# POSTGRADUATE LAW STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE USE OF ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES IN TWO UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

Dr. (Mrs) Stella Ngozi Ifeoma Anasi
Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
s.anasi@unizik.edu.ng/drsanasi4real@gmail.com
**ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8344-2573**

and

Dr. Samson Oyeniyi Akande
Centre for Educational Media Resource Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

## Abstract

This study examined the influence of attitude towards use of e-resources and proficiency in information and communication technology skills on postgraduate law students' use of electronic information resources in two universities in Nigeria. The study adopted the survey research design. A questionnaire was used for data collection. The sample size for the study is 200 postgraduate law students. The data collected were critically analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The overall mean score of 2.42 which is below the criterion mean 3.5 revealed that the frequency of e-resources use by postgraduate law students was very low. The self-reported level of proficiency in Information and Communication Technology skills was high (overall mean 2.89>criterion mean 2.5) and their attitude towards use of electronic information resources was positive (overall mean 2.70 >criterion mean 2.5). The study further showed that attitude towards e-resources use is not a significant predictor of e-resources use, but proficiency in information and communication technology skills has a significant relative effect on use of e-resources. The study recommends that university libraries should provide access to e-resources via remote authentication system. This would enable postgraduate law students to access the library's e-resources 24/7 without any physical restriction. Links to electronic information resources should be provided through online public access catalogue and library dedicated website. The law librarian should partner with faculty of law members to create awareness of the benefits of electronic information resources use among postgraduate law students. The university libraries should also organize training for postgraduate law students to enable them acquire relevant information and communication technology skills required for information retrieval.

Keywords: E-resources Use, Postgraduate law Students, Information and Communication Technology skills, Attitude

## Introduction

In today's digital environment, electronic resources are increasingly becoming the main sources of information in academic law libraries. The provision of electronic resources, often referred to as e-resources, is gradually becoming an integral part of legal education. Globally, legal education in higher educational institutions is rapidly shifting towards the use of electronic resources for their teaching, learning and research.

Electronic resources come in different forms such as e-book and e-journal among others which are accessible via CD-ROMs, e-database and the Internet. Bankole, Ajiboye and Otunla (2015) defined electronic resources as information resources provided in electronic formats such as internet, CDROM databases, e-books e-journals, online database, Online Public Access Catalogues, and other computer –based electronic networks. According to Dhanavandan and Tamizhcheivan (2012), electronic resources are information resources stored electronically and made accessible through electronic systems and network environment. Some of them are provided free of charge to libraries in developing countries by their publishers or vendors, while others require some fees for subscription. The various types and forms of e-resources in academic law libraries are Westlaw, Lexis-Nexis, Law Pavilion, Legalpedia and Compulaw and so on (Ossai, 2011). Every university that offers a law programme in Nigeria is by law required to also provide an academic law library equipped with an e-library for the utilization by law students and lecturers. These e-libraries are generally to be equipped with electronic resources, internet services and computer systems (Ossai, 2011). Tyagi (2011) stated that globally law libraries have increased their holdings of e-resources and automated their operations and can no longer depend on conventional information sources to cope with the latest development in their respective fields.

The advantages of e-resources use include access to relevant and current information from different subject areas, huge information reservoirs and provision of quick information. Electronic information resources also have various search options for easy retrieval, are easy to cite, can easily be uploaded, stored, archived, disseminated, shared and updated, and have

flexibility features (Edem and Egbe, 2016; Onoyeyan and Okereke , 2014). Adeleke and Nwalo (2017) opined that electronic resources provide access to authoritative, reliable, accurate and timely access to information which will increase timeliness in research of postgraduate students. According to Togia and Tsigilis (2009) electronic resources offer advanced search capabilities; they offer flexibility in the storage of search results; and they allow access to information without the restrictions of time and location. Uzuegbu, Chukwu and Ibegwam (2012) affirmed that electronic resources have search tools, keyword searching capability, subject searching capability, help section and the publications section which are very valuable and useful for time-saving research.

Adequate knowledge about computers and retrieval techniques is desirable in order to use electronic resources effectively. Postgraduate students are increasingly expected to possess computer and information retrieval skills in order to utilise the growing range of electronic resources. In their learning and research processes, basic computer and information retrieval skills are important assets to postgraduate students. This entails the capacity to identify when information is needed, and the competence and skill to locate, evaluate and use information effectively (Lau, 2006). It requires the ability to exploit complex masses of information generated by computers and mass media. To the postgraduate students, these skills are of prime importance for the achievement of their academic and professional goals.

In Sri Lanka, Karunarathna (2015) conducted a study on the use of electronic resources by law degree students and found that the majority of the respondents used only a few electronic resources such as e-books, e- chapters, e- indexes, e- abstracts. However, most of the respondents had never used some electronic resources such as electronic theses and dissertations. The study further claims that lack of awareness and lack of skills are the barriers to access electronic resources. Another study by Jayakananthan and Jeyaraj (2019) on behavioural aspects of postgraduate students' use of electronic information resources revealed that computer experience moderated the relationship between facilitating-conditions and intention to use electronic information resources.

In Nigeria, the study carried out by Ekenna and Mabawonku (2013) revealed that although there is an increase in the provision of electronic resources in Nigerian university libraries, there is low use of the resources by students due to lack of requisite skills for the use of the resources.

Okite-Amughoro, Makgahlela and Bopape (2015) investigated the use of e-resources by the postgraduate students at the Delta State University, Nigeria. The study revealed that although the postgraduate students had access to e-resources, lack of searching skills, erratic power supply, inadequate space in the library and low bandwidth subscription proved to inhibit their utilization. A study by Ebijuwa and Mabawonku (2019) found significant relationship existed between computer self-efficacy and use of electronic library resources.

Attitude towards using technology refers to an individual's overall affective reaction to using a system (Venkatesh, Morris Davis and Davis 2003). According Ukachi, Onuoha and Nwachukwu (2014, p. 333) attitude of student towards electronic information resources use entails "those reactions to e-resources and services use by students, resulting from assumptions, perceptions, beliefs and, other people's opinions". Attitudes towards e-resources access could be attributed to problems faced when accessing e-resources. A survey of students' use of and satisfaction with subscribed e-resources in two specialized universities by Ahmed (2013) found that students had poor satisfaction level with the university subscribed e-resources. The students reported limited access to computers and slow download speed as major constraints affecting the use of e-resources. In Makerere University, Uganda, Okello-Obura and Ikoja-Odongo (2010) examined Library and Information Science (LIS) postgraduate students' attitudes towards use of e-resources. The study indicated that majority (72%) of LIS postgraduate students strongly feel that the standard of their academic work would suffer without e-resources. They believe that in order to perform well, they cannot avoid e-resources.

In Nigeria, a study conducted by Ternenge and Fanafa (2019) revealed that inadequate computers in the library, poor internet connectivity. limited subscribed titles, power outages, difficulty to access and use, lack of relevant e-resources in various disciplines as well as no assistance from the library, were the problems encountered by students while accessing and using electronic information resources for research. At Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria, Oyedapo and Ojo (2013) reported under-utilization of electronic resources due to poor searching skills. At Delta State University in Nigeria, BaroEndouware and Ubogu (2011) also found that scholarly electronic journal databases were under-utilized by students due to lack of awareness of the existing resources. These studies indicated that students are not using electronic information resources enthusiastically.However, a literature search revealed a dearth of studies on postgraduate law students' attitude towards the use of electronic information resources and

none specifically explored the influence of attitude towards use of e-resources and proficiency in information and communication technology skills on postgraduate law students' use of electronic information resources. This study, therefore, examine the influence of attitude towards use of e-resources and proficiency in information and communication technology skills on postgraduate law students' use of electronic information resources.

**Research Method**

The study was conducted at University of Ibadan and University of Lagos, Nigeria. At University of Lagos, law programme commenced in1962, while it started in 1981 at University of Ibadan. The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. A self-developed structured questionnaire designed to elicit information related to frequency of use of e-resources, attitude towards the use of electronic information resources, proficiency in information and communication technology skills, constraints to electronic information resources utilization was used for data collection. The questionnaire was administered on 200 consenting postgraduate law students who were at both universities at the time of data collection using convenience sampling technique. Data collected were analysed using frequency count, percentages,mean, inferential statistics and presented in tables and figures. Out of the 200 copies of the questionnaire, 154 were fit for statistical analysis, representing a response rate of 77%.

**Research questions**

The research questions which guided the study are:

RQ 1: How frequently do postgraduate law students use electronic information resources?
RQ 2: What is the attitude of postgraduate law students towards the use of electronic information resources?
RQ 3: What is the level of postgraduate law students' proficiency in information and communication technology skills?
RQ 4: What are the constraints to electronic information resources utilization by postgraduate law students?
RQ 5: Is there any significant relationships between frequency of use and postgraduate students attitude towards the use of electronic information resources
RQ 6: Is there any significant relationship between frequency of use and postgraduate students proficiency in information and communication technology skills?
RQ 7: Is there any significant relative contribution of attitude towards the use of electronic information resources and proficiency in information and communication technology skills on frequency of use of electronic information resources?

## Results

The demographic data obtained from the survey responses are presented in Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents were as follows: the largest group of respondents 94 (61.0%) were male; 118(76.6%) were below 35 years age group; 102(66.2% were single; 70(45.5%) access electronic resources from home while 68(44.2%) had access from office. This means that postgraduate students need remote access to electronic information resources.

Table 1: Demographic Variable of the Respondents and Access points

| **Demographics and Access points** | **Respondent categories** | **No. of participants (n =154 )** | **%** |
|---|---|---|---|
| University | University of Ibadan | 60 | 39.0 |
| | University of Lagos | 94 | 61.0 |
| Gender | Male | 94 | 61.0 |
| | Female | 60 | 39.0 |
| Age | Below 35 | 118 | 76.6 |
| | 35-40 | 28 | 18.2 |
| | 41-50 | 4 | 2.6 |
| | 51 and above | 4 | 2.6 |
| Marital Status | Married | 52 | 33.8 |
| | Single | 102 | 66.2 |
| Access Points | University Library | 22 | 14.3 |
| | Faculty computer Laboratory | 38 | 24.7 |
| | Home | 70 | 45.5 |
| | Office | 68 | 44.2 |

Postgraduate law students were asked about their frequency of e- resources use (Table 2). It was found that at both universities internet resources were used more than twice a week (mean =5.27).The second most used is Laws of Federation of Nigeria (Electronic version) (Mean=4.31). Most specialized law e-resources such as LexisNexis, Westlaw, Lawpavilion were poorly utilized. The overall mean of 2.42 is far below the criterion mean of 3.5 which revealed that the frequency of e-resources use by postgraduate law students is very low. This finding is consistent with the result of studies by BaroEndouware and Ubogu (2011); Okello and Magara (2008); Ukachi, Onuoha and Nwachukwu (2014), Okunlola (2021) who reported underutilization of electronic information resources among students in higher learning institutions. Similar to this finding, Thanuskodi (2009) found that the use of online databases was significantly low in Law faculty and that they relied more on print resources than electronic sources.

Table 2: Mean Response of Frequency of Use of **E-resources**

| Type of E-resources | Daily | Twice a week | Once a week | Twice monthly | Rarely | Never | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Laws of Federation of Nigeria (Electronic) | 102(66.2) | 18(11.7) | 20(13.0) | 4(2.6) | 8(5.2) | 2 (1.3) | 4.31 |
| Wikipedia | 42(27.3) | 22(14.3) | 10(6.5) | 12(7.8) | 32(20.8) | 36(23.4) | 3.49 |
| E -journal | 24(15.6) | 16(10.4) | 12(7.8) | 16(10.4) | 40(26.0) | 46(29.9) | 2.89 |
| E-books | 28(18.2) | 16(10.4) | 8(5.2) | 8(5.2) | 46(29.9) | 48(31.2) | 2.88 |
| Law Pavilion | 16(10.4) | 4(2.6) | 8(5.2) | 6(3.9) | 36(23.4) | 84(54.5) | 2.09 |
| CD ROM databases | 16(10.4) | 4(2.6) | 8(5.2) | 6(3.9) | 36(23.4) | 84(54.5) | 2.09 |
| Westlaw | 12(7.8) | 10(6.5) | 4(2.6) | 6(3.9) | 32(20.8) | 87(56.5) | 2.09 |
| Lexis Nexis | 6(3.9) | 8(5.2) | 6(3.9) | 8(5.2) | 32(20.8) | 94(61.0) | 1.83 |
| Electronic Court Proceedings | 8(5.2) | 0(0.0) | 10(6.5) | 4(2.6) | 36(23.4) | 96(62.3) | 1.74 |
| DOAJ | 10(6.5) | 4(2.6) | 4(2.6) | 2(1.3) | 26(16.9) | 108(70.1) | 1.70 |
| Easy Laws | 6(3.9) | 4(2.6) | 4(2.6) | 6(3.9) | 26(16.9) | 108(70.1) | 1.62 |
| E-thesis | 2(1.3) | 4(2.6) | 4(2.6) | 6(3.9) | 30(19.5) | 106(68.8) | 1.52 |
| EBSCOHOST | 4(2.6) | 4(2.6) | 2(1.3) | 0(0.0) | 26(16.9) | 118(76.6) | 1.44 |
| JSTOR | 2(1.3) | 0(0.0) | 2(1.3) | 6(3.9) | 34(22.1) | 110(71.4) | 1.40 |
| | | | | | | Overall Mean=2.42 | |

Note: The figures in bracket are in percentages. Criterion Mean=3.5

Postgraduate law students were asked to indicate their level of proficiency in Information and Communication Technology skills. The findings presented on Table 3 showed that the respondents were highly proficient in visiting of websites (mean=3.36) and communicating with colleagues via email (mean=3.36). They were moderately proficient in downloading information into storage devices(mean=3.14) and searching of electronic databases(mean=3.06). The overall mean of 2.89 is higher than the criterion mean of 2.5 which revealed that the respondents possess a high level of proficiency in Information and Communication Technology skills. This finding contradicts the result of the study by Adeleke and Nwalo (2017) who reported that postgraduates do not possess requisite information technology skills. This finding also disagrees with other studies conducted by Ukachi (2015) and Adeniran (2013) which reported low level of information literacy skills or lack of search skills among Nigerian students.

Table 3: Respondents Level of Proficiency in Information and Communication Technology Skills

| Statements | Highly proficient | Moderately proficient | Proficient | Not proficient | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Visiting of websites | 100(64.9) | 22(14.3) | 20(13.0) | 12(7.8) | 3.36 |
| Communicating with colleagues via e-mails | 98(63.6) | 26(16.9) | 14(9.1) | 14(9.1) | 3.36 |
| Downloading information into your storage devices | 80(51.9) | 38(24.7) | 14(9.1) | 22(14.3) | 3.14 |
| Searching of electronic databases | 66(42.9) | 48(31.2) | 14(9.1) | 24(15.6) | 3.06 |
| Chatting with other web users | 66(42.9) | 38(24.7) | 20(13.0) | 30(19.5) | 2.90 |
| Uploading information from your personal computer | 68(44.2) | 30(19.5) | 28(18.2) | 28(18.2) | 2.89 |
| Scanning images | 46(29.9) | 46(29.9) | 22(14.3) | 40(26.0) | 2.63 |
| Burning information into compact disks | 38(24.7) | 38(24.7) | 36(23.4) | 42(27.3) | 2.46 |
| Designing of search strategies | 42(27.3) | 20(13.0) | 22(14.3) | 70(45.5) | 2.22 |
| | | | | | Overall mean =2.89 |

Note: The figures in bracket are in percentages. Criterion mean = 2.5

Figure 1 shows the attitude of the respondents towards the use of e-resources in the two universities. The findings show that 'I get current information from e-resources' had the highest mean of 3.36. This is followed by 'I depend highly on e-resources for my academic work' with a mean of 2.66. All items listed had a high mean only 'I prefer to use e-resources than print-based resources' had a mean of 2.14 which is lower than the criterion mean of 2.5. The overall mean of 2.70 which is higher than the criterion mean of 2.5 indicates that the respondent had a positive attitude towards e-resources use. The result is in tandem with the findings of studies by Odunewu, Oyedipe and Oyedokun (2022); Alokluk(2020), Okello-Obura and Magara(2008) who found positive attitude towards the use of e-resources. However, the finding is inconsistent with studies which reported negative attitudes towards use of electronic information resources among students (Ukachi, Onuoha and Nwachukwu, 2014; Henderson, Selwyn and Aston, 2017).

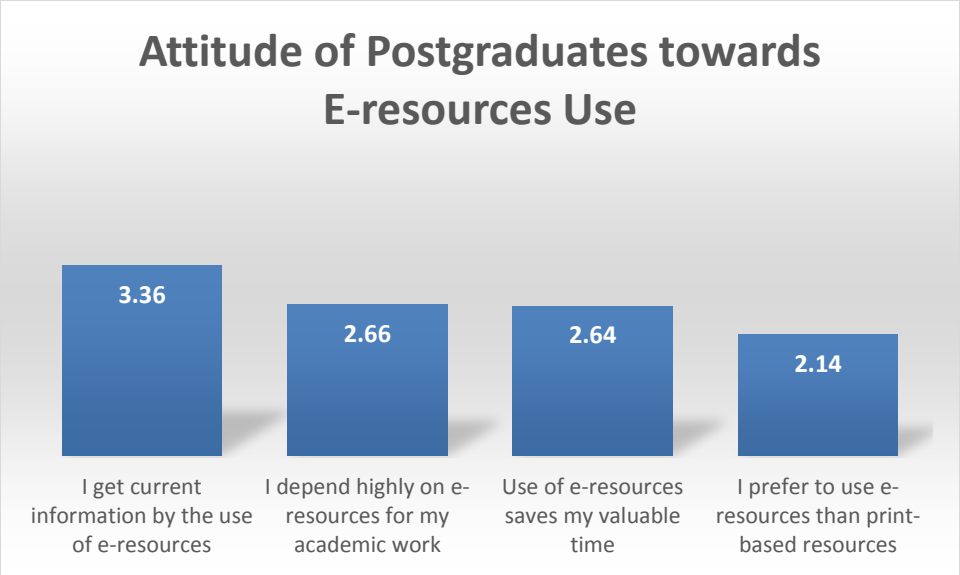


Figure 1: Attitude towards use of E-resources
Note: Strongly Agree=4; Agree=3; Disagree=2; Strongly Disagree=1,
Criterion mean=2.5 Overall mean= 2.70

Figure 2 reveals that of all the challenges 'erratic power supply' had the highest mean score of 2.83 while 'lack of information retrieval skills' had the lowest mean score of 1.67. This implies that erratic supply of power is the major challenge to the use of e-resources in both universities. This finding is similar to that of Ankrah and Atuase (2018), on the use of e-resources by postgraduate students of the University of Cape Coast, who reported that most of the respondents were of the view that power outages was the major challenge faced in using e-resources.

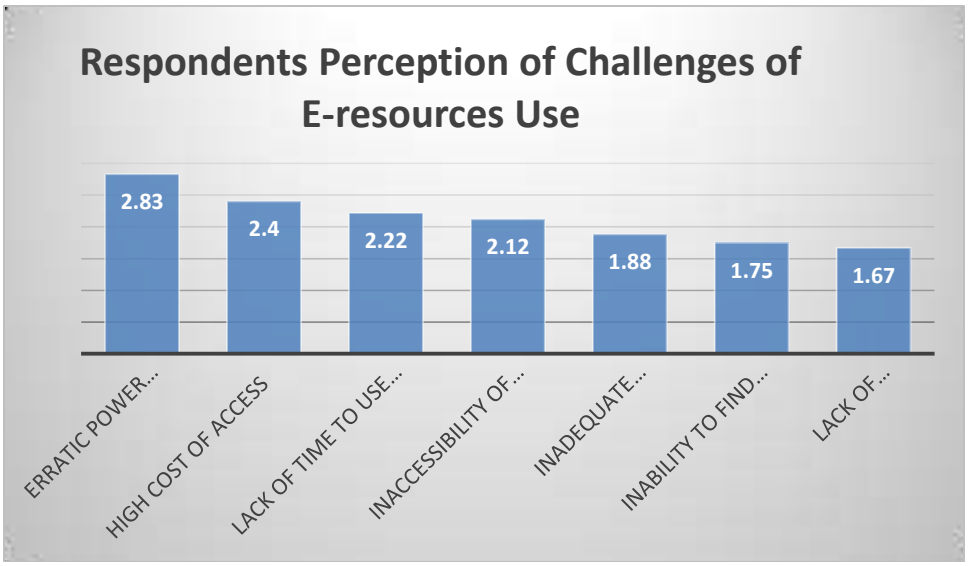


Figure 2: Respondents perception of challenges of E-resources use
Note: To a very great extent=4; To a great extent=3; To a small extent=2; To a very small extent=1
Criterion mean =2.5

Table 4 shows the Spearman's rho coefficient (rs), indicating the relationship between attitude towards e-resources use and frequency of e-resources use is 0.241; p value < 0.05. The result shows that there is a low significant positive relationship between attitude towards e-resources use and frequency of e-resources use among postgraduate law students in the two universities in Nigeria. This finding supports the result of Ukachi, et al (2014) which found significant relationship between undergraduate students' attitude and their use of e-resources provided in the library.

**Table 4: Correlation between Attitude towards E-resources and Frequency of Use**

| | | **Attitude towards Use of E-resources** | **Frequency of E-resources Use** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | 0.241** |
| **Attitude towards Use of E-resources** | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | 0.028 |
| | N | 154 | 154 |
| | Correlation Coefficient | 0.241** | 1.000 |
| **Frequency of E-resources Use** | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.028 | . |
| | N | 154 | 154 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5shows the Spearman's rho coefficient (rs), indicating the relationship between level of proficiency in information and communication technology skills and frequency of e-resources use is 0.283; p value < 0.05. The result shows that there is a low significant positive relationship between level of proficiency in information and communication technology skills and frequency of e-resources use among postgraduate law students in the two universities in Nigeria. This finding agreed with Bashorun, Bashorun, Olarongbe and Akinbowale (2022) which revealed a significant relationship between information literacy competence and the use of electronic information resources among law students.

**Table 5: Correlation between Level of Level of proficiency in information and communication technology skills and Frequency of E-resources Use**

| | | **Level of proficiency in information and communication technology skills** | **Frequency of E-resources Use** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | 0.283** |
| Level of proficiency in information and communication technology skills | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | 0.000 |
| | N | 154 | 154 |
| | Correlation Coefficient | 0.283** | 1.000 |
| Frequency of E-resources Use | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | . |
| | N | 154 | 154 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether attitude towards e-resources use and proficiency in information and communication technology skills had impact on e-resources use among postgraduate law students. Table 6 shows that the overall model accounted for 7% of the variation on use of e-resources. The Beta of proficiency in information and communication technology skills to the prediction of e-resources use is (β =.287). This implies that proficiency in information and communication technology skills contributed 28 per cent to the prediction of e-resources use among postgraduate law students. Similarly, the Beta of attitude towards e-resources use to the prediction of e-resources use is (β = .024). This means that attitude towards e-resources use contributed 2 per cent to the prediction of e-resources use. Table 6 reveals that attitude towards e-resources use is not a significant predictor of e-resources use, but proficiency in information and communication technology skills has a significant relative effect on use of e-resources and statistically significant. The finding is at variance with the regression results of the study by Nwone and Mutula, (2019) which showed that attitude and social influence significantly influenced use of electronic resources. The result also contradict the finding of Liu, Chen, Sun, Wible and Kuo (2010) which provided adequate support on the significant influence of attitude on use of technology.

**Table 6: Summary of Regression predicting Use of electronic information resources**

| Model | R | $R^2$ | Adj$R^2$ | β | p -value | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 0.297[a] | 0.088 | 0.076 | | .000 | |
| Proficiency in information and communication technology skills | | | | .287 | .001 | Significant |
| Attitude towards E-resources Use | | | | .024 | .773 | Not Significant |
| Std. Error of the Estimate= 12.46695 ; F= 7.313 | | | | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: use of e-resource

b. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude, Proficiency

## Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the influence of attitude towards use of e-resources and proficiency in information and communication technology skills on postgraduate law students' use of electronic information resources. The findings indicate that although the frequency of e-resources use by postgraduate law students was very low, the self-reported level of proficiency in Information and Communication Technology skills was generally high and attitude towards use

of electronic information resources was positive. The major challenges to the use of electronic information resources were erratic power supply and high cost of access to e-resources. The results also suggest that postgraduate law students in University of Lagos were more proficient in Information and communication technology skills and utilize e-resources more than their counterparts at University of Ibadan. The study found a low significant positive relationship between attitude towards e-resources use and frequency of e-resources use among postgraduate law students in the two universities. It also found a low significant positive relationship between level of proficiency in information and communication technology skills and frequency of e-resources use among postgraduate law students in the two universities in Nigeria. The independent sample t-tests indicate no significant difference between male and female postgraduate law students' frequency of use of e-resources, proficiency in information and communication technology skills and attitude towards the use of e-resources. However, multiple regression analysis revealed that attitude towards e-resources use is not a significant predictor of e-resources use, but proficiency in information and communication technology skills has a significant relative effect on use of e-resources and statistically significant.

**Recommendations**

In light of the findings reported in this paper, the following recommendations are made to boost the use of e-resources by the postgraduate law students. Most postgraduate students are largely distance learners and are unable to access e- resources from their homes or offices because access to e-resources is generally authenticated via IP address. To motivate them to use library electronic information resources access to e-resources should be via remote authentication system. This would enable postgraduate law students to access the library's e-resources 24/7 without any physical restriction. Links to electronic information resources should be provided through online public access catalogue and library dedicated website.

It is evident that there is a significant relationship between attitude towards e-resources use and frequency of use therefore university libraries should also create Universal Resource Locator (URL) links to electronic resources on computer desktop pages to sensitize and increase postgraduate law students' utilization of the various electronic databases. Hopefully, awareness of availability and easy access to e-resources will likely influence their attitude towards the use of e-resources. The law librarian should partner with faculty of law members to create awareness of the benefits of electronic information resources use among postgraduate law students.

The result of the study revealed that information and communication technology skills is a significant predictor of use of e-resources therefore the university library should organize training for postgraduate law students to enable them acquire relevant information and communication technology skills required for information retrieval. The university libraries should also create awareness of online courses on information and communication technology skills which postgraduate students should take advantage of in order to boost their skills.

As regards the problem of perennial epileptic power supply to university libraries, the university library management should demand an alternative power supply from the university management. Library should be provided with dedicated power generators and inverters to ensure constant power supply. All data collected were based entirely on self-report and how they perceived their attitude towards e-resources use and Information and Communication Technology skills. A further limitation of this study is that postgraduate students participated voluntarily. Therefore, caution must be taken when generalising any findings for the entire population at the universities where this study was conducted.

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