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Summer 10-30-2023

## Postgraduate Students Perception and Utilization of Serial Materials in South-East, University Libraries, Nigeria

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Promise, Aworo and Kikiri, Helen, "Postgraduate Students Perception and Utilization of Serial Materials in South-East, University Libraries, Nigeria" (2023). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 7884. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/7884>

# **Postgraduate Students Perception and Utilization of Serials Materials in South-East University Libraries, Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

The goal of this study is to learn how postgraduate students in Nigeria's university libraries perceive and use serial resources. The study used a descriptive survey as its method. 295 postgraduate library and information science students from four South-East regional institutions two state universities and two federal universities make up the research population. The instrument used to collect the data was a questionnaire. Based on the study's goals, a questionnaire was created. The findings show that postgraduate students have a positive perception of the use of serial materials, which includes the following: serial materials carry current information on a variety of subject areas; they are essential for researchers and students; serial contains the facts and figures needed for research; serial materials present reports of current research findings more quickly than any other publication; and serial materials represent various author's ideals on a variety of subjects. The results also showed that journals, project work, and thesis were the main serials materials most frequently used. The results also showed that the following challenges were encountered: a lack of borrowing facilities or journals in my area; poor searching abilities; an unstable power supply; a lack of resources; an inconvenient opening; outdated information serials resources; a lack of manpower to effectively handle customer requests; and periodicals that are not appropriate. The findings also suggested measures for overcoming the challenges faced by the serial unit, including increased funding for the library acquisition of sufficient, up-to-date serials resources and a rise in subscription rates.

**Keywords:** Postgraduate, Perception, Serial Resources, South-East, University Library,

## **Introduction**

The main goal of an academic library is to give users the necessary information to make informed decisions. The topic interests of the institutions must be reflected in the academic library holdings. In terms of quality, quantity, and variety, it must also be sufficient. The library accomplishes this by carefully choosing and acquiring items for use in research, education, and instruction; processing and organizing the contents for simple retrieval; and disseminating knowledge about the collections while also encouraging their active usage. Therefore, academic libraries must offer the most recent serial materials in all the subjects and courses offered by their parent institution. Staff and students are also expected to use the library, particularly the serial department. Bhat in Owusu-Ansah and Nutsupkui (2017) defined serials as a publication in any medium issued in successive parts bearing numerical or chronological designations and intended to be continued indefinitely. There are many kinds of serials. These include newspapers, magazines, newsletters, accessions, journals, indexes, abstract, reports, proceedings and transactions of societies and so on. Akande in Tamomowo-Ayodele and Ayobami (2018) posited that there are many kinds of serials, these include: newspaper, magazines, newsletters, accessions, journals, indexes, abstract, reports, proceedings and transactions of businesses in societies. Meanwhile, Lanzuela, Balot, and Bugaling (2017) concluded that periodicals in academic libraries be given serious consideration towards greater utilization of the faculty particularly in the evaluation process. Thus, every university that is worth its name should makes effort to acquire serials for the community.

Meanwhile, Anyaegbu, (2016) posits that the university library is the academic nerve centre of the university. This is because all the teaching, learning and research going on in the university revolve around the library collection. A well-stocked and organized library is a pride of any educational institution which will definitely help in meeting its teaching, learning and research needs through availability of contemporary serial publications alongside other library resources. Sambo and Akpojotor (2016) affirmed that, periodicals are useful because they are the most up-to-date resources in the library and that the articles in periodicals are often written by experts in the field, therefore, they are reliable and the articles are precise and not as cumbersome to read as textbooks. Academic libraries must therefore provide the latest journal titles in all the subjects/courses covered by its parent institution and also, staff and students are expected to make use of the library most especially the serial section of the Library to get current information in their chosen field of study.

## **Statement of the Problem**

One key preoccupation dominates the postgraduate student population at universities: learning. As a result, learning in tertiary institutions extends beyond traditional in-class lectures and interactions between lecturers and students. Postgraduate students are required to perform research for current demands such as continuing assignments and assessment tests, further reading outside of class, presentations, and ultimately final year projects, for which serials might provide material. However, these postgraduate students have limitless access to serials on the internet and in academic libraries. According to research, university budget cuts, high serial subscription costs for both print and online publications, management, lack of internet access, inadequate basic search skills, and ignorance and so on are the major challenges. These difficulties then have a domino effect on Nigerian postgraduate students, which appears to be having an impact on their academic performance and general level of knowledge. Eventually, this will have an impact on the country's educational standards as a whole. In order to meet students' and researchers' immediate information demands, university libraries, open access journals, and other sources for current serials play a vital role. However, it looks like access to these serials is limited or unavailable. In light of this, this study explores how postgraduate students in South-East university libraries in Nigeria perceive and use serial publications.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study is to examine the postgraduate students' perception and utilization of serial materials in south-East university libraries, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. to identify postgraduate student's perception in the use of serial materials in South-East, university libraries, Nigeria.
2. to determine the serial materials mostly utilized by postgraduates in the South-East university libraries.
3. to investigate the constraint confronting the postgraduate students in the use of serial publications
4. to suggest strategies that would enhance the use of serials resources among postgraduate students in South-East university libraries, Nigeria

### **Literature Review**

Academic libraries' main goals and objectives are to provide their users students, faculty, and other members of the university community with academic, learning, and research services in support of the parent institution's programs. Serials continue to be a possible

instrument for knowledge distribution in academic endeavors and are crucial teaching and research tools. Because of the types of information items it holds, particularly journals, Chitumbo, et al. (2016) argued that serial collection is a crucial area in assisting the university's fundamental functions of learning, teaching, research, and consulting. In a related study, Nyiyongo, Tersur, and Tofi (2020) investigated how postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria, used serials for research. The result indicated that Serials were readily available for research activities in university libraries in Benue state. Outcomes also shown that majority of the postgraduate students were challenged among others, by difficulty in locating needed serials, inadequate storage facilities; journals articles not indexed for easy access and inadequate power supply; lack of awareness of serial materials and poor attitude of library staff towards users. Serials are vital and well-liked educational tools, according to Susanah and Ayobami (2018), since they provide up-to-date information. They can be ordered internationally or locally. Serials, which might be published as journals, newspapers, magazines, bulletins, etc., are frequently used as synonyms for periodicals. Findings and studies showed that library users in Nigerian universities frequently request extensive photocopies of significant articles and fascinating academic themes in serials.

In their research, Emeka, Obiano, and Damian (2020) conducted a survey of undergraduate students' knowledge of and use of serial publications in the library at the Federal University of Technology, Owerri. The outcome recommended, among other things, that the library conduct a thorough orientation program and library tour for new students in order to familiarize them with the library's resources and make effective use of embedded librarians who will bring the library's services closer to the students and faculty members. In order to meet the demands of the university curriculum, Kanwar Library (2019) promised that magazines should be ethically and effectively bought whenever possible at a cost that is affordable and readily available. Additionally, in this regard, the value of periodicals is crucial for students to interact with people in general. Likewise, Ntui and Udah (2015) study on the use and accessibility of library resources, found that respondents were unable to use reliable information sources because they couldn't get to them in the library. The acquisition, prominence, and accessibility of magazines in the library are just a few of the variables that may affect how postgraduate students use them. Okorie and Akanwa (2018) reported that, despite the emphasis placed on the use of periodicals in university libraries, there is a decline in their usage among postgraduate students. This view correlates with the one by Abubakar and Adetimirin (2017) that postgraduate students' use of periodicals in Nigeria is on the downside.

Correspondingly, Nutsupkui and Owusu-Ansah (2017) study on the use of serials by staff and students in a university library in Africa, Nutsupkui and Owusu-Ansah found that both professors and graduate students were, on the whole, relatively aware of the serials (periodical) collection in the library. Similar to this, Adeleke and Nwalo (2017) found that despite periodicals being available, students rarely use them because they are unaware of the different ways in which information can be accessed. Since they are also unaware of the sources of this information, they are unable to locate and retrieve them from their libraries.

Kumah (2015) observed that students rely heavily on journals (print and online) theses and dissertations as well as periodical literature for their research productivity. In the same vein, Olanlokun (2015) confirmed that journal articles, textbooks, theses and dissertation, monographs, treatises and government documents were considered very important to the job performance of the Nigerian academics. Sambo and Akpojotor (2016), states that serials publication, including journal and other periodicals constitutes the most important class of materials found in an academic library, because they contain the most up-to-date information. It is generally acknowledged that serial publications play an important role in research. According to Wise and Fisher (2015) serials will continue to make a special impact on the scholarly community as they contain the most current and vital information on various disciplines.

Tyagi (2014) and Kisiedu (2018) in their separate studies commented on the declining budgetary allocations in most tertiary institutions in Africa which have great negative impact on the availability and adequacy of serial publications in libraries. Consequently, African scholars depend heavily on gifts and donated materials from foreign countries for information for their research even on local issues. This scenario seriously affects research output of students in developing countries, including Nigeria, as much time, fund and energy are wasted trying to track down these foreign information resources. It has also been observed that information literacy affects research output using serial publications (Okiki & Iyabo, 2013). Likewise, Sambo and Akpojotor (2016) have identified some of the problems to include but not limited to the following: delay in supplying of daily, lack of space, Information overload, poor library organization; lack of user skills; poor funding of libraries, lack of current information resources; lack of adequate/relevant materials; poor IT infrastructure; unconducive reading environment; poor power supply; lack of technical support; and lack of user education. It was recommended among others that adequate funding, encourage students during orientation programs to utilize serial materials to support their research work, organize seminars/workshops to train the undergraduate students on the importance of serial

publications users' educations, subscriptions, improved human services for effective and efficient services in order to satisfy users' needs would alleviate the problems of serials

In view of the problems confronting the utilization of serial publications for research output, some strategies have been suggested. Yushau and Fadip (2018) observed that there is lack of ICT facilities in Nigerian educational institutions especially in the polytechnics. This according to them is a major hindrance to adequacy of serial publications. They suggested a general improvement in infrastructural facilities especially ICT infrastructure to ensure enhanced currency of serial publications. On the other hand, Afebende and Ebanye (2018) consider lack of user skills as one of the major constraints to effective utilization of serial publications for quality research output. They were of the view that improved user skills through user education, current awareness services and public enlightenment on the resources available in the institution will go a long way in enhancing effective use of adequate and current serial publications available for research in the institution. Kinengyere (2017) shared this view and pointed out the importance of these resources to postgraduate students. As a result, he suggested the provision of electronic resources, internet facilities and ICT network in institutions as way of attracting users to use serial publications. Baro, Oni and Onyenania (2018) supported this view and further called for the creation of conducive reading environment in these libraries through regular supply of electricity.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The study covered four university libraries (two State and two Federal Universities in the South – East offering postgraduate programmes in library and information science) which met the criteria for the study. They include: University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Imo State University and Abia State University. The population figure is obtained from the establishment unit of university libraries studies (2021/2022 academic session). The instrument for data collection for this research was a self-constructed questionnaire titled:

Postgraduate Students Perception and Utilization of Serials Materials in South-East University Libraries, Nigeria (PSPUSMSEULN). The researchers distributed the questionnaire with the help of co-librarians as research assistants. Three research assistants from each universities libraries helped to distribute and collect the instruments since they are familiar with the respondents. A period of 2 weeks was used for the administration and collection of the instruments. The whole population of 295 of postgraduate students that were offering library and information science were used for the study. This was as a result of the manageable size

of the population. Two hundred and ninety five questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, 271 were duly completed and found usable, which gives (a 91.8%) response rate. Results were analysed using Statistic Package for the Social Science (SPSS) and are presented in percentage, mean and standard deviation. For the responses, it was based on (4) -point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agreed (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

### Presentation of the Results

**Table 1: Questionnaires and Response Rate**

Names of the University	No Questionnaire Administered	No Questionnaire Returned	Response Rate%
University of Nigeria, Nsukka	86	80	93
Nnamdi Azikiwe university, Akwa	72	65	90.2
Abia State University, Uturu	80	73	91.2
Imo State University, Owerri	57	53	92.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>91.8</b>

Source: 2021/2022 Academic Session Retrieved from the Universities Libraries

Table 1 revealed that two hundred and ninety five (295) copies of the questionnaire administered for the study, 271 were retrieved and found usable, representing (91.8%) response rate.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	102	37.6%
Female	169	62.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field work, 2022.

Table 1 reveals that 102 (37.6%) were male while 169 (62.3%) were female. This shows that there are more female postgraduate students than male in department of library and information science in South-East university librarians, Nigerian

**Table 2: Academic programme of respondents**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
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PGDL	91	33.5%
MLIS	144	53.1%
PHD	36	13.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field work, 2022.

Table 2 shown academic programme of the respondents. 144 (53.1%) had masters in library and information science while 91 (33.5%) had postgraduate diploma in library whereas 36 (13.2%) had doctorate degree.

**Research Question 1: What are the postgraduate students’ perception on the use of serial materials in South East, University Libraries?**

**Table 3:** Postgraduate students’ perception on the use of serial materials in South East, University Libraries

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
Serial materials carry current information on various fields of study	121	150	0	0	4.47
Serial materials present report of findings of current research quickly than any other publication	162	109	0	0	3.59
Serial contains facts and figures required for research	181	90	0	0	3.66
Serial materials represent different ideals from various author on variety of topics	98	173	0	0	3.36
They are vital to researchers and students	193	61	0	0	3.71

**Aggregate Mean: 3.75**

**Criterion Mean: 2:50**

From Table 3, with an aggregate mean of  $\bar{X}$  3.75, which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50, this implies that the postgraduate students’ perception on the use of serial materials is high. Specifically, their perception include Serial materials carry current information on

various fields of study (mean=  $\bar{X}$ 4.47), they are vital to researchers and students (mean=  $\bar{X}$  3.71), serial contains facts and figures required for research (mean=  $\bar{X}$  3.66), serial materials present report of findings of current research quickly than any other publication (mean=  $\bar{X}$  3.59) and serial materials represent different ideals from various author on variety of topics (mean=  $\bar{X}$  3.36).

**Research Question 2: What are the serial materials mostly utilized by postgraduate students in the South-East university libraries?**

**Table 4:** Serial materials mostly utilized by postgraduate students in the South-East university libraries.

Items	Agreed	Disagreed
Journals	257(94.8%)	14(5.1%)
Magazines	215(79.3%)	56(20.6%)
Newspapers	201(74.1%)	70(25.8%)
Project works	231(85.2%)	40(14.7%)
Memos of learned society	198(73%)	73(26.9%)
Conference proceeding	213(78.5%)	40(14.7%)
Transactions	207(76.3%)	64(23.6%)
Thesis	219(80.8%)	52(19.1%)
Reference sources	201(74.1%)	70(25.8%)

**Source: Field work, 2022.**

Table 4 shown serial materials mostly utilized by postgraduate students in the South-East, university libraries. The respondents are agreed with all the items mention above which include Journals 257(94.8%), project work 231(85.2%),thesis 219(80.8%),magazines 215(79.3%), conference proceeding 213(78.5%), transactions 207(76.3%), newspapers 201(74.1%)/reference sources and memos of learned society 198(73%).

**Research Question 3: What are the constraints to the effective utilization of serial resources by postgraduate students in South-East university libraries, Nigeria?**

**Table 5:** Constraints to the usage of serial resources by postgraduate students in South-East university libraries, Nigeria

Items	Agreed	Disagreed
Outdated information serials resources	175(64.5%)	96(35.4%)

Lack or borrowing facility	207(76.3%)	64(23.6%)
Inconvenient opening/closing hours	198(73%)	73(26.9%)
Inadequate manpower to provide effective services	165(60.8%)	106(39.1%)
Periodicals are not properly organized for easy access	153(56.4%)	118(43.5%)
Inadequate searching skills to locate resources	201(74.1%)	70(25.8%)
Scarcity of the resources	200(73.8%)	71(26.1%)
Epileptic power supply	198(73%)	73(26.9%)
Delay in supplying of daily	150(55.3%)	121(44.6%)
Lack of journals in my areas	207(76.3%)	64(23.6%)

**Source: Field work, 2022.**

Table 5 revealed the constraints to the effective utilisation of serial resources among postgraduate students in South-East, universities libraries.. Several factors were found to be militating against the effective use of serials resources in the libraries. These include lack or borrowing facility/lack of journals in my areas 207(76.3%), inadequate searching skills to locate materials 201(74.1%), epileptic power supply / scarcity of the resources / inconvenient opening / closing hour 198 (73%), outdated information serials resources 173(64.5%), inadequate manpower to provide effective services 163(60.8%), periodicals are not properly organised for easy access 153(56.4%) and delay in supply of daily 150(53.3%) respectively.

**Research Question 4: What are the Strategies that would enhance the use of serials resources among postgraduate students in South-East university libraries, Nigeria?**

**Table 6:** Strategies that would enhance the use of serials resources

Items	Agreed	Disagreed
Seminar on the use of serials materials	231(85.2%)	40(14.7%)
Increase in the subscription rate	245(90.4%)	26(9.5%)
Provision of the recent journals in the departments	198(73%)	73(26.9%)
Introduction of practical orientation on how to use journal articles	156(57.5%)	115(42.4%)

More fund should be allocated to the library for the acquisition of adequate, recent serials resources to the libraries	257(94.8%)	14(5.1%)
The libraries should purchase a solar inverter or standby generating set that will solve the issue of epileptic power supply	231(85.2%)	40(14.7%)
Libraries management should request for more staff in the serials unit	213(78.5%)	40(14.7%)
Extension of the closing hour	201(74.1%)	70(25.8%)

**Source: Field work, 2022.**

Table 6: Shows suggestions by the postgraduate students on how to improve the use of serial materials in South East, university libraries, 257(94.8%) agree that more fund should be allocated to the library for the acquisition of adequate, recent serials resources to the libraries while 245(90.4%) agree that increase in the subscription rate whereas 231(85.2%) agree that library management should introduce seminar on the use of serial materials/the libraries should purchase a solar inverter or standby generating set that will solve the issue of epileptic power supply. Also, 465(78%) agree that compiling recent journals and sending them to relevant department. Furthermore, 213(78.5%) agree that libraries management should requested for more staff in the serial unit whereas 201(74.1%) agree that libraries should extend their service hour and 198(73%) agree that provision of the recent journals in the department respectively.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The purpose of this study is to examine the postgraduate students' perception and utilisation of serial materials in South-East, university libraries. The study found that postgraduate students perception on the use of serials materials is high, which includes; Serial materials carry current information on various fields of study, they are vital to researchers and students, serial contains facts and figures required for research,, serial materials present report of findings of current research quickly than any other publications and serial materials represent different ideals from various author on variety of topics. This is in line with the finding of Susanah and Ayobami (2018), who opined that serials are important and popular learning materials because they contain current information.

The result in table 4 shown serial materials mostly utilized by postgraduate students in the South-East, university libraries. Such as Journals, project work, thesis, magazines, conference proceeding, transactions, newspapers/ reference sources and memos of learned

society. Kumah (2015), asserted that journal articles, textbooks, theses and dissertation, monographs, treatises and government documents were considered very important to the job performance of the Nigerian academics.

The result in table 5 shows divergence confronting utilize of serial resources in South-East, university libraries, These include lack or borrowing facility/lack of journals in my areas, inadequate searching skills to locate materials, epileptic power supply / scarcity of the resources / inconvenient opening / closing hour, outdated information serials resources, inadequate manpower to provide effective services, periodicals are not properly organised for easy access and delay in supply of daily. This is in consonance with the finding of Sambo and Akpojotor (2016), who identified some of the problems to include but not limited to the following: delay in supplying of daily, lack of space, Information overload, poor library organization; lack of user skills; poor funding of libraries, lack of current information resources; lack of adequate/relevant materials; poor IT infrastructure; uncondusive reading environment; poor power supply; lack of technical support; and lack of user education. Supported by Ntui and Udah (2015), who opined that the respondents cannot use quality information resources due to their inability to access them in the library.

The result in table 6 shown suggestions on how to improve the use of serial materials in South East, university libraries, Nigeria. The participants agreed that more fund should be allocated to the library for the acquisition of adequate, recent serials resources to the libraries, increase in the subscription rate, library management should introduce seminar on the use of serial materials/the libraries should purchase a solar inverter or standby generating set that will solve the issue of epileptic power supply, compiling recent journals and sending them to relevant department, libraries management should requested for more staff in the serial unit, libraries should extend their service hour and provision of the recent journals in the department. This is in line with the findings of Baro, Oni and Onyenania. (2018); Afebende and Ebanye (2018); who opined that improved user skills through user education, current awareness services and public enlightenment on the resources available in the institution will go a long way in enhancing effective use of adequate and current serial publications available for research in the institution, more so, adequate funding should be considered as a basic necessity for the effect of periodicals acquisition and utilisation in university libraries as well as conductive reading environment in these libraries through regular supply of electricity.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study confirmed that institutional libraries in Nigeria suffer a variety of difficulties that have hindered the efficient distribution of intellectual content. In addition to

adding to the body of literature, the study describes the most often used serial resources, how postgraduate students view them when they consult them, obstacles they face, and potential solutions. Inadequate searching abilities to locate materials, epileptic power supply, scarcity of resources, inconvenient opening and closing hours, outdated information serials resources, insufficient manpower to provide effective services, periodicals not properly organized for easy access, and delays in supply of daily are among the main challenges acknowledged.

**Recommendations were made:**

- i. Librarians should endeavour to organize seminars/workshops to train the postgraduate students during orientation on the importance of serial publications.
- ii. Library environment should be adequately equipped with basic equipment such as internet connectivity, air conditioners, extension of working hour, and expansion of the serial unit, more budget allocation to the unit and adequate power supplies or provision of solar inverter.
- iii. Provision of current serial publications to meet the information needs of postgraduate students to facilitate research should be given proper attention by library administrators

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