International Journal of Innovative Social Sciences & Humanities Research 14(2):198-203, April-June, 2026

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doi:10.5281/zenodo.19800863

Availability Of Institutional Repositories And Research Productivity Of Postgraduate Students In Universities In Abia State, Nigeria

[1]Ifeoma Stella Udochukwu & [2]Hungwa Shidi

[1]stellaifeoma034@gmail.com/+2348052671089
[2]+234 803 722 9170

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the availability of institutional digital repositories and their perceived impact on the research productivity of postgraduate students in universities in Abia State, Nigeria. Anchored on the premise that digital repositories enhance access to scholarly resources and support academic research, the study adopts a descriptive survey research design. Data were collected to identify the types of digital resources available in university repositories and to assess the level of research productivity among postgraduate students. Findings reveal that a wide range of digital resources—including electronic journal articles, theses, dissertations, conference materials, datasets, audiovisual materials, e-books, grey literature, policy documents, and software—are available in the repositories of the surveyed university libraries. Furthermore, the results indicate a high level of research productivity among postgraduate students, evidenced by frequent publication in indexed journals, conversion of theses into peer-reviewed outputs, citation impact, and participation in academic conferences. However, hypothesis testing using ANOVA shows no statistically significant relationship between the use of digital repository resources and research productivity ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that although repositories are available and productivity is relatively high, other factors may be influencing research output beyond repository usage. The study concludes that while digital repositories are well-established and postgraduate research productivity is commendable, their direct impact on productivity is not statistically significant. It recommends increased awareness, improved user engagement strategies, and enhanced integration of digital repositories into academic workflows to maximise their potential benefits.

INTRODUCTION

University libraries play a vital role in offering digital repositories in addition to training and empowering postgraduate students to take charge of their research. The university is critical in achieving this feat. A university is referred to as an institution of higher learning or tertiary education. According to (Monteiro, 2021), universities are established as higher educational institutions or centres for sharing knowledge, conducting innovative researches, and engaging in the community development activities.

Digital repositories are collections of digital content such as articles, books, graphics, and multimedia that are stored, managed, and accessible online for academic and research purposes (Bankier & Gleason, 2014). Unlike a local database, which is stored on a single computer or physical media, digital repositories are accessible via the Internet and are designed to be shared widely. Key features of digital repositories include access through a web browser, advanced search capabilities, and often, open access or subscription-based access models.

Research is the bedrock of any sustainable development worldwide. (D'Este, 2022) viewed research as a procedure that facilitates the contribution of knowledge by scientist towards finding solutions to societal and human problems. It involves three primary steps: posing a question, collecting data to answer the question, and presenting an answer based on the findings. Research contributes to the discovery of new knowledge, which plays a significant role in societal development and improving the quality of human life.

Research productivity refers to the output and impact of scholarly work, including publications, citations, patents, and contributions to knowledge advancement. It is a critical measure of academic and institutional performance, often influenced by factors such as funding, collaboration, access to resources, and institutional support. High research productivity is associated with increased visibility, innovation, and the ability to address societal challenges (Abramo, 2017). Research productivity among postgraduate students is a critical indicator of their academic development and contribution to knowledge creation. It encompasses outputs such as journal publications, conference presentations, theses, and dissertations, which are essential for advancing their careers and addressing societal challenges.

Utilization refers to the process of effectively using tools or resources to achieve specific goals or objectives. In the context of digital repositories, postgraduate students who make use of these resources can greatly enhance their access to current, relevant academic materials and research that support their studies. The extent of digital repository usage among postgraduate students varies significantly across regions and institutions, influenced by factors such as accessibility, awareness, and institutional support. In developed countries, postgraduate students frequently utilize digital repositories due to well-established infrastructures, open-access policies, and institutional mandates that promote the archiving and sharing of research outputs (Bamgbose, et al., 2025).

Additionally, the researcher observed that many postgraduate students face significant challenges in conducting research. These include inadequate research funding, insufficient mentorship, poor ICT retrieval skills, duplication of research efforts, plagiarism, reliance on outdated print resources, lack of research focus, and limited access to online databases. These challenges negatively impact research productivity, often resulting in students exceeding the maximum duration of their programme or, in some cases, abandoning them altogether. Many also struggle with publishing research articles. Given that university libraries serve as research hubs, digital resources could play a crucial role in addressing these issues. Against this backdrop, the researcher aims to investigate the perceived impact of digital repository usage on the research productivity of postgraduate students in public universities in Abia State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Digital repositories play a vital role in enhancing research productivity by providing access to a vast array of academic resources, data sets and scholarly articles. This access empowers postgraduate students to make informed decisions about their research direction and methodologies, essential for academic success. Moreso, the digital repositories contribute to a productive and efficient research experience, enabling postgraduate students to balance academic responsibilities with personal development.

Prior observation by the researcher has shown that limited access to reliable digital repositories may pose challenges for many postgraduate students, negatively impacting their research productivity, academic progress, and career advancement. A lack of awareness of available research tools, inadequate digital literacy, and disparities in technology access may hinder students from fully benefiting from these resources. While some university libraries provide access to digital repositories, integrating these tools into students' academic workflows remains a significant challenge, affecting their overall productivity and potential.

Current evidence suggests that university libraries in the study area are progressively transitioning into functional digital repositories. Recent studies (Abdullahi, et al., 2022; Okeke, et al., 2023) document advancements in digital infrastructure, expanded open-access initiatives, and institutional collaborations. However, persistent challenges including inconsistent funding, low researcher engagement, inadequate bandwidth, and non-compliance with global standards hinder their full utilization by postgraduate students. Without intervention, these limitations may compromise the effectiveness of digital repositories, leading to substandard research output and diminished contributions to national development. Against this backdrop,

this study seeks to examine the perceived impact of digital repository usage on the research productivity of postgraduate students in university libraries within Abia State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective is to investigate the perceived impact of digital repositories usage and research productivity of postgraduate students in the university libraries in Abia state, Nigeria. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Find out types of digital resources available in the digital repositories for use by postgraduate students in universities in Abia state, Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the research productivity of postgraduate students in the university libraries in the universities in Abia state.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the research questions:

1. What are the types of digital resources available in the digital repositories for use by postgraduate students in university libraries in Abia state, Nigeria?
2. What is the level of research productivity of postgraduate students in the university libraries in the universities in Abia state?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H01: There is no significant relationship between use of digital resources and research productivity of postgraduate students in universities in Abia State

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for the study is descriptive survey research design. This is because descriptive research design systematically document and describe the characteristics, behaviours, or attitudes of a group or phenomenon as they currently exist. According to (Bhattacherjee, 2025), descriptive survey research involves collecting data about prevailing conditions or situations through self-administered or interviewer-administered questionnaires for the purpose of description and interpretation. This type of research method helps to have a deeper and informed knowledge of the research problem, identification of trends and relationship, comparisons, analyses and interpretation. The design will be applied to determine perceived impact of digital repositories usage and research productivity of postgraduate students.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Research Question 1: *What are the types of digital resources available in the digital repositories for use by postgraduate students in university libraries in Abia state, Nigeria?*

Table 1. Types of digital resources available in the digital repositories for use by postgraduate students in university libraries in Abia state, Nigeria?

S/N	DIGITAL REPOSITORY RESOURCES	A	NA
	Electronic Journal Articles	√	
	Electronic Theses	√	
	Electronic Dissertations	√	
	Electronic Conference Materials	√	
	Datasets	√	
	Audiovisual Materials	√	
	Electronic Books & Book Chapters	√	
	Grey Literature	√	
	Policy Documents	√	
	Code & Software	√	

The results represented in Table 1 is an observation checklist on the types of digital repositories available to postgraduate students. The findings show that all the various digital repositories were all available to postgraduate students in the university libraries.

Research Question 2: *What is the research productivity of postgraduate students in the university libraries in the universities in Abia state?*

Table 2 Mean and standard deviations of respondents on the research productivity of postgraduate students in the university libraries in the universities in Abia state

S/N	ITEMS	VF	F	R	N	Mean	St. D	DECISION
1	Number of articles published in indexed journals during/post-graduation	49	47	2	0	3.48	0.54	Frequent
2	High proportion of Thesis/dissertation turned to peer-reviewed articles or books	76	9	13	0	3.64	0.71	Very Frequent
3	Collaboration frequency	19	39	27	13	2.65	0.94	Frequent
4	Citations received by publications of postgraduate students/graduates	72	26	0	0	3.73	0.44	Very Frequent
5	Citations in technical reports, guidelines, or grey literature	81	17	0	0	3.83	0.38	Very Frequent
6	Presentations, posters, or proceedings at academic conferences	37	45	7	9	3.12	0.90	Frequent
7	Duration from dissertation completion to first manuscript submission/acceptance	43	40	15	0	3.29	0.72	Frequent
8	Cheaper hardware/software influence utilization of electronic resources	16	17	59	6	2.44	0.84	Rarely
9	Secured research funding	14	11	73	0	2.40	0.73	Rarely
10	Frequency of online journal/database usage and reference manager adoption	72	0	26	0	3.47	0.89	Frequent
	Cluster Mean					**3.20**		**High Frequency**

The results represented in Table 2 details the research productivity of postgraduate students in the university libraries. Based on the cluster mean of 3.20, the findings posit a high frequency of research productivity amongst postgraduate students in the university libraries.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between use of digital resources and research productivity of postgraduate students in universities in Abia State

Table 3. **ANOVA Analysis on the significance between use of digital resources and research productivity of postgraduate students in universities in Abia State.**

ANOVA

Source of Variation	***SS***	***DF***	***MS***	***F***	***P-value***	***F crit***
Between Groups	0.076	1	0.08	0.25	0.62	4.41
Within Groups	5.34	18	0.30			
Total	5.42	19				

Keys: SS = Sum of Squares, **DF** = Degree of freedom, **MS** = Mean Squares

Table 3 shows that the P-value was 0.62. Since the significant level ($p > 0.05$), the null hypotheses is accepted. The findings indicate that while the research productivity of postgraduate students in the university libraries included: Number of articles published in indexed journals during/post-graduation, High proportion of Thesis/dissertation turned to peer-reviewed articles or books, Collaboration frequency, etc there is no significant relationship between the use of digital resources and the research productivity of postgraduate students.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first objective of the study examined the types of digital resources available in the digital repositories for use by postgraduate students in university libraries. It was found that, electronic journal article, electronic theses, electronic dissertation, electronic conference materials, datasets, audiovisual materials, electronic books and book chapters, grey literature, policy documents, code and software were available for use by the postgraduate students. This is supported by (Piwowar, 2018) which stated that by consolidating diverse materials into accessible formats, these platforms facilitate knowledge dissemination and collaborative scholarship. Scholarly publications including journal articles, conference proceedings, theses, and dissertations constitute primary repository content.

The study's second objective investigated the research productivity of postgraduate students in the university libraries. The findings showed a high level of research productivity amongst postgraduate students in areas of number of articles published in indexed journals during/post-graduation, High proportion of Thesis/dissertation turned to peer-reviewed articles or books, Collaboration frequency, etc. These findings were supported by (Nwagwu, 2019) who confirms that researchers leveraging comprehensive e-resources, including platforms like Scopus, Web of Science, and institutional repositories, achieve higher publication rates due to enhanced discovery and synthesis of relevant information. However, the hypotheses testing showed there was no significant relationship between use of digital resources and research productivity of postgraduate students in universities in Abia State. This means that despite the high level of research productivity, there was no significant relationship between it and the postgraduate student's usage of digital resources.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that there are various types of digital repositories available in the university libraries such as electronic journal article, electronic theses, etc. It also concludes that there was very high overall level of research productivity by postgraduate students as revealed by number of articles published in indexed journals during/post-graduation, high proportion of thesis/dissertation turned to peer-reviewed articles or books, among others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that university libraries should create more awareness to the existence of digital repository through a mix of digital, in-person and collaborative strategies

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