

# POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS OPEN ACCESS FOR RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY IN TWO SELECTED LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

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## Abstract

This study examined postgraduate students' attitudes toward open access for research productivity. The study focused on determining the level of awareness of open access among postgraduate students and their attitudes toward the use of open access resources for research. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of 29 postgraduate Library and Information Science (LIS) Master's students from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and University of Port Harcourt. A census sampling technique was used to include all the students in the study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that postgraduate students have a high level of awareness of open access resources. The results also showed that although students recognize the usefulness and benefits of open access for academic research, their preference and regular use of these resources remain relatively low. The study concluded that awareness of open access among postgraduate students is high, but this awareness has not fully translated into consistent usage for research activities. The study recommended that universities and academic libraries should organize training programmes and provide guidance to encourage postgraduate students to make more effective use of open access resources in their research.

**Keywords:** Open access, postgraduate students, research productivity, scholarly communication, academic research.

## Introduction

Over the past years, access to information is crucial to postgraduate students due to their research-focused academic pursuits. They need access to existing literature to contextualize their research, identify gaps and contribute to knowledge. Access to credible sources enhances research quality, enabling students to produce well-informed, publishable work. Open access (OA) is one of the solutions to this dilemma, as it provides free access to scholarly sources without the use of financial resources (Hussain et al., 2021). Through open access, there is equity in knowledge sharing and more dissemination of research is achieved. It also means that students can access up to date literature which they need in their research and academic development. Research has indicated that information accessibility through information resources and information literacy competencies have a high impact on postgraduate research output (Adeyeye et al., 2025). When post graduate students' have access to various academic materials, they can be able to engage in extensive literature to recognize research gaps and create quality academic works.

Open access information resources are laden with the benefits of providing researchers with access to relevant and up-to-date digital information, wherever they are located in a relatively easier, faster, cheaper and desired format (Yang & Li, 2025). The contents in open access" can be read, downloaded, copied, distributed and printed by anyone and from anywhere without discrimination as to their use and this can be in

various formats such as texts, data, audio, video and multimedia, etc. With all the openness of open access resources, attitude, awareness and use have been a major issues in the acceptance of any technology innovation. Oloniruha et al., (2023) assert that the perceptions of postgraduate students regarding credibility and publication fees and the existence of predatory journals influences their desire to use OA platforms. Although, favorable attitudes would promote reading and publishing in the open-access sources among the students and unfavorable attitudes would inhibit interaction.

User's attitude and their perception of the library have changed a lot due to the emergence of ICT. Attitudes represent the conceptual value of open access (OA) in the minds of students and not the values of the OA themselves. According to Business Dictionary (2017) as cited in Jatto and Diyaolu (2021) attitude could be a predisposition or a bent to reply absolutely or negatively towards a definite plan, object, person, or situation. Positive attitudes are elementary in implementing and using new technologies. Attitudes represent our evaluations, preferences or rejections that support the knowledge we tend to receive. Hence, in this 21<sup>st</sup> century postgraduate students should adopt a positive attitude towards the use of OA. Ibrahim et al. (2023) discovered that OA resources contribute to the capacity of postgraduate students to find pertinent literature that help them produce scholarly outputs.

The research output of postgraduates stand out as one of the ways through which research is carried out in the university setting. Asikhi and Akpa (2022) as cited in Oyediran and Okorie (2024) assert that research output is an enormous contributions for

the development of the university and a country's manpower evident in the performance level of employees. Research output is conceptualized to mean the publication productivity of postgraduates in universities. This productivity is done through assignments, term papers, dissertations and thesis. Research output has prompted postgraduates in universities in Nigeria to be at the front of expertise in demonstrating academic excellence, gain recognition share insights, and create inventions in their field of specialization (Oyediran & Okorie, 2024); hence, the attitude and usage of open access by postgraduate becomes important.

There is diversity in awareness, as well as attitude towards OA between institutions and students. Palla et al. (2022) assert that even though a significant number of students know about OA resources, their utilization can be determined by their perceived quality, availability, and institutional support. Also, it can be enhanced by mentorship, guidance, and training to enable engagement and productivity of research (Awoleye, 2026). Despite the importance of OA in enhancing research among students, some of the difficulties, including the lack of awareness, insufficient training, and suppositions about OA, still exist. The attitude of postgraduate students towards OA is thus crucial in enhancing the research involvement. This paper investigates the perception and use of open access resources among postgraduate students in order to inform on the strategies to make research productive.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The output of the research studies is a major need of the postgraduate students, who are supposed to deliver the theses, dissertation work, journal articles, and other academic works in a short time. This will be possible to a large extent due to accessibility of relevant and up-to-date research materials. Open access (OA) might also be not fully understood and utilized by many postgraduate students despite the introduction of open access to eliminate financial and legal barriers to information about scholarly contents. Although open access has been proven to increase visibility and citation impact of the research output, student attitude towards open access can determine the use and publication of research works in open access platforms. OA journals might be viewed as trustworthy and useful by some students and may raise some questions related to quality or the cost of publishing by others. These divergent attitudes are able to influence the degree of their interest in open access materials and, as a result, their research output. Although the policy of open science has become widely supported worldwide, the relationship between the attitudes of postgraduate students to the open access and their output in research activities is scarcely empirically validated. Thus, the gap in the research is the insufficient knowledge of whether and how the attitudes of postgraduate students towards open access affect the results of their research and their general performance.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the level of awareness of open access among postgraduate students?

2. What are postgraduate students' attitudes toward the use of open access resources for research?

## **Literature Review**

### **Concept of Open Access**

Open access (OA) means the free and instant access of scholarly research on the internet; and is not restricted by financial or legal limitations. Open access enable users to access and download research materials and share them without paying subscriptions or coming across paywalls. This practice fosters the notion that academic knowledge must be easily accessible to the world population (Hussain et al., 2021). More so, open access has attained a significant aspect of modern scholarly communication, due to the ability of students, researchers, and the general population to enjoy academic research. Open access resources in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria and the world over are so far the newest channels that access to information can be achieves by students, researchers and academics. These resources vary form library catalogues (OPAC) to open access journals, open access magazines, open access databases, open access e-books, open access these, website information and open access repositories, etc.

Open access is making scholarly publications accessible and reusable online without technical, and legal barriers. Similarly, open access is also associated with the greater open science movement that advocate transparency, collaboration, and equal access to

knowledge. In addition, open access can decrease inequalities in access to scholarly information, particularly in developing countries, by removing financial barriers. With the accessibility of digital and open information sources, there has been a notable increase in access to research materials among students and researchers (Ternenge & Kashimana, 2019). Similarly, open access sources support academic work among postgraduate students who rely on existing literature to write their thesis and dissertations.

There are various types of open access publishing, among which are: gold open access, green open access and hybrid open access. These models enable researchers to place their publications in institutional repositories, such as EBD at no cost or publish their work freely. The availability of scholarly content in universities has greatly increased with the growth of open access journals and repositories. Ibrahim et al. (2023) are of the view that open access resources have facilitated the access of postgraduate students to research information. In the same vein, Shoroma (2021) noted that open access publication has enhanced scholarly communication through the increased dissemination of research outcome globally. As such, open access is thus an important factor in increasing knowledge access and facilitating research in institutions of higher education.

Hussain et al. (2021), explained the utilization of subscribed and open access information resources among Library and Information Science (LIS) research scholars. In their view, they examine the usage patterns, preferences, level of awareness, motivations behind using these resources, and challenges. Results from the study indicated that scholars of LIS utilized both subscribed and open access sources, yet subscribed ones were

more used to get access to articles and global accessibility. Lack of information and understanding of the available facilities minimized the full use of open access resources and institutional databases. This research made the conclusion that open access resources are gaining preference due to the free availability online resources, whilst subscribed resources tend to be limited to campuses.

### **Attitudes toward Open Access**

Attitude is the belief, perception and feeling that an individual has towards a given idea or practice. Within the context of open access, attitude play a role in the perception, trust, and use of open access materials that students use to conduct their academic work. In many cases, positive attitude will motivate students to search open access journals, repositories, and databases, but negative perceptions will decrease confidence in accessing them. Hence, the perception regarding credibility and quality of scholarly publications have a great impact on the attitude of open access use. Oloniruha et al. (2023) discovered that perception of scholarly publishing among postgraduate students have an impact on their intentions to publish on various academic platforms. Students, who believe in open access journals as credible and helpful, read and publish in them. Although, , the issue of predatory journals and publication fees would frighten some students away to open access systems. Hence, the awareness of open access resources is significant in attitude formation among students. Egunjobi (2019) has also found that awareness of open access publishing is a major determinant of whether a researcher is willing to utilize open access platform.

Palla et al. (2022) indicated that quality perceived, accessibility, and institutional support are the factors that affect the attitude of students and towards open access. The attitude towards open access among students can also be enhanced by institutional support. Also, orientation programmes, information literacy training and research mentoring can make enhance students' knowledge of how to find and assess valid open access materials. As Adeyeye et al. (2025) pointed out, based on such training, students can improve their information resource utilization. Awoleye (2026) also indicated that academic mentorship can be positively beneficial in engaging in research.

Mohammed (2013) examined the awareness and the utilization of open access (OA) scholarly publications among postgraduate students at the Faculty of Science, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria. The research objective was to identify the mediums by which students came to know about OA publications, the most significant sources they used, and the obstacles they had in accessing them.. The results found out that a majority of students knew about OA publications via usual internet searches, and were little familiar with the primary OA outlets. The theses and dissertations were mainly supported by OA publications. Two of the main recommendations of the study included ensuring libraries arrange periodic staff, postgraduate student training about the need and use of OA publications, and encouragement of students to publish in OA journals by faculties.

### **Open Access and Research Productivity**

Research productivity can be defined as the amount and quality of academic products, such as journal articles, conference papers, theses, and dissertations. It is frequently utilized as an indicator of the educational efficacy and input to the creation of knowledge. Availability of pertinent information material plays a significant part in research productivity. According to Madukoma and Adekunle (2022), information literacy skills and access to academic resources enhance the doctoral student capacity to write a literature review, construct a theoretical framework, and deliver quality research results. These activities are further facilitated by open access resources which are both free and highly accessible to scholarly literature. The study by Adetomiwa (2020) and Iroaganachi and Izuagbe (2018) indicated that the knowledge of electronic and open information resources positively influence the yield of research in academic institutions.

Productivity is also affected by other factors like institutional support, research mentorship, digital literacy and access to research infrastructure. In collaborating the above, Sawe (2024) pointed out that effective research support services assist students in accessing materials and building the required research skills. The understanding of intellectual property rights and responsible research practices was also associated with better scholarly output (Eruanga, 2021). Although open access is capable of improving the productivity of research, the advantages of open access research resources are dependent on how the students are aware, their attitudes, and how they utilize them effectively. Hence, postgraduate students with favorable attitude to open access and those who actively use these services are also more likely to enhance their research output and academic input.

## Methodology

The research design was a descriptive survey design. The study sample includes 29 Masters postgraduate students of Library and Information Science (LIS) in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and the University of Port Harcourt in Rivers State. All the 29 students were sampled in the study through the census sampling technique due to the relatively small number of members. This strategy made sure all the members of the population took part in the research. The structured questionnaire was used to gather data and mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data.

## Results and Discussion

### Research 1. What is the level of awareness of open access among postgraduate students?

**Table 1: Summary of mean and standard deviation on the level of awareness of open access among postgraduate students (N=29)**

S/N	Items	Mean	S/D	Decision
1	I am aware of the concept of open access in scholarly publishing.	3.38	0.62	Agreed
2	I know that open access resources allow free access to research articles and academic materials online.	3.41	0.59	Agreed
3	I am aware that many universities provide institutional repositories where research can be accessed freely.	3.24	0.68	Agreed
4	I know some open access journals or databases that I can use for my research work.	3.17	0.72	Agreed
5	I am aware that open access resources can be used legally for academic study and research	3.45	0.55	Agreed
<b>Grand Mean/S/D</b>		<b>3.33</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation on the level of awareness of open access among postgraduate students. All items recorded mean scores above 3.0, with the

highest awareness reported for the legal use of open access resources (Mean=3.45, SD=0.55) and the lowest for knowing specific open access journals or databases (Mean=3.17, SD=0.72). The grand mean of 3.33 (SD=0.63) showed that postgraduate students have a high level of awareness of open access resources. This implies that students in most cases know the meaning and advantages of open access, but they know a little bit about particular journals or repositories. The result is consistent with the results of Ambrose et al. (2023) and Piwowar et al. (2018), who indicate that postgraduate students in Nigerian and international settings have an awareness of open access, but they might not know specific details about the available platforms. It highlights the role played by library orientation programmes and training in improving the practical skills of students with reference to open access resources.

**Research Question 2: What are postgraduate students' attitudes towards the use of open access resources?**

**Table 2: Summary of mean and standard deviation on the postgraduate students' attitudes toward the use of open access resources for research (N=29)**

S/N	Items	Mean	S/D	Decision
1	I believe open access resources are useful for supporting my academic research.	3.21	0.66	Agreed
2	I prefer using open access journals and repositories when searching for research materials.	2.31	0.71	Disagreed
3	I believe that open access resources improve access to scholarly information.	3.28	0.64	Agreed
4	I am willing to use open access resources regularly in my research activities.	2.42	0.75	Disagreed

5	I believe publishing research in open access journals can increase the visibility of research work	3.16	0.68	Agreed
	<b>Grand Mean/S/D</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation on postgraduate students' attitudes toward the use of open access resources for research. All items recorded mean scores above 2.0, with the highest agreement reported for the perception that open access resources improve access to scholarly information (Mean=3.28, SD=0.64) and the lowest for the willingness to use open access resources regularly in research activities (Mean=2.42, SD=0.75). The grand mean of 2.88 (SD=0.69) revealed that postgraduate students generally have a positive attitude toward the use of open access resources for research. It shows that though students appreciate the advantages of open access, they might not be prepared to use OA materials in their studies on a regular basis or base all their research on these materials. This is also comparable to the findings of Frost and Ienca (2021) and Singh et al. (2024), who have seen that postgraduate students tend to favor open access in theory, but when it comes to frequent use, they tend to be reserved about quality, lack of institutional support or guidance and credibility. The results can be used to suggest that positive attitudes may be insufficient to ensure the active use of open access resources. The institutional support, familiarity with respectable OA journals, and the development of skills to navigate repositories are key to suggestions of positive attitude to productive research behavior.

## Recommendations

1. Universities and LIS schools should organize regular training and orientation programmes to educate postgraduate students on how to effectively locate and use open access journals, databases, and institutional repositories for their research.
2. University libraries should also promote credible open access platforms and provide guidance to postgraduate students on the benefits of using open access resources in order to encourage their regular use in research activities.
3. University libraries should upgrade open access infrastructure to support post graduate students research skills and to enhance productivity.
4. Universities should upgrade LIS school repositories and provide accessible open access resources to support post graduate students 'research productivity.

## Conclusion

The research investigated the perceptions of postgraduate students regarding open access and the impact these perceptions have on their research efficiency at two chosen Library and Information Science institutions in Rivers State. The results indicated that postgraduate students possess a significant level of knowledge concerning open access materials, signifying that they grasp the concept and understand that these materials offer complimentary and lawful access to academic information. Additionally, the findings indicated that while students recognize the advantages of open access materials and their contribution to enhancing research visibility and information accessibility, their inclination and frequency of utilizing these materials are quite limited. The research concluded that even though postgraduate students demonstrate a high level of openness towards open access and have generally favorable attitudes, this understanding has not completely resulted in regular application. This indicate a necessity for universities and libraries to

offer greater support and education to promote the effective utilization of open access materials in research endeavors.

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