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INFORMATION LITERACY, GENDER, AND UNDERGRADUATES' USE OF E-RESOURCES IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NORTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

In this digital age, information literacy (IL) has become a necessary fundamental skill-set needed by undergraduates to effectively utilise e-resources, irrespective of gender bias. Gender disparities in educational access are pronounced in North-west, Nigeria, where cultural, religious and socio-economic factors often limit women's academic pursuit and consequent use of e-resources, hence, the connection between IL and gender presents a critical area of concern in the context of North-west Nigeria. Therefore, the main purpose of the study was to determine the correlation among information literacy, gender and undergraduates' use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria. The study used a correlational survey design. The population was 10,239 registered users of the university libraries in seven Federal universities in the region during the 2024/2025 academic session. The sample consisted of 370 third-year undergraduates, chosen based on research on students' use of library resources by Hayelom (2014). Krejcie and Morgan (1970) and Hayes' formulas were applied to get the sample size and number for each library subgroup. Data collection involved an achievement test for assessing information literacy skills and a questionnaire addressing gender and undergraduates' use of e-resources. The validation was done by three experienced lecturers from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. Descriptive and Inferential Statistics were used for Data analysis. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to test the hypotheses. Among the study's findings is that a weak positive relationship exists between both information literacy, gender and undergraduates' use of e-resources and it was recommended that the universities should prioritise the development of information literacy programmes that will benefit their students irrespective of gender.

Keywords: Undergraduates, Digital literacy, Information literacy, Gender, Use of e-resources, University libraries

Introduction

In today's digital age, information literacy (IL) is crucial for undergraduates to effectively utilise electronic information resources. IL encompasses various competencies, including library literacy, media literacy, ethics, communication, computer literacy, and critical thinking (Parang, Raine, & Stevenson, 2001, cited in Ekong & Ekong, 2018). Information literacy skills enable users of information to become independent learners. It is the ability to identify, search, manipulate, synthesize, evaluate, and retrieve information (Ebiefung & Okafor, 2022). These are set of techniques and skills/abilities needed for effectively utilisation of various information sources and resources to address one's

information needs, in this context, students' academic pursuit like producing assignments, term papers, final year projects, prepare for tests/quiz, exams and other academic activities. Universities and their libraries have fully embraced e-resources as prominent library learning and teaching resources for all their students irrespective of gender and, thus, have various information literacy programmes that will enable their students take advantage of the benefits of e-resources. Despite its importance, many undergraduates in North-west, Nigeria, lack prerequisite IL skills to navigate the complex digital landscape.

Gender, another factor that could influence students' use of e-resources (Diyaolu, 2018) is the sexual categorisation of human beings into male and female. Males tend to be more confident and self-efficacious, when using technology, while females tend to be more cautious and hesitant. According to Waldman (2003), gender is a relevant factor in examining the use of electronic databases, which are library e-resources. Gender issues, on many grounds and cultures, favour men, hence, gender inequality. Some cultural and religious beliefs do not permit women to engage in meaningful economic activities. This is true in education, hence, the clamour for girl child education. This is obvious in North-west, Nigeria, where girls are not allowed to go to school or get any form of exposure rather are given out in marriage at a very early age.

Electronic information resources (EIRs) are information in various forms ranging from text, audio to video and pictorials, held and made accessible through various digital resources. Some are available on the web pages; others are held in different forms of databases. Ternenge and Kashimana (2019) defined EIRs as materials consisting of data and/or computer programmeme (s) encoded for reading and manipulation by a computer and its peripheral device directly or remotely connected to the computer or via a network such as the Internet. Examples of e-resources are the Internet, CD-ROM, databases, e-books e-journals, offline & online databases, Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC) and other computer-based electronic networks. Ekenna and Mabawonku (2013) explained that they are the essentials of students' academic success because they provide accurate, latest and 24/7 information services, capable of enhancing educational outcomes and assist in the retrieval of large amount of information for teaching, learning and research going on in the universities.

Several studies such as Ndagi and Madu 2018, Buba, Song and Abdullahi (2021) have investigated IL, gender and e-resources usage among undergraduates globally but there seem to be a dearth of such investigation in North-west, Nigeria. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the correlation among undergraduates' IL, gender, and e-resources usage
in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria. The findings will provide insights for universities and library management to develop targeted interventions, promoting inclusive academic environments and enhancing digital literacy training.

Statement of the Problem

The abundance and complexity of EIRs can overwhelm users, making effective information management crucial. However, despite significant investments by universities including those in North-west, Nigeria to provide e-resources and necessary environment for their use, under-utilisation remains a concern and attributed to inadequate information literacy (Akpovire *et al.*, 2019). Also, observations by the researcher show poor attendant from the North-west, e-libraries use records, it was also observed

from the students' information seeking behaviour that they are unable to: identify their information needs; articulate their information needs; effectively search databases containing these resources; evaluate online information; hence, most of their assignments are not properly conducted. These raises critical questions about the effectiveness of current instructional strategies in promoting IL among students and the position of Okoye (2013) that despite the importance of IL, many African universities do not have them in their curricula.

Moreover, the relationship of information literacy and gender presents an additional level of intricacy in understanding the usage of e-resources. Gender disparities in educational access are pronounced in North-west, Nigeria, where cultural and socio-economic factors often limit women's academic pursuit and consequent use of e-resources. This study therefore, sets out to determine the relationship between information literacy, gender and undergraduates' use of e-resources in North-west, Nigeria. By examining this, the study seeks to identify the association among the variables with a view to providing insights and recommendations that will foster an inclusive academic environment, where all students can fully utilise the advantages offered by e-resources, irrespective of their gender.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to determine the correlation among information literacy, gender and undergraduates' use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria. However, specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the relationship between undergraduates' information literacy and use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria;
2. find out the relationship between undergraduates' gender and their use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria; and
3. determine the joint association between undergraduates' information literacy, gender and their use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

The study aims to understand the relationship between undergraduates' information literacy, gender and use of e-resources. The findings will provide insight on the interplay between the variables to universities and library management for relevant policy directions towards, bridging access gaps among the genders, strengthen awareness campaigns, and improve digital literacy training and enhancing campus access points. In addition, students will understand the importance of e-resources in their academic achievement leveraging on education administrators and managements' efforts in bridging the access gap and acquire digital literacy skills, Findings of the study will contribute to existing knowledge in library and information science and provide empirical literature for researchers.

Scope of the study

The study focused was on undergraduates' information literacy, gender and their use of e-resources in university libraries. Geographically, the study will cover seven federal university libraries in the seven states of the North-west, Nigeria. Undergraduates in 300 level in these universities will be used for the study. The content scope will be information literacy, gender and use of e-resources in these university libraries.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

$H0_1$: There is a significant relationship between undergraduates' information literacy and their use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria.

$H0_2$: There is a significant relationship between undergraduates' gender and their use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria.

$H0_3$: There is a significant joint correlation among undergraduates' information literacy, gender, and their use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Relationship between Undergraduates' Information Literacy and Use of E-resources

E-resources are information in various forms ranging from text to audio to video and pictorials held and accessible through various digital resources. Therefore, some forms of skills are required not only to access them but also search them out, identify needed ones, evaluate them, analyse them among other processes or actions required to utilise them. Ekong and Ekong (2018) reported that IL is a key knowledge and ability of students for the use of e-library resources, and it determines the quality and quantity of their academic works to a large extent.

Amuda, Kehinde, Abdul and Onanuga (2020) conducted a study at the Al-Hikmah University, Kwara, North-central, Nigeria with the main purpose of examining the influence of computer literacy, user education and online searching skills on undergraduates' use of e-resources. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between undergraduates' online searching skills (an information literacy skill component) and their use of electronic resources at Al-Hikmah University. Odede and Nsibirwa (2018) conducted a study to determine the relationship between information literacy skills and the use of e-resources among university students in South-south, Nigeria using descriptive survey design. Their finding shows that students' ability in the different components of information literacy skills predicts their use of e-resources. This is an indication of a relationship between the two.

A similar study was carried out by Ukachi (2015) to ascertain "the relationship that exists between undergraduate students' information literacy skills and their use of electronic resources (ERs) in university libraries in South-west, Nigeria using a descriptive research design for the research questions and the correlational research design for the hypothesis. The study indicates a positive and significant relationship between IL skills and students' use of e-resources. This suggests that undergraduates with better information literacy skills are more likely to effectively and critically use e-resources.

Relationship between Undergraduates' Gender and their use of e-resources

The debate about the influence of gender on use of ICT is an age long one. Waldman (2003) found that gender is a relevant factor in examining the use of electronic databases, which are library e-resources. Ruzegea and Msonde (2021) in their finding concluded that female students compared to their male counterparts experience greater challenges in locating e-resources and hence, they are unlikely to use the resources compared to the male gender. This is apparent in some cultures and regions of the world such as North-west, Nigeria where male children are supported in their education career at the expense of their female siblings.

The study of Onojah *et al*. (2021) in which one of their purposes was to determine the influence of gender on undergraduates' demeanour toward using e-resources in single a university in North-central, Nigeria using a descriptive researchdesign reveals that there are no significant differences in demeanour about using e-resources for learning among undergraduates based on gender.In another study, Maitato (2020) investigated the frequency, purpose, demographic profile and e-resources awareness of students in SardarVallabhbhai Patel University of Agriculture and Technology, India with influence of gender in the use of e-resources as one of the objectives.

A descriptive survey research design was used and discovers that the male students use e-resources more than their female counterpart. Ebijuwa and Mabawonku (2019) carried out a study on the demographic variables and academic discipline as determinants of undergraduates' use of e-resources in federal universities in South-west, Nigeria. Age and gender were among the factors investigated. The findings reveal that male use e-resources more than their female counterparts, indicating a relationship between gender and use of e-resources. Similarly, Diyaolu (2018), studied the influence of demographic (gender) characteristics on utilisation of EIRs by postgraduate students in three selected universities in South-west, Nigeria. Finding shows that there is no significant relation between gender and the use of e-resources.

Correlation among Undergraduates' Information Literacy, Gender and Use of E-resources

Studies have shown that IL have influence on use of e-resources (Amuda, *et al*., 2020), and that gender can influence information literacy skills (Talylor & Dala, 2017) and use of e-resources (Maitato, 2020).The influence of IL in the use of e-resources was attested to by Ekong and Ekong (2018) when they posited that information literacy skills is a prerequisite for information resources usersto be able to harness effectively resources at their disposal. Waldama (2003) found out a positive correlation in students with high computer self-efficacy and they are likely to explore new techniques, software or databases to achieve reasonable level of information usage. However, studies have not shown the joint correlation among these variables. Understanding the interplay among them is desirous for a better approach to optimal utilisation of e-resources.

Methodology

This study employed a survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 10,239 registered library users in seven federal university libraries in North-west, Nigeria in the 2023/2024 academic session. A sample of 370 users, consisting of third year undergraduates, was used. The choice for 300 level was based on Hayelom (2014) position that library usage tends to increase with academic progression. Data collection involved an instrument of three parts: achievement test for assessing information literacy skills and questionnaire for gender and undergraduates' use of e-resources respectively. These instruments were developed based on the UNESCO (2018) Global Framework for Digital Literacy Skills, along with insights from relevant literature.

Validation of the instruments was done by three experienced lecturers from the Faculty of Education at Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Reliability was established using Kuder

Richardson 20 for the achievement test, yielding a coefficient of 0.83, and Cronbach's Alpha for the questionnaire, which produced a coefficient of 0.82. The instrument used was 370 and 340 was used for the study giving a 92% return rate. The instrument was administered directly to respondents in their respective libraries, with assistance from seven research aides. Inferential Statistics was used for Data analysis. Research questions were answered using the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation while the PPMC (r) was used to test the hypotheses.

Results

Data Analysis and Results

Table 1: Population, Sample Size and Instrument Distribution and Return Rate

S/N	Name of University	300 Level R.L.U.	S. S. /D. Q.	U. Q.	Return Rate (%)
1	Federal University Dutse, Jigawa State	417	15	15	
2	Bayero University Kano (BUK), Kano State	3,234	117	112	
3	Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Kaduna State	175	6	6	
4	Federal University Dutsin-ma, Katsina State	785	28	27	
5	Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State	883	32	29	
6	Usamanu Danfodyio University Sokoto, Sokoto State	4,041	146	127	
7	Federal University Birnnin Kebbi, Kebbi State	706	26	24	
	Total	**10,239**	**370**	**340**	**92**

Key: R.L.U=Registered Library Users; S.S=Sample Size; D.Q=Distributed Questionnaire; U.Q. =Used Questionnaire

Data Analysis and Findings

Objective 1: Determine the relationship between undergraduates' information literacy and their use of e-resources in university libraries in North-West, Nigeria?

Table 2: Respondents Information Literacy Skills and E-resources Use

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Information Literacy Skills	340	46.4676	23.89879
Undergraduates' Use of E-resources	340	70.5059	17.13705

Table 2 presents the descriptive analysis indicating that undergraduates use of e-resources has a high mean score of 70.5059 while information literacy skills has a low mean score of 46.4676.

Hypotheses Results

$H0_1$: There is a significant relationship between undergraduates' information literacy skills score and their use of e-resources in university libraries in North-West, Nigeria.

Table 3: PPMC on Respondents' Information Literacy Skills and E-resources Use

Sources of Variations	N	Df	Information Literacy Skills	Undergraduates' Use of E-resources	Remark
Information Literacy Skills	340	338	1	0.262 **0.000001**	Weak Positive Relationship
Undergraduates' Use of E-resources	340		0.262 **0.000001**	1	Significant

Table 3 with an r value of 0.262 indicates a weak positive relationship. This shows that there is a positive relationship between Undergraduates' information literacy skills and their use of e-resources among the respondents. The table also shows that at the significance level of 0.05 and degree of freedom (df) of 338 with a P-value of **0.000001**that is almost close to zero, the alternate hypothesis was upheld. This suggests that there is a statistically significant correlation between the two variables and is therefore concluded that there is a statistically significant weak positive correlation between undergraduates' information literacy skills and their use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria.

Objective 2: Find out the relationship between undergraduates' gender and their use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria

Table 4: Respondents' Gender and their Use of E-resources

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	340	1.4500	.49823
Undergraduates' Use of E-resources	340	70.5059	17.13705

Table 4 presents the descriptive analysis indicating that undergraduates' use of e-resources has a high mean score of 70.5059 while gender has a low mean score of 1.4500.

H0$_2$: There is a significant relationship between undergraduates' gender and their use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria

Table 5: Summary of Correlation (r_{pb}) on Respondents' Gender and E-resources Use

Sources of Variations	N	Df Gender rpb		Undergraduates' Use of E-resources r_{pb}	Cal.T	P-value	Remark
Gender	340	338	1	.025	2.63	WeakPositive Relationship	
Undergraduates' Use of E-resources	340		.025	1		0.02	Significant

In Table 5, the result shows a score of .025 indicating that a weak positive relationship exists between gender and undergraduates use of e-resources among the respondents. Similarly, the hypothesis test result at 0.05 level of significance, shows that with a 338df, calculated t of 2.63 and p-value of 0.02 which is < than 0.05, the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between undergraduates' gender and their use of e-resources was upheld.

Objective 3: Determine the joint correlation among undergraduates' gender, information literacy and their use of e-resources in university libraries in North-West, Nigeria.

Table 6: Respondents' Information Literacy Skills, Gender and E-resources Use

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Information Literacy Skills	340	46.4676	23.89879
Gender	340	1.4500	.49823
Undergraduates' Use of E-resources	340	70.5059	17.13705

Table 6 presents the descriptive analysis of the variables and it shows that undergraduates' use of e-resources has the highest mean score of 70.5059, followed by information literacy which has 46.4676, while gender has the lowest mean score of 1.4500.

H0$_3$: There is a significant joint correlation among undergraduates', information literacy, gender and their use of e-resources in university libraries in North-West, Nigeria.

Table 7: Summary of regression analysis on the correlation among undergraduates' information literacy, gender and use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria.

Models	R	R-Sq	Adjusted R-Sq	Df	Cal.F	P-value	Remark
Information literacy, Gender (Male & Female) and use of e-resource	.263	.069	.064	338	12.561	.000	Moderate Positive Correlation

Significant

Table 7 is the result of the correlation coefficient of multiple regression analysis between information literacy, gender and undergraduates use of e-resources. It shows that r is .263 with an R Square of .069 indicating a positive relationship but a weak to moderate correlation between the variables. It also shows that at 0.05 level of significance and 338 df, the calculated F 12.561, and the P-value .000 being less than 0.05, the alternate hypothesis is therefore accepted. This shows that a significant joint relationship exists among information literacy, gender and undergraduates' use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria.

Discussion of the Findings

Relationship between Undergraduates' Information Literacy and Use of E-resources

Result for objective 1 shows that a weak positive relationship exists between information literacy and use of e-resources. This is an indication that there are some positive relationship between undergraduates' information literacy skills and their use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria. This shows that information literacy is necessary skill set needed by the undergraduates to be able to cope up with effective access and use of information that abounds everywhere both in quantity and quality. The finding agrees with that of Odede and Nsibirwa (2018) that the use of electronic information resources is determined by students' competency in the various dimensional constructs of information literacy.

This relationship buttresses the place of information literacy in today's information age and particularly, in academics, thus, Okoye (2013) posits that it is a prerequisite skill for all students to successfully achieve most of their academic outcomes. However, it can be said that the weak/moderate positive relationship is not a good one as it is not strong enough to suggest that increases in undergraduates' information literacy skills significantly impact the use of e-resources. Perhaps, this explains why the students are unable to define their information needs, search online databases effectively, evaluate downloaded information to ascertain its credibility and reliability among other IL skill deficiencies observed among North-west, Nigeria, undergraduates.

Furthermore, the alternate hypothesis was accepted as the result shows that there is a significant relationship between the two. This in line with the findings of Ndagi and Madu (2018), which revealed that information literacy skills and use of e-resources have a significant positive correlation among the students they studied. This means that a student that is information literate can make effective use of e-resources to enhance his or her academic performance. However, the educational implication of this weak positive relationship is that it makes it necessary for educational institutions to prioritise the development of information literacy programmes. As earlier noted, most African universities does not have information literacy in their curricula. However, such initiatives can empower students to navigate and utilise e-resources more effectively. However, institutions should also consider integrating additional support systems, such as access to technology and training workshops to enhance overall e-resource usage.

Relationship between Undergraduates' Gender and their Use of E-resources

The result of objective 2 reveals that a weak positive relationship exists between undergraduates' gender and their use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria. Separate correlation analysis on gender indicates weak positive relationships for both male and female use of e-resources. This implies that neither gender significantly outperforms the other in the use of e-resources, indicating a relatively equal level of usage. The finding is consistent with that of Adetimirin and Mabawonku (2016), who revealed that gender was a determining factor in students' use of e-resources. The finding calls for a closer scrutiny of library services and educational policies aimed at enhancing access to digital resources. While male students may slightly outpace their female counterparts in the use of e-resource, the marginal nature of this difference indicates that interventions should not solely focus on gender but also on broader issues of digital literacy and access.

The finding is insightful particularly, in North-west, Nigeria, where cultural and religious beliefs significantly shape educational access and opportunities in favour of the male gender. Often, traditional

customs prioritise male education. This can contribute to a hesitance among female students to use e-resources, despite the increasing availability of digital technologies, but that is not case. Hypothetically, the finding shows that the relationship between undergraduates' gender and their use of e-resources is significant, leading to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. This contrasts with the findings of Diyaolu (2018), which shows that gender do not have significant relation with the use of e-resources by post graduate students of the studied universities. The implication of this finding is that both male and female students have similar access to and use of e-resources. Therefore, with this similarity in their use of e-resources, libraries need to focus on enhancing the overall user experience rather than targeting specific genders. The findings can also lead to more inclusive campaign that encouraged all students to utilise e-resources, regardless of gender.

Correlation between Gender, Information Literacy and Use of E-resources

Results from the findings indicate that a positive relationship exists among information literacy, gender, and the use of e-resources among undergraduates. However, it also suggests a weak to moderate correlation among them, indicating that while there is some association between them, it is not overall, strong. The association is not sufficient to suggest that improvements in one will lead to significant changes in the other. An indication that other factors, such as institutional support, access to technology, and previous experience with e-resources, play a more considerable role in influencing the use of e-resources. It shows that only about 6.9% of the variance in the use of e-resources is explained by information literacy and gender, further suggesting that other factors not included in the model may also significantly influence e-resource usage. The implication of this is that it emphasizes the importance of information literacy as a critical skill in today's educational landscape, where access to information increasingly relies on technology. Today's higher education is increasingly integrating technology into learning environments, which implies that information literate students are better positioned to use e-resources effectively irrespective of their gender.

Therefore, universities need to prioritise information literacy training, ensuring that all their students, regardless of their socio-economic background, have the skills necessary to access and utilise digital resources effectively and efficiently. Overall, the finding calls for targeted interventions to bridge the digital divide and promote equitable access to educational technologies. Hypothetically, the analysis shows that a significant relationship among information literacy, gender and undergraduates' use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria. However, while research has shown independent relationships between information literacy, gender and use of e-resources respectively, there seem to be no existing literature to either support or contrast this finding.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study has established the existence of a moderate positive and significant correlation among information literacy, gender and undergraduates' use of e-resources in university libraries in North-west, Nigeria. The study provides understandings of how information literacy and gender correlate with undergraduates' use of e-resources, while individual factors exhibit weak positive relationships with e-resource usage. The moderate correlation observed in the joint analysis emphasizes the importance of a multifaceted approach. The provision of e-resources by the universities and undergraduates' possession of information literacy irrespective of their gender relates to the moderate use of e-resources. However, understanding and addressing these dynamics can help tailor resources and support to enhance e-resources utilisation and improve overall educational outcomes and produce no gender bias digital age graduates.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. The universities in North-west, Nigeria should prioritise the development of information literacy programmes; to empower students to navigate and use e-resources more effectively. They should also consider integrating additional support systems, such as access to digital technology and training workshops, to enhance overall e-resource usage by their students.

2. University Administrators in North-west, Nigeria should make deliberate policies that address gender disparities in access to digital resources. The universities should consider implementing programmes that is particularly aimed at empowering female

students, such as workshops on information literacy, mentorship programmes, and community outreach initiatives that challenge existing status or norms about women's education.

3. Universities should prioritise the development of robust information literacy training programme for all students, irrespective of their background. They should also consider the vital societal factors that could also influence e-resource usage by initiating programmes such as financial aid for technological access; encouraging parental involvement to address gender disparity in education; creating mentorship programmes and ensuring that e-resources are user-friendly.

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