (Pittaway & Malomo, 2021; Luo, Xiao, Ma, and Li 2021). Thus, the spread of digital books established its position in almost all classrooms in no time. An electronic book is commonly referred to as an e-book, i.e., replicating conventional books in electronic format.

The perceived usefulness and usage of these e-books have become a concern as they relate to information provision. Perceived usefulness and usage of e-books is to promote a user's willingness to use new information technology, it is necessary to let potential users believe that the new information technology is easy to use and that they can benefit from using it. Perceived usefulness refers to "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance" (Davis, 1989). Davis et al. (1989) also previously identified usefulness as the most powerful predictive variable in information technology usage. Since that time, a variety of studies focused on TAM have demonstrated that perceived usefulness is the key determinant factor in cases in which users intend to use a new IS or Internet technology (Adams et al., 1992; Ahn et al, 2004; AL-Gahtani & King, 1999; Davis et al., 1989; Dishaw& Strong, 1998; Mathieson, 1991).

The E-book can be produced in numerous formats that range from very basic text files to well-structured, purpose built-files that use one of the emerging standards for e-books such as the e-pub and Adobe PDF standards (Owajeme, 2017). Lal, (2014), affirmed that from the day of its introduction, libraries realized the importance of e-books and made them part of their collection development. He further explains that libraries acquire e-books through subscription or purchase license policies and provide them to the user via library OPAC, website, etc. Within the organizational context, a system that is high in perceived usefulness is one that the user believes will have a positive use-performance relationship. IS adoption research suggests that "a system that does not help people perform their jobs is not likely to be received favourably" (Nysveen, Pedersen, &Thornbjomsen, 2005, p. 537). The ultimate reason that users exploit digital libraries is that they find the systems used for their information needs or search tasks (Hong et al., 2002).

The "usefulness" and "ease of use" of technology acceptance factors both have positive effects on "attitude", and the effect of 'ease of use" is even more evident. Users believe that the benefits provided by e-books are useful (e.g., they can rapidly complete their life or work tasks) and are easy to use (e.g., they can get started without another's guidance), which helps increase users' attitudes toward e-books. If consumers believe that e-books are more useful for their work or are

easy to use, their attitude toward using e-books is also higher. Thus, the perceived usefulness and ease of use of e-books are cognitive factors for consumers to accept e-books. This further corroborates that postgraduate students' perceived usefulness of electronic books to a very large extent determines either increasing or decreasing usage of electronic books.

Usefulness has to do with the extent to which a particular electronic resource helps the researcher to fill the gap(s) of the information needed with the aid of its information, system, and service quality. However, many argue that E-bookings; as a new learning technology will definitely and significantly contribute to the learning environment. Technology advances day after day, while traditional methods, such as tutorials and face-to-face lectures, are still strongly dominant in most universities, and educational arenas.

Wang and Bai, (2016) opined that postgraduate students used e-books more for academic purposes. Similarly, Carroll (2016), et al. observed that overall, the use of e-books for academic purposes by postgraduate students has increased considerably. Koçak (2016), et al. also noticed that students preferred e-books while studying. Khan (2016), et al. and Lewellen (2016), et al. found that postgraduate students used e-books more than undergraduates. Therefore, the dearth of empirical evidence on the perceived usefulness by the postgraduate students coupled with the fact that there is more to explore in terms of e-book usage among postgraduate students in universities in South West, Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that the researcher seeks to investigate the perceived usefulness as a determinant of e-book usage by postgraduate students in South-West Universities of Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

The research design that was adopted for this study is the descriptive survey method. The target population of the study comprises postgraduate students in three selected universities in South West of Nigeria, namely; the University of Ibadan, Ekiti State University (EKSU), and Bowen University According to the data collected from the Directorate of Academic Planning in the three universities, the population of postgraduate students are presented in the table below. The total targeted population was 13,500 where the post-graduate students from the University of Ibadan, Ibadan 11,825, Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti 1620, and Bowen University, Iwowa 55 respectively of their postgraduate students. Israel's (2009) model for determining sample size was used to arrive at the sample size for this study. The model states taken sample size for  $\pm 3\%$ ,  $\pm 5\%$ ,  $\pm 7\%$ , and  $\pm 10\%$  for Precision Levels where Confidence Level is 95% and  $P=.5$ . Therefore, at  $\pm 5\%$  precision levels and the confidence level at 95% for a population of 13500. The researcher adopted a simple random sampling technique by collecting the names of all the postgraduate students of each of the institutions. Based on the serial number attached to the list, the researcher used random numbers to select the sample. The samples were selected randomly for each of the institutions. Thus, at the University of Ibadan, 342 postgraduate students were selected in every 34<sup>th</sup> names that appeared on the list of 11,825, at Ekiti State University 46 postgraduate students were selected in every 35<sup>th</sup> names that appeared on the list of 1,620, and at Bowen University 2 postgraduate students were selected in every 27<sup>th</sup> names that appeared on the list of 55. This study used a questionnaire for data collection.

## Results

A total of three hundred and seventy-five (375) copies of the questionnaire were administered to postgraduate students at the University of Ibadan, Ekiti State University, and Bowen University. A total of Two hundred and fifty-nine (259) participants responded and completed the survey questionnaire giving a response rate of 69%.

### Analysis Of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the perceived usefulness of e-books?

Table 1: Perceived Usefulness of E-Books by Postgraduate Students

Factors	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>E-book contents are usually presented in a useful format</b>	141	54.4	109	42.1	8	3.1	1	.4
<b>E-book content provides up-to-date information</b>	146	56.4	102	39.4	11	4.2	-	-
<b>E-book content will improve my academic performance(s)</b>	138	53.3	115	44.4	6	2.3	-	-
<b>E-book content provides information that seems to be exactly what I need</b>	155	59.8	93	35.9	11	4.2	-	-
<b>E-book content provides information relevant to my discipline</b>	159	61.4	90	34.7	10	3.9	-	-
<b>E-book content could enable me to accomplish my task(s) very quickly</b>	165	63.7	92	35.5	2	.8	-	-
<b>E-book content will enhance my academic career effectiveness</b>	185	71.4	62	23.9	12	4.6	-	-

Table 1 reveals the result of the perceived usefulness of e-books among postgraduate students. This shows that the majority 250 (96.5%) of the respondents indicate that e-book content is always presented in a useful format. However; 248 (95.8%) of the respondents thought that e-book content would provide up-to-date information; 253 (97.7%) of the respondents perceived that e-book content would improve their academic performance(s); 248 (95.7%) of the respondents thought that e-books content provides information that seems to be exactly what they need.

Table 1; further shows that 249 (96.1%) of the respondents perceived that e-book content provides information relevant to their discipline; 257 (99.2%) of the respondents thought that e-book content could enable them to accomplish their task(s) very quickly; while 247 (95.3%) of the respondents perceived that e-books content will enhance their academic career effectiveness. However, this implies that the majority of the respondents agreed that perceived usefulness affects e-book usage.

**Research Question Two: What is the extent to which postgraduate students utilize e-books?**

**Table 2: Research Question Three: The Extent of Usage of Electronic Books by Postgraduate Students**

Factors	High Extent		Medium Extent		Low Extent		No Extent	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>I have used some e-books provided by the university library</b>	164	63.3	58	22.4	24	9.3	13	5.0
<b>I'm using e-books to update research work</b>	154	59.5	82	31.7	19	7.3	4	1.5
<b>I'm using e-books for preparing academic coursework or reading</b>	172	66.4	65	25.1	18	6.9	4	1.5
<b>E-books assist me to write and publish article paper(s)</b>	161	62.2	71	27.4	25	9.7	2	.8
<b>E-books expose me to up-to-date and wide range of knowledge</b>	178	68.7	64	24.7	15	5.8	2	.8
<b>E-books help me to pass away my leisure time i.e., Reading novels, paper articles etc.</b>	54	20.8	113	43.6	54	20.8	38	14.7

Table 2 reveals the extent of usage of electronic books among postgraduate students. Table 4.4 shows that 164 (63.3%) of the respondents agreed that they have used some e-books provided by the university library to a high extent; 58 (22.4%) agreed to a medium extent, 24 (9.3%) of respondents on low extent while 13 (5.0%) are on no extent of e-books usage. More so, 154 (59.5%) of the respondents are using e-books to update research work to a high extent; 82 (31.7%) of the respondents are on a medium extent; 19 (7.3%) of the respondents are on a low extent while 4 (1.5%) of the respondents had no extent of e-books usage. Also, 172 (66.4%) of the respondents are using e-books for preparing academic course work or reading to a high extent; 65 (25.1%) of the respondents are on a medium extent; 18 (6.9%) of the respondents are on low extent while 4 (1.5%) of the respondents had no extent of usage. Table 2 further shows that 161 (62.2%) of the respondents agreed that books assist them in writing and publishing

article paper(s) to a high extent of usage; 71 (27.4%) of the respondents are on a medium extent; 25 (9.7%) of the respondents are on low extent while 2 (8%) of the respondents had no extent to the said statement; 178 (68.7%) of the respondents depicts that e-books expose them to an up-to-date and wide range of knowledge; 64 (24.7%) of the respondents are on the medium extent, 15 (5.8%) are on low extent of usage and while 2 (8%) of the respondents had no extent of usage. Finally, 54 (20.8%) of the respondents agreed that e-books help them to pass away their leisure time i.e., reading novels, paper articles, etc.; 113 (43.6%) of the respondents agreed to the medium extent of usage, 54 (20.8%) were on low extent while 38 (14.7%) had no extent of usage to the said question. This implies that the majority of the respondents put e-books into use to a high extent.

Research Question 3 What are the challenges encountered by postgraduate students while accessing and using electronic books?

**Table 3: Challenges Encounter While Accessing E-Books by Postgraduate Students**

Factors	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Our university library does not subscribe to the appropriate website to access up-to-date e-book resources	8	3.1	42	16.2	126	48.6	83	32.0
Offline e-books provided by the library are not relevant to my course of work	21	8.1	27	10.4	125	48.3	86	33.2
No manual guide is being provided to access offline e-books	9	3.5	56	21.6	125	48.3	69	26.6
It is difficult for me to use e-book software or applications provided by the university library	14	5.4	29	11.2	126	48.6	90	34.7
I find it difficult to read e-books through the screen because it causes eyestrain	50	19.3	31	12.0	121	46.7	57	22.0
Our university library does not provide a link to access e-book resources	21	8.1	20	7.7	125	48.3	93	35.9
No assistance is rendered while accessing e-books in my university library	9	3.5	42	16.2	108	41.7	100	38.6
It is difficult for me to use search engines via the internet to get the appropriate needed e-book information resources	22	8.5	19	7.3	78	30.1	140	54.1
Offline e-books provided by the library are not relevant to my course of work	21	8.1	27	10.4	125	48.3	86	33.2



Table 3 reveals the result of the challenges encountered among the postgraduate students while accessing e-books, 50 (19.3%) of the respondents agreed that their university libraries do not subscribe to the appropriate website to access up-to-date e-books resources; while 209 (80.6%) of the respondents disagreed with this statement; 48 (18.5%) of the respondent agreed that offline e-books provided by the library are not relevant to their course of work while 211 (81.5%) of the respondent disagreed with the statement; 65 (25.1%) of the respondents agreed that no manual guides are being provided to access offline e-books while 194 (74.9%) of the respondents declined the statement. Table 3 further shows that 43 (16.6%) of the respondents agreed that it is difficult for them to use e-books software or applications provided by the university library while 216 (83.3%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement; 81 (31.3%) of the respondents agreed that they find it difficult to read e-books through the screen because it causes eyestrain while 178 (68.7%) of the respondents rejected the statements; 41(15.8%) of the respondents agreed that their university library does not provide a link to access e-books resources while 218 (84.2%) of the respondents rejected the statement.

Table 3 however reveals that 51 (19.7%) of the respondents agreed that no assistance was rendered while accessing e-books in their university library while 208 (80.3%) disagreed with the statement; 41 (15.5%) of the respondents agreed that it is difficult for them to use search engines via the internet to get the appropriate needed e-books information resources while 218 (84.2%) of the respondent declined the statement. Thus, the majority of the respondents didn't encounter any challenges while accessing e-books.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study were discussed based on the three (3) research objectives formulated for the study.

#### **Perceived Usefulness of E-Books by Postgraduate Students**

Findings from this study show that there is a positive perception usefulness of e-books among postgraduate students as the majority of them found e-books to be presented in a useful format, provide up-to-date information, seem to be exactly what they need, relevant to their discipline, enable them to accomplish the task very quickly, specifically it improved their academic performance. This study is similar to Wei, Rabindra, and Laeeq (2015) who reported that the perceived usefulness of e-books positively predicts the academic performance of the students.

#### **The Extent of Usage of Electronic Books by Postgraduate Students**

Findings from this study show that there is a high extent of usage of e-books among postgraduate students as the majority of them use e-books provided by the university libraries; to update research work; prepare academic course work or reading; write and publish article papers (s). This study corroborates Walton (2007) who reported that students are more receptive to using e-books to conduct research and to using e-books as a textbook. However, this study also reveals that the majority of the respondents use e-books to pass away their leisure time i.e., reading novels, paper articles, etc., this study at the same time contradicts Walton (2007) who reported that students are still hesitant to embrace books as a primary format for leisure reading.

### **Challenges Encountered While Accessing E-Books by Postgraduate Students**

The findings reveal that postgraduate students had fewer challenges while accessing e-books as a majority of them claimed that their university library subscribed to the appropriate website to access up-to-date e-book sources, offline e-books provided by the library were relevant to their course of work, and manual guide was being provided; reading of e-books through screen didn't cause eyestrain, provision of links to access e-books; assistance has been rendered while accessing e-books and it has been easier for them to use search engines to get the needed e-books. Findings from this study contradict Marques (2012) who reported that electronic books cause eyestrain and difficulty in reading are factors impeding the usage of e-books.

### **Conclusion**

In addition to the available empirical evidence, this study has been able to establish empirical evidence on the perceived usefulness as a determinant of e-book usage by postgraduate students in universities in South West, Nigeria. Specifically, this study showed that the major mode of reading e-books among postgraduate students is on the screen and through e-book software or e-book reader devices, while the main purpose of using e-books is for finding relevant materials and research purposes. The following features are the main factors that enable students to make use of e-books; they are searchable, available, accurate, save space, allow easy navigation, etc.

The role of e-books is overemphasized; they can provide better knowledge delivery and accessibility. Universities libraries in South-West, Nigeria should encourage postgraduate students the use e-books by subscribing to the appropriate e-book's website and acquiring more e-books, downloading a separate e-book collection, assistance should be rendered to access e-books and organizing raining on the better use of e-books. From the findings of this study, it is observed that e-books were getting accepted by postgraduate students in universities in South-West, Nigeria. Lastly, universitylibrary in universities in South-West, Nigeria should create closer communication with students to address their need for e-books collection and to teach the skills for locating and using e-books.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations directed at the management of universities, government agencies, students, and library staff are made:

The benefits of electronic books can never be overemphasized; therefore, university management should ensure that they subscribe to the appropriate online academic databases.g., Ebscohost, ProQuest ScienceDirect etc., to have access to up-to-date e-books and e-resources as whole. As a result, this might attract the students to make regular use of e-books provided by the university management when they find the e-books more relevant to their needs;

Students should embrace the use of electronic books for academic purposes such as using them to complement printed books, checking for the research topic and updating research work, preparing academic course work or reading, passing away leisure time (Novels and like), searching for academic information resources and many more; and the library should create a

unit called an electronic library where we have an e-librarian that will be receiving, answering queries, and exchanging e-books with the e-users via the university webpage. Most especially to make available both online and offline e-books for the benefit of the researchers.

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