



**INFLUENCE OF KNOWLEDGE NAVIGATION SKILLS ON ONLINE
SCHOLARLY RESOURCE USE BY POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN AHMADU
BELLO UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, ZARIA**

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of Knowledge Navigation Skills (KNS) on the use of Online Scholarly Resources (OSR) by postgraduate students in Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 2,499 postgraduate students, from which a sample size of 346 respondents was determined using the Research Advisors (2006) sample size determination table. Questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection, data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations with the aid of SPSS. The findings revealed that postgraduate students predominantly use online scholarly resources for academic and research-related purposes, particularly for research writing, assignments, literature retrieval, and sourcing scholarly materials. Non-academic uses, such as social networking, were minimal. The study also found that postgraduate students use online scholarly resources frequently, with the Internet, online databases, electronic journals, and e-books being the most commonly accessed resources. Furthermore, the results indicated that effective use of online scholarly resources is closely linked to students' knowledge navigation skills. The study concludes that Knowledge Navigation Skills significantly enhance postgraduate students' ability to access and utilize online scholarly resources effectively. It therefore recommends that university libraries strengthen practical training in information and knowledge navigation skills and ensure consistent access to relevant digital resources to support postgraduate research and learning.

Keywords: *Knowledge Navigation Skills; Online Scholarly Resources; Postgraduate Students; Academic Libraries; Ahmadu Bello University*

Introduction

Online Scholarly Resources (OSRs) refer to information resources that are accessible only through electronic means with the aid of information and communication technology (ICT) facilities (Obuh, 2021). Common examples include the Internet, CD-ROM databases, online databases, online public access catalogues (OPAC), electronic journals, e-books, e-newspapers, e-magazines and digitized documents. These resources are increasingly taking the place of traditional print materials because they provide users with timely and up-to-date information (Obuh, 2021). According to Sahabi, Alegbeleye, and Madukoma (2024), OSRs are electronically generated resources that can be accessed by a wide audience, regardless of location, through electronic transmission or the Internet. Similarly, Swain and Panda (2023) describe OSRs as information materials accessed via computers or other electronic devices, whether stored locally or retrieved remotely over the Internet.

OSRs are information resources preserved in electronic formats, which may be stored digital libraries, or the Internet. They provide convenient remote access to a vast body of information, a trend that has become increasingly popular worldwide (Sahabi, Ebunuwele & Esther, 2020). Compared to print resources, OSRs offer significant advantages in the digital environment, particularly by connecting millions of postgraduate students to current and relevant scholarly literature across the globe. They have been widely embraced in academia and are now used for communication, information retrieval, and instructional delivery to support teaching, learning, and research activities in higher institutions (Alegbeleye, Madukoma & Sahabi, 2024).

The online scholarly resources use (OSRU) has become an integral part of postgraduate education globally, offering students access to a vast array of academic materials such as journals, databases, e-books, and institutional repositories. According to UNESCO (2023),

online scholarly resources have revolutionized research by providing access to over 45 million peer-reviewed articles annually. In developed nations, nearly 90% of postgraduate students rely on digital platforms like JSTOR, PubMed, and Scopus for their research needs (Statista, 2022). A study by Olumide and Aina (2022) revealed that only 52% of postgraduate students in Nigerian universities regularly access online scholarly resources, and among these, 45% reported difficulties in locating relevant materials. These challenges are further compounded by a lack of training in the effective use of online scholarly databases, leaving many students unable to fully exploit the wealth of information available to them (Sahabi, & Ebunuwele 2018).

Online Scholarly Resource Use (OSRU) provides researchers and postgraduate students with access to global information resources, particularly through the Internet, which supports their academic work (Sahabi, Aakia & Unobe, 2020). In university libraries, postgraduate students rely on OSRU mainly for academic purposes, such as retrieving up-to-date literature for their studies, preparing for examinations, completing assignments, conducting research projects, and engaging in communication and collaboration with peers and lecturers via email or blog discussions (Adeniran, 2018). They also make frequent use of e-books and electronic journals to expand their knowledge and conduct research (Ajayi, Shorunke & Aboyade, 2024). In addition, CD-ROMs containing course materials provide them with convenient access to educational resources at any time. With advancements in ICT, the use of OSRU has grown significantly worldwide and is now widely accepted by scholars (Oyedapo & Ojo, 2023). These developments have greatly enhanced the quality of education, although studies still reveal low levels of OSRU usage among Nigerian postgraduate students (Omoike, 2024).

The importance of OSRU in academic environments cannot be overstated (Ku, 2024). They not only motivate users but also create opportunities for sharing, acquiring, transferring, and disseminating knowledge across disciplines. They provide tools and applications that improve

information seeking and retrieval, making them indispensable in research and learning. Unlike the manual system of searching for resources, OSRU allow simultaneous access by multiple users, thereby complementing traditional print collections. These resources serve as reliable tools for completing assignments, writing term papers, and exploring subject-specific information (Fabunmi, Paris & Fabunmi, 2021).

Because of their timeliness, advanced search features, remote accessibility, and regular updates, OSRU have become even more vital in academic environments since the widespread use of the Internet. Their provision in tertiary institutions offers quick and seamless access to a wealth of global research information (Aina, Okunnu & Dapo-Asaju, 2024). University libraries have embraced these resources for their enormous potential, and postgraduate students stand to benefit greatly if they are effectively harnessed, as they offer access to scholarly materials beyond geographical and financial limitations (Sahabi & Ezeudu, 2020).

However, studies indicate that while OSRU are widely accepted and used in many other countries (Ekenna & Ukapho, 2022), the situation in Nigeria is quite different. One likely reason for this underutilization is the lack of adequate Knowledge Navigation Skills. Research has shown that such skills are a critical factor influencing how effectively users can access, evaluate, and ethically use online resources (Prangya & Rabindra, 2022). Without these skills, postgraduate students may experience low digital confidence, limiting their motivation and ability to fully engage with OSRU in university libraries.

University libraries are key institutions in higher education systems globally, supporting the teaching, learning, and research functions of their parent universities. With the rapid advancement in digital technologies and the increasing reliance on online scholarly resources, postgraduate students are expected to possess adequate knowledge navigation skills and digital confidence to maximize the use of these resources. Globally, universities are investing in digital literacy programs to enhance students' ability to navigate academic databases, electronic

journals, and other digital repositories. Conferring from the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 2021), over 75% of academic libraries in developed countries have implemented structured digital literacy programs, resulting in a 70% increase in postgraduate students' confidence in using online scholarly resources.

However, challenges remain, particularly in developing countries. The Global Library Report (2020) highlights that 55% of postgraduate students in low-income countries struggle with knowledge navigation skills, with only 40% reporting confidence in accessing and utilizing online academic resources. In Africa, university libraries face unique challenges in fostering digital competence among students. A study by Ocholla (2020) found that only 50% of African university libraries offer digital literacy training, and only 35% of postgraduate students reported having strong knowledge navigation skills. More technologically advanced university libraries in South Africa and Egypt have adopted digital training initiatives, increasing postgraduate students' proficiency by 60%.

In Nigeria, the state of university libraries still reflects a heavy reliance on traditional systems. According to the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2020), about 60% of libraries continue to operate with conventional services, while only 40% have adopted digital platforms. A more recent survey by the Nigerian Library Association (NLA, 2022) highlighted the implications of this gap, showing that just 42% of postgraduate students in federal universities in North-West Nigeria felt confident using online scholarly resources. The majority 58% struggled with navigating digital platforms effectively.

Knowledge navigation skills involve the ability to locate, evaluate, and apply information effectively. These skills are critical for optimizing the use of online scholarly resources. Around the world, universities have acknowledged their importance and integrated structured information literacy programs to address them. In places such as Finland and the United States, postgraduate students are systematically trained in advanced search techniques, citation

management, and critical appraisal of academic materials (UNESCO, 2023). Unfortunately, the African experience has been less consistent. Research by Aminu and Suleiman (2023) in North-West Nigeria revealed that only 34% of postgraduate students demonstrated sufficient navigation skills. Many relied on trial-and-error approaches when seeking information, which often led to frustration and wasted effort. This skill gap is further compounded by weak library support systems and limited exposure to modern search technologies, making it difficult for students to build the competencies they need. Addressing these shortcomings through targeted training programs and workshops could go a long way in improving students' academic performance and the quality of their research.

For postgraduate students in federal university libraries in North-West Nigeria, the stakes are even higher. Their academic journey demands advanced research and access to credible, scholarly information resources that they cannot fully utilize without strong knowledge navigation skills. Online scholarly resources such as JSTOR, ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost, and institutional repositories provide vast content in various disciplines. However, access alone is not sufficient; students must possess the skill to identify relevant sources, formulate search strategies, and use advanced search tools such as Boolean operators and subject thesauri. Isah (2020) noted that poor navigation skills often hinder students from exploiting the full potentials of these e-resources, leading to underutilization and poor research output. Therefore, knowledge navigation is not only a skill for information retrieval but a strategic academic competence for effective scholarship.

This study was carried out in two federal university libraries in the North-West Nigeria. Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, and Federal University Dutsin-Ma (FUDMA), Katsina. These institutions were chosen because they represent both an older, well-established university and a newer, developing one, offering a balanced view of how different academic environments support postgraduate research. It was also chosen based on convenience, as both

institutions were easily accessible to the researcher for data collection. The libraries in these universities play an important role in students' learning and research activities, especially as more scholarly materials move online. By focusing on how postgraduate students use Online Scholarly Resources (OSR) and how their Knowledge Navigation Skills (KNS) help them access these resources, the study aims to understand students' real experiences navigating today's digital academic world.

Statement of the Problem

The use of Online Scholarly Resources (OSRU) has become a cornerstone of modern learning and research, particularly in today's digital era. With the growing influence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the globalization of education, students now have access to a wide range of academic materials electronically. These resources including e-journals, e-books, databases, e-newspapers, conference proceedings, and other scholarly outputs available only through ICT platforms play a crucial role in supporting the academic and research activities of postgraduate students (Afolabi & Abayomi, 2020). For postgraduate learners in particular, access to credible and up-to-date information is essential, making OSRU an integral part of their academic experience.

However, despite the critical role of OSRU in postgraduate education, its utilization in Nigerian universities remains relatively low. Ekenna and Ukpebor (2021) observed that while postgraduate students in developed countries actively embrace and use OSRU, Nigerian students appear to lag behind in this regard. This disparity raises questions about the factors contributing to the underutilization of OSRU in Nigerian university libraries. One possible explanation lies in the level of Knowledge Navigation Skills students possess. These skills which involve locating, accessing, evaluating, and applying digital information effectively are fundamental to making productive use of online scholarly resources (Salako & Igere, 2018).

Although federal university libraries in Nigeria have taken steps to bridge this gap through orientations, seminars, and practical training workshops (Abubakar & Nwokedi, 2019), many postgraduate students still encounter challenges when navigating digital platforms. Against this background, this study aims to examine the influence of Knowledge Navigation Skills on the use of Online Scholarly Resources by postgraduate students in Ahmadu Bello University Library, Zaria. The underlying assumption is that strengthening these skills will enhance students' ability to use OSRU effectively, thereby improving their academic performance and research output in the study area.

Objectives of the Study

The central aim of this study is to examine the influence of Knowledge Navigation Skills on the use of Online Scholarly Resources (OSR) by postgraduate students in ABU, Zaria. To achieve this, the study focuses on three specific objectives:

1. To identify the purposes for which postgraduate students use Online Scholarly Resources in ABU, Zaria;
2. To determine the frequency of OSR use by postgraduate students in ABU, Zaria;

Research Questions

The following research questions guided by the study:

1. What are the purposes do postgraduate students use Online Scholarly Resources in Ahmadu Bello University Library, Zaria?
2. How often do postgraduate students use Online Scholarly Resources in ABU, Zaria?

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design. The target population of the study comprised 2,499 postgraduate students enrolled in selected federal universities in North-West Nigeria between January 2023 and January 2025. These students were considered suitable for the study

because of their frequent engagement with online scholarly resources for academic and research purposes. The sample size was determined using the Research Advisors (2006) sample size determination table, which provides statistically reliable estimates based on population size, confidence level, and margin of error. Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to elicit information on the purposes and frequency of Online Scholarly Resource use among postgraduate students, as well as their knowledge navigation skills. The study employed a quantitative approach for data analysis. Completed questionnaires were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, were used to analyze the data and answer the research questions.

Results

This chapter presents the analysis and findings of the study on Knowledge Navigation Skills (KNS) and Online Scholarly Resource Use (OSRU) among postgraduate students in Ahmadu Bello University Library, Zaria.

Research Question One: For what purposes do postgraduate students use Online Scholarly Resources IN AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, ZARIA?

Table 1: Purposes of Online Scholarly Resource Use (N = 346)

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean	SD
I use the library's online scholarly resource for research writing	17(4.9)	16(4.6)	104(30.1)	209(60.4)	3.46	0.80
I use CD-ROM for discussions on the subject area of interest	14(4.0)	31(9.0)	127(36.7)	174(50.3)	3.34	0.81

I use the Internet in the library to generally source materials	13(3.8)	36(10.4)	130(37.6)	167(48.3)	3.31	0.81
I use the e-resources to retrieve current literature for studies	18(5.2)	58(16.8)	156(45.1)	114(32.9)	3.18	0.86
I use the online database in the library for my assignments	28(8.1)	46(13.3)	126(36.4)	146(42.2)	3.15	0.93
I use the electronic catalogue (OPAC) for sourcing information in the library	24(7.0)	49(14.2)	130(37.6)	143(41.3)	3.14	0.91
I use e-journals to do class assignments	13(3.8)	56(16.2)	166(48.0)	111(32.1)	3.12	0.80
I use the electronic books provided by the library to complement my class notes	23(6.6)	64(18.5)	126(36.4)	133(38.5)	3.07	0.92
I use the electronic journals provided by the library for my project writing	21(6.1)	60(17.3)	140(40.5)	125(36.1)	3.06	0.89
I use e-books to augment my class works	22(6.4)	62(17.9)	135(39.0)	127(36.7)	3.03	0.90
I use it to search for scholarship opportunities	31(9.0)	55(15.9)	124(35.8)	136(39.3)	3.01	0.97
I use the Internet access in the library to send e-mails	35(10.1)	55(15.9)	124(35.8)	132(38.2)	2.97	0.99
To search for internship opportunities	23(6.6)	67(19.4)	138(39.9)	118(34.1)	2.95	0.91
I use the e-resources to write term papers	27(7.8)	79(22.8)	136(39.3)	104(30.1)	2.88	0.92
I use the e-resources for augmenting class works	36(10.4)	99(28.6)	124(35.8)	87(25.1)	2.78	0.96

I use the Internet access in 101(29.2) 89(25.7) 84(24.3) 72(20.8) 2.37 1.11
the library to chat with
friends

Grand Mean Score = 3.05

Field Survey, 2025

Decision Rule: Based on the scale used, mean scores between 1.0–1.49 indicate Strongly Disagree, 1.50–2.49 = Disagree, 2.50–3.49 = Agree, and 3.50–4.0 = Strongly Agree. Criteria mean of 2.5 was used as the benchmark for agreement.

Respondents were asked to indicate the purposes for which they use online scholarly resources. As shown in Table 1, the findings reveal that students primarily use these resources for academic and research purposes. Most respondents reported using the library's online resources for research writing, with 209 (60.4%) indicating strong agreement and a mean score of 3.46. Similarly, 174 respondents (50.3%) frequently used CD-ROMs for discussions on their areas of interest, and 167 (48.3%) often used the Internet in the library to source materials generally, reflecting a strong inclination toward scholarly engagement rather than recreational use.

Other academic activities, such as retrieving current literature for studies or using electronic databases for assignments, were also moderately high, with mean scores ranging between 3.01 and 3.18. In contrast, activities like using the library Internet to chat with friends were the least reported, with only 72 respondents (20.8%) indicating frequent use and a mean score of 2.37. Overall, these results suggest that postgraduate students predominantly use online scholarly resources to support their studies, research projects, and assignments rather than for social or leisure activities.

Research Question 2: How frequently do postgraduate students use online scholarly resource in ABU, Zaria?

Table 2: Frequency of Online Scholarly Resource Use (N = 346)

Statement	Never (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Very Often (%)	Mean	SD
The Internet	24(6.9)	80(23.1)	50(14.5)	192(55.5)	3.19	1.01
Online databases	48(13.9)	83(24.0)	62(17.9)	153(44.2)	2.73	1.09
Electronic books	40(11.6)	90(26.0)	66(19.1)	150(43.3)	2.67	1.04
Electronic journal	45(13.0)	71(20.5)	51(14.7)	179(51.7)	2.54	1.08
Electronic catalogue (OPAC)	45(13.0)	65(18.8)	40(11.6)	196(56.6)	2.45	1.09
Grand Mean Score = 2.72						

Field survey, 2025

Decision Rule: The decision rule states that: 1.0-1.49 = Never Used; 1.50-2.49 = Sometimes Used; 2.50-3.49 = Often used; 3.50-4.0 = Very Often Used. Criteria mean of 2.5 is calculated as follows: $4+3+2+1=10/4=2.5$.

Respondents were asked to report how frequently they use Online Scholarly Resources. The results presented in Table 2 the findings also explored how frequently postgraduate students use online scholarly resources. The results indicate that students engage with these resources regularly. The Internet was the most frequently used resource, with 192 respondents (55.5%) reporting very frequent use and a mean score of 3.19. Online databases and electronic books were also frequently consulted, with 153 (44.2%) and 150 (43.3%) of respondents, respectively, indicating high usage.

On the other hand, while electronic catalogues (OPAC) were utilized, they were accessed less frequently compared to other resources, suggesting that students might prefer direct Internet searches or specialized databases for their research needs. Overall, these findings highlight that

postgraduate students actively use online resources in their academic work, with the frequency of use reflecting a high level of engagement and reliance on digital information tools.

Discussion of Findings

The study explored how Knowledge Navigation Skills influence the use of Online Scholarly Resources among postgraduate students in the selected libraries. The findings are discussed with reference to the study's objectives, research questions, and tested hypothesis.

Research Question 1: Purpose of Online Scholarly Resource Use

Findings (Table 1) show that postgraduate students use online scholarly resources at a high level, with the exception of chatting with friends online in the library. Key purposes include research/writing projects, subject discussions, sourcing materials, retrieving current literature, assignments, class work augmentation, e-books, scholarship and internship searches, emailing, and term papers.

These findings align with more recent studies such as Okwu, Oladokun, Oguche, and Arome (2023), who found that postgraduate students in Nigerian universities increasingly rely on electronic resources for academic writing and research-related activities. Similarly, Agina-Obu and Okwu (2023) observed that online scholarly resources enhance preparation for assignments, discussions, and research processes. Eireyi-Fidelis and Ivwighrehweta (2022) also reported that postgraduate students use academic databases extensively for retrieving literature and supporting coursework.

Research Question 2: Frequency of Online Scholarly Resource Use

Table 2 shows that most postgraduate students use online scholarly resources at least once a week. Among the resources, the Internet ranked highest, followed by online databases, e-books, and e-journals, while electronic catalogues were less frequently used.

These results corroborate Okwu et al. (2023), who observed high levels of e-resource use among postgraduate students, particularly Internet-based scholarly platforms. Agina-Obu and Okwu (2023) similarly emphasized the rising dependence on digital information systems for academic research, communication, and accessing course materials. The findings also agree with Digital Information Literacy Skills Study (2023), which found that frequency of e-resource use among graduate students is strongly linked to their academic information needs.

However, the findings contrast with earlier reports such as Eireyi-Fidelis and Ivwighrehweta (2022), who noted that although awareness of e-resources is high, actual usage varies across institutions due to infrastructural limitations. This underscores the need for federal university libraries in North-West Nigeria to continually improve access to current digital resources.

Conclusion

Online scholarly resources have become a critical tool for postgraduate students in Nigerian federal university libraries, providing access to current, high-quality information anytime and anywhere. The study demonstrated that students' effective use of these resources largely depends on their Knowledge Navigation Skills. Findings indicated that postgraduate students in the selected libraries frequently used online scholarly resources and possessed a high level of Knowledge Navigation Skills. Moreover, the study confirmed a significant positive effect of Knowledge Navigation Skills on students' use of online scholarly resources, highlighting the crucial role of these skills in supporting academic research and learning.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. Since the finding reported that postgraduate students rely heavily on online scholarly resources for their academic work, university libraries should expand their training programs to be more practical and hands-on. While current library orientation often

introduces students to available databases, the sessions should go further teaching how to evaluate sources, use advanced search techniques, and apply information in academic writing. For example, workshops could guide students through citation management tools like Zotero or EndNote, or show how to structure a literature review using multiple sources. This kind of applied training will help students turn access to information into meaningful academic achievements.

2. Given the high frequency of resource usage, because postgraduate students frequently engage with online scholarly resources, university management must ensure uninterrupted subscription to key databases and journals. Consistent access prevents research setbacks that occur when subscriptions lapse. Alongside subscriptions, investment in ICT infrastructure such as reliable internet access, updated computers, and remote login services is essential. For instance, access to platforms like JSTOR, Scopus, or ScienceDirect allows students to consult cutting-edge research across disciplines. Steady resource provision, paired with strong ICT support, will sustain students' engagement and improve research quality.

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