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## **ACCESSING ELECTRONIC THESES AND DISSERTATIONS FOR RESEARCH BY POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS OF AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA**

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### **Abstract**

The study investigated access to electronic theses and Dissertations for Research by postgraduate Students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The study has the following specific objective, which includes determining the extent of accessibility of electronic theses and dissertations on research and finding out the challenges faced by postgraduate students when accessing electronic theses and dissertations. The study adopted quantitative research method and cross-sectional survey research design. A questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. 320 respondents were selected through a proportionate random sampling technique from a population of 1,964 Postgraduate Students from three (3) Faculties of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, which were selected. Data from the survey were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the descriptive data and inferential statistics using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequency distribution tables and percentages were used for the descriptive statistics. Finding from the study revealed that the extent postgraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria access electronic theses and dissertations for research is quite high and especially they access abstracts and book chapters. The main challenges faced by the respondents while accessing electronic theses and dissertations include inadequate Internet search skills and poor Internet connection. The study recommended that all postgraduate students should undergo a compulsory course on how to use the various search engines to source for information electronically. Additionally, the poor internet facilities in and around the Ahmadu Bello University campus hamper the effective use of ETDs. The university library management together with ICT directorate to organize compulsory training for all postgraduate to understand various search techniques and on how to use the various search engine to source for information electronically. Similarly, to provide strong internet connectivity to access adequate electronic theses and dissertations permanently.

**Keywords:** Ahmadu Bello University, Electronic Theses and Dissertations, Postgraduate Students,

## Introduction

Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) are regarded as the bedrock of graduate education and a secondary source of information. ETDs are known to be a rich and unique source of information. Often, the only source for research work that does not find its way into various publication channels. Electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) are a relatively new mode of research and scholarly communication. Lippincott states that an ETD program provides a process, standards, and software to automate functions, as well as a digital infrastructure for access and preservation (Lippincott, 2006). Electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) are similar to traditional theses but transformed in to digital for worldwide access and retrieval with the help of computer, tablet, and mobile phone and so on. Depending on the nature of accessibility provided, ETDs can be accessed anytime, anywhere. It helps in increasing the visibility of the individual researcher as well as the institution involved in the research work (Fox, Macmilliam & Srinivasam 2009). An electronic Thesis and Dissertation environment is enabled by widespread application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in universities for effectiveness and efficiency in the research process (Ani, 2013).

In tertiary and research-related Institutions, postgraduate students engaged in research activities. In this process, electronic theses and dissertations are consulted. According to the Networked Digital Library of Theses & Dissertations NDLTD (2009), Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) can be accessed on the web in full or partial-text. In the past, researchers were not able to access all the scholarly literature (theses and dissertations) published across the world due to inadequate communication technologies facilities. With the advent of information and communication technology (ICT), this problem is solved to a large extent and now results of the research are uploaded online for global visibility and access without any restriction (Ahmed, 2017). The increased complexity and accessibility of technology in everyday life have changed the desire and expectations of library clients which demand remote

access to full text resources, including theses and dissertations. The convergence of technology, open source initiatives, and developing new world view on intellectual property rights has energized ETDs (Vaishali & Babasaheb, 2014). Access to e-theses and dissertations is imperative for successful conduct of research in the universities. According to Moon, Hossain, Kang and Shin (2012), access to relevant scholarly publication is necessary and of paramount importance for post graduate students to take efficient decision in their researches.

Library management of Ahmadu Bello University, responsible to provide adequate access to electronic theses and dissertation to support research activities among the postgraduate student of the University. Similarly, the University library also subscribed adequate scholarly online databases, digitized their local Theses and Dissertations to enable postgraduate student of the university to get full access Theses and Dissertations electronically through the university library website to conduct their researches. Therefore, this study focused on the access to electronic theses and dissertations for research among the postgraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Access to scholarly publications like theses and dissertations are key to the research and development of postgraduate students in Universities. Essentially, Universities are the centers for the generation and propagation of knowledge through research towards nation building. Past theses and dissertations that are in electronic versions have helped postgraduate students to achieve research success by overcoming the delay that associated manual systems of submission which provide avenue for timely access. E-theses and dissertations have to some extent perfected efficiency in information dissemination by providing easy access offline and on the web (Online) that are freely available on the internet. It has been universally acknowledged that the quality of academic research theses and dissertations is traceable to the

quality of available electronic theses and dissertations therein in an academic institution (Ani, 2013).

Despite massive investment in institutional repositories for housing and dissemination of electronic theses and dissertations, observations made by the researcher and literature revealed that postgraduate students face difficulties when accessing electronic theses and dissertations for research in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Access to electronic theses and dissertations are affected by multiple factors, which include among others, difficulties when accessing theses and dissertations. As such, this will affect the quality and productivity of research particularly, at the university level. Also, this could lead to overreliance on the print theses and dissertations that are becoming over stretched due to the increasing population of postgraduate students. Hence, this study intends to find out the access to electronic theses and dissertations for research by postgraduate students in some selected faculties in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna, State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do postgraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, access electronic theses and dissertations for research?
2. What are the challenges faced by postgraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, when accessing electronic theses and dissertations for research?

### **Literature Review**

Several studies have been conducted in different countries on the postgraduate student's access to electronic theses and dissertations. Therefore, this study focused on accessing electronic theses and dissertations for research by postgraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University

Zaria. The literature were reviewed for this study on access to electronic theses and dissertations for research.

According to Frincovic, Skender, Dojemovic and Bilic-Zulte (2019), accessibility refers to the ability of a user to access theses and dissertations in a specified location and in the correct format. According to Frincovic, Skender, Dojemovic and Bilic-Zulte (2019) stated that, Accessibility refers to the ability to a user to access theses and dissertations in a specified location and in the correct format. Ibrahim (2014) from his point of view explain that, the more accessible e-theses and dissertations are, the more likely they are to be used. Similarly, ETDs are growing exponentially, thus the preservation and continued access to these ETDs is not only a necessity but should also be an obligation for libraries. Libraries should not only be committed, but also responsible for providing access to ETDs in the desired format, so that Post graduate students can access these ETDs when and where they needed it. According to Saka, Yusufu and Mommoh (2021) conducted study on digital preservation, accessibility, and use of electronic theses and dissertations in University libraries in Nigeria. ETDs are preserved through digitization, archiving, and creation of websites and databases as well as through floating institutional digital repositories (IDRs). ETD access is facilitated by tools such as automated library catalogs and classification schemes, online public access catalog, indexes, abstracts, bibliographies, and mobile devices such as smartphones and personal computers. ETDs are capable of meeting research of the postgraduate of universities. According to Saka, Babalo and Ahmed (2020) conducted a Study on the influence of preservation techniques and access to digital resources on research outputs of academic staff in Federal university libraries in northern Nigeria. Result showed that e-journal article, digitization and library catalogue top the list in terms of digital resource, preservation techniques and access tools used in research output of academic staff in federal university libraries in Northern Nigeria. Digital resources were used to disseminate research output.

Ani, Ngulube, and Onyancha (2015) conducted a study to investigate the effect of accessibility and utilization of electronic resources on productivity of academic staff in Nigerian universities. The study revealed that accessibility and use of electronic resources had a significant perceived positive effect on research productivity at the surveyed Nigerian universities. However, there was no significant perceived effect of accessibility and use of electronic resources by discipline on research productivity in the survey. In terms of gender, it was found that there was no significant perceived effect of accessibility and use of electronic resources by gender on research productivity among respondents at the surveyed Nigerian universities. This implies that increase in access and use of e-resources will lead to increase in productivity among respondents at the surveyed universities. Ani, (2013) studied the relationship between accessibility and utilization of electronic Thesis and Dissertation for research and its effect on productivity of academic staff in selected Nigerian universities between 2005 and 2012 Nigeria and notes that the findings of the study indicate low electronic Theses and dissertation environment in the two surveyed universities in relation to global practices. But, University of Ibadan was found to have a better electronic Theses and Dissertation environment than University of Calabar.

According to Ahmed (2017) Investigate the accessibility to scientific and technological information in Nigeria revealing that of the 7,014 scientific papers published between 1990 and 1995, 5,067 (79%) are journal articles and 1,116 (20%) of these journal articles were not indexed or abstracted making them inaccessible. Further analysis shows that 77% of the papers not covered by any indexing or abstracting services were published in Nigeria. He recommends the establishment of a national information Science centre to acquire, organize, provide access and disseminate scientific ETDs resources in Nigeria and other places. Aina, (2014) investigate the awareness, accessibility and use of electronic databases among Academic staff of Babcock University Business school Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo

Ogun State, Nigeria. The study was carried out among one hundred and eighteen academic staff in the Babcock Business School (BBS). One of the findings of the study was that information awareness on electronic resources among lecturers in BBS was inadequate and this affects the accessibility and use of electronic resources.

While discussing about the challenges associated with accessing Electronic Theses and Dissertations Saliu, Ngozi, and Lawal, (2022) in their identify the challenges and strategies to be adopted to access institutional repositories(IRs) among postgraduate students in universities, in South-West Nigeria. The results of the study identify some challenges to accessing IRs which include poor ICT skills, unwillingness to deposit research materials, epileptic power supply, absence of IRs policy hindering the submission of content to the IRs, fear of copyrights infringement, financial constraints, lack of awareness of publishers policy as regards depositing published works in IR, fear of plagiarism, and low bandwidth. The results further revealed strategies to surmount the challenges facing the IRs in universities such as alternative power supply should , increase Internet bandwidth to enhance the effective utilization of the IRs, IRs policy to encourage the acquisition of content, plagiarism software to mitigate plagiarism, specifying copyright and intellectual property right in respect of IRs content, creating more awareness and content of the IRs among others. According to Bamigbola, (2014) his study examines the level of awareness, to use of electronic Theses and dissertation and challenges faced for access by faculty in Agriculture disciplines in Federal University of Technology, Akure, (FUTA) Nigeria. The results of this study showed that, seven (7) out of ten statements, respondents agree that there were challenges to the use of ETDs web site while the other responses for the remaining three (3) statements implied that the respondents strongly agreed that there were challenges to use of ETDs Web site. Some of the challenges as revealed by the study were; Lack of awareness of ETDs web site, epileptic power supply in the country, fear of not being able to publish works submitted in ETDs web

site, fear of plagiarism, ignorance of publishers policy among others were challenges faced by faculty members. The above report is in consonance with previous studies;

Musa, Shittu, and Abdulkadir (2014) who reported that, the most nagging problem for ETDs access among others are inadequate power supply, include Low Bandwidth, Technophobia, Technical Support and Security, Finance and Legal Aspects. Earlier studies by Akintunde and Anjo (2012) reported similar challenges bedeviling the project at the University of Jos stated that lack of skilled personnel to manage the repository, Lack of adequate power supply as the electricity power sector of Nigerian is poor and it really affects the servers that house the repository. They equally observed lack of Support from the community. From the foregone review, the studies recommended increased awareness of open access Electronic Theses and dissertation web site is likely to be a solution to many other factors considered to affect utilization of Electronic Theses and dissertation web site.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted quantitative research method aimed at collecting information from a sample of the population such that the results are representative of the population. To achieve this, cross sectional survey research design was adopted for this study, because it ideal and capable of providing accurate and comprehensive data. This study targets the population of one thousand nine hundred and sixty four (1,964) Registered Postgraduate Students who carry out research from Three (3) Faculties in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria which included the Faculty of Administration, Faculty of Education and Faculty of Life Science. The three faculties weress randomly selected from 17 Faculties in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. A sample size of 320 Postgraduate Students were selected from a population of 1,964 Postgraduate Students using Krejcie and Morgan sample size table. The research adopted proportionate random sampling technique. Questionnaire was used as an instrument for data

collection. The data collected was analyzed using frequency count, mean and standard deviation.

### Data Analysis and Discussion

**Table: 1 Extent to which postgraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria access ETDs for research**

This objective was set to determine the extent to which postgraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria access electronic ETDs theses for research. To achieve this objective, questions were asked using a 5 point Likert scale of measurement. Table: 1 present the responses.

S/No.	Items	HA	A	UD	RA	NA	Mean	STD	Rank
<b>ELECTRONIC THESES</b>									
1.	Abstract	146	82	37	10	22	4.08	1.190	1
2.	Preliminary pages	91	110	46	6	44	3.67	1.331	4
3.	Chapters	114	101	25	19	38	3.79	1.355	2
4.	Appendix	76	109	39	17	56	3.44	1.418	5
5.	Complete theses	105	80	66	9	37	3.780	1.316	3
<i>Cumulative mean 3.752</i>									
<i>Decision/standard mean =0.500</i>									

#### Keys:

**HA: Highly Accessed**

**A: Accessed**

**UD: Undecided**

**RA: Rarely Accessed**

**NA: Not Accessed**

Table 1 shows that the extent postgraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria access electronic theses for research is quite high. The cumulative mean of accessing theses is 3.752 which above the 3.000 decision mean. In these specifically most access abstract as this has the highest mean of 4.08 and this shows that 146 respondents are highly access it, 82 access it as against 37 that were undecided while 10 rarely access it and the rest 22 do not access abstract. In the same vein, most access electronic theses for research in chapters as this has the second

mean of 3.79 with details showing that while 114 highly access it, 101 access it as against 25 that were undecided, 19 rarely access it and the rest 38 do not access chapters at all. In summary, the extent to which postgraduate students of ABU access electronic theses for research is quite high especially they usually access the abstracts and chapters for research through the electronic these

Additionally, In the Dissertation postgraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria access electronic dissertation for research, is high. Reason being that their cumulative/general mean of 3.752 is above the 3.000 decision/standard mean. Specifically, most of them access Abstract through the electronic dissertation for research, as this had the highest mean of 3.93 with 139 that highly access it while 84 access it as against 25 that were undecided while 13 rarely access it and the rest 36 do not access abstract at all. Also majority access complex dissertation through the electronic dissertation for research as this had the second highest mean of 3.74 with details showing that while 97 highly access it, 91 access it as against 70 that were undecided while 14 rarely access it and the rest 25 do not access it at all. In summary, the extent do postgraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria access electronic dissertation for research, is high especially as most access Abstract and complex dissertation through the electronic dissertations for research.

The findings of this study corroborates that of (Attama 2013, and Okon, Ani, Ngulube & Onyacha 2015) that publication of perceived effect of accessibility and utilisation of ETDs on productivity of academic staffs in some selected Nigerian University. However, the result was not favorable as the number of respondents that have published articles with the use of ETDs were less than 50% of the population.

**Table: 2 Challenges in accessing electronic theses and dissertation by postgraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria**

The respondents were asked to identify the challenges militating against accessing of electronic theses and dissertation for research in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. Table: 2 presented the responses of postgraduate Students as regards to challenges of accessing of ETDs for research.

S/No.	Challenges items	Yes	No	Mean	Std	Rank
1.	Lack of awareness of the existence of open free e-theses and dissertations	157	140	0.53	0.500	3
2.	Inadequate internet search skills	192	105	0.65	0.479	1
3.	Poor Internet connection for the ETDs hinders my access	172	125	0.58	0.495	2
4.	Inadequate ICT facilities affects my using the ETDs	155	142	0.52	0.500	4
5.	Irregular power supply	153	144	0.52	0.501	5
6.	Downloading delay	99	198	0.33	0.472	6
7.	Limited access to computer terminals	59	238	0.20	0.400	7
8.	Others	13	284	0.04	0.205	8
<b><i>Cumulative mean 0.421</i></b>						
<b><i>Decision/standard mean = 0.500</i></b>						

The table above showed the challenges of accessing and utilizing electronic theses and dissertation. The table showed that the main challenge are inadequate Internet search skills. This challenge attracted the highest mean response of 0.65 as details showed that a total of 192 said YES as against 105 that said No to this challenge. In the same vein, another serious

challenge is poor internet connection for the ETDs hinders their access, as this challenge attracted the second highest mean of 0.58 as details showed that while a total of 172 consider this a challenge the rest 125 do not consider this a challenge. In summary, the main challenges of accessing and utilizing electronic theses and dissertation include inadequate internet search skills and poor internet connection that hinders the ETDs access. This agrees with earlier findings of Saturday, Madukoma and Bamidele (2012) state that among the numerous challenges that militate against the academics' access to electronic information resources, lack of personal computer and irregular power supply were the most prevalent.

### **Summary of the Major Findings**

Arising from the findings of this research, the following summary is presented.

1. The extent postgraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University access electronic theses and dissertation for research is quite high and predominantly they access abstracts and chapters.
2. The main challenges militating against access to electronic theses and dissertation are inadequate search skills, poor Internet connection, among others.

### **Conclusion**

The study concluded that most postgraduate students particularly Masters Students of the University are not aware of the existence and important of the available electronic information resources provided, hence do not patronize the resources and services. It is obvious that majority of the postgraduate students are encounter with challenges when they are trying to access electronic thesis and dissertation because of they don't have adequate internet search skills.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. The University library management together with digitization unit of library should make all the postgraduate students of the university to be aware with the current digitized theses and dissertations, and others subscribed databases so that to support their research activities.
2. The greatest challenge hindering the access ETDs is inadequate search skills, poor Internet connection, among others. Therefore, the university library management together with ICT directorate to organize compulsory training for all postgraduate to understand various search techniques and on how to use the various search engine to source for information electronically. Similarly, to provide strong internet connectivity to access adequate electronic theses and dissertations permanently.

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