

## **PERCEIVED QUALITY AS DETERMINANTS OF E-BOOK USAGE AMONG POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA**

**EROMOSELE George Osas**  
*University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria*

**AKINBORO Evelyn. O. PhD**  
*University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria*

**Augustine EDIMEH(CLN)**  
*Federal University of Technology, Minna, Nigeria*

**YUSUF Abdulkadir Olalekan**  
*University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria*

### **Abstract**

*This paper examined perceived quality as a determinant of e-book usage among postgraduate students in selected southwest universities in Nigeria. The objective of the study was to determine the perception of quality of e-books among postgraduate students in universities in Southwest, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was adopted and the instrument for data collection was questionnaire. The population of the study comprised postgraduate students from the University of the three selected Universities totaling 13, 500 out of which the sample size was 390 using simple random sampling technique among the three Selected Universities. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The hypotheses were tested using linear regression. Content-related approach validation was conducted to ensure the validity of the instrument while Cronbach alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument. Findings revealed that postgraduate students have a positive perception of the quality of e-books. The study concluded that there was a significant relationship between perceived quality and the extent of e-book usage. The study recommended that; the government should allocate budget for both federal and state-owned universities to subscribe to the appropriate e-book website for the benefit of staff, students, and academic researchers for research. Also, libraries should constitute e-librarian team that will be receiving, answering queries and exchanging e-books with the e-users via university webpage among others.*

**Keywords:** E-books-Usage, perceived Quality, Postgraduate Students, Universities, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

In the ever-evolving educational landscape, technology has ushered in a fresh paradigm for learning. The swift advancements in information, communication, and technology (ICT) have given rise to digital educational content, encompassing electronic information resources. The rise of the internet and the prevalence of virtual textual content have hastened transformations within academia (Islam & Rumman, 2023). Ayele and Vuda, (2013) asserted that libraries have transformed into digital and virtual libraries where books, journals, and magazines have changed into e-books, e-journals, and e-magazines. They also provide access to current information as

these are often updated frequently. This development has not only improved library collection development practices and service provision but has also influenced users' searching behaviors. Students now have prompt access to diverse and quality information at the right time through the click of a button (Osinulu, 2020).

Electronic information sources are becoming increasingly important in society in general and among academic faculty, concomitant with the growth of portable electronic devices that facilitate the reading of e-books. Electronic information resources are said to be the electronic representation of information that can be accessed via electronic systems and computer networks (Johnson, Evensen, Gelfand, Lammers, Sipe & Zilper, 2012). Since many educational institutions are now adopting e-learning, e-books have become most relevant (Payare, 2014). Thus, the trend toward using e-learning and e-resources facilitates learning and teaching processes.

Tella, Orim, Ibrahim, and Memudu (2018) postulated that an electronic book is popularly called an e-book, digital book, or e-edition of a printed book. They further explained that an e-book is a book-length publication in digital form, consisting of text, images, or both that are readable on computers or other electronic devices, and many academic institutions such as in Nigeria are already in the process of implementing the use of e-books within learning, teaching and search activities. More so, e-books offer exceptional opportunities for providing learners with rich and educationally powerful learning experiences (Khirwadkar, Hewit & Chaudhari, 2013).

No doubt the use of e-books is gaining pace, the continuous availability and accessibility are making things easier and enabling learning to be well facilitated. However, the perceived quality of e-books is very important and highly necessary. It is envisaged that the issues of the quality of e-books will go a long to determine its use. "Perceived quality" is the users' view of the quality of e-books both in terms of what they expect and in comparison, with how they perceive the quality of competing offerings (Daniel & Woody, 2013). That means "perceived quality is defined as a measure of belief about e-books. It can also be viewed as the degree to which an individual thinks about using a system because of its information quality, system quality, and service quality.

Similarly, the issues of the quality of e-books as well will go a long way to determining their use. However, it is unexpected that despite e-book adoption to complement e-learning in most higher education institutions in Nigeria, empirical documentary evidence is still lacking particularly regarding the perceived quality and usage of e-books by the postgraduate students. It is against this backdrop that the researcher seeks to investigate the perceived quality as a determinant of e-book usage by postgraduate students in South-West Universities of Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The transformation of conventional books to electronic books is becoming a recognized resource to be used by postgraduate students, believing that, it would be useful to enhance or champion their quest for knowledge with the aid of its information, system, and service qualities. Despite the relevance, flexibility, and importance of e-books; problems are attached to access

and usage of e-books. There seems to be little evidence of its increased use among postgraduate students in Nigeria. Tella, et al. (2018) reported that the major problem encountered by students with e-books is the difficulties reading on the computers or the internet, followed by the cost of an e-book reader. It could be argued that challenges associated with the features of e-books were the major factors when students make use of it; searchable, available round the clock, etc. hyperlinks, and e-book reader support, were the major problems encountered while using e-books. However, there is a dearth of empirical evidence on the perceived quality of e-book usage by postgraduate students in southwest, Nigeria. Thus, this study seeks to focus on the challenges affecting the usage of e-books. It is against this backdrop that the research seeks to investigate the perceived quality as a determinant of e-books among postgraduate students in South-West Universities of Nigeria.

### **Objectives of The Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the perceived qualities as determinants of e-book usage among postgraduate students in southwest, Universities of Nigeria while the specific objectives are to:

- i. determine the perception of quality as a determinant to e-books usage by the postgraduate students in universities in Southwest, Nigeria.

### **Research Hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis was tested for the study at a 0.05 level of significance

$H_0$ : There is no significant relationship between the qualities of e-books and e-books usage by postgraduate students in the South West Universities of Nigeria.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Contemporary reading habits rely heavily on digital tools such as the internet, laptops, mobile devices, and, more recently, electronic books (e-books). These e-books are regarded as groundbreaking innovations that significantly impact students' academic journeys (Islam and Rumman, 2023). E-books are gradually replacing traditional textbooks, as they offer numerous functionalities that are unavailable in traditional textbooks and allow students to interact with learning content at any time and place (Turel & Sanal, 2018; Zarzour et al., 2020).

With the continuous advancements in electronic information technology, e-books have opened boundless possibilities for student learning, offering fresh and novel educational experiences (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016). To avoid encountering e-book accessibility uncertainty and risks such as irrelevant, slow Internet and lack of subscription to an appropriate e-book's website and lack of offline e-books, more importantly, to strengthen the relationship between e-users, e-books and e-librarians with it service trust when promoting e-books services. Electronic information sources and information qualities can be gained by using the accumulated long-term excellent experiences (such as the brand i.e. electronic books, website reputation, and e-library quality) of the institution; in addition, the willingness of e-users to use electronic books can be increased..., brand, website reputation, and e-library perceived quality and trust are notably important factors that affect the willingness of e-users to use electronic books (Heiden, Verhagen, & Creemers, 2003).

When e-users believe that the electronic books provided by e-library are honest, their qualities are sincere, and the institution makes users' interests a priority, understands the user's individual needs, provides personalized service, and is trustworthy, then e-users will adopt a positive attitude toward using e-books. Academic libraries are an integral part of universities and have a critical role to play in supporting the core mission of the university, which is teaching, learning, and research. According to Tiefel (2004), most library users are unaware of the quality and variety of information available. Tiefel pointed out that students are often satisfied with materials that an experienced e-librarian would find inadequate and /or inappropriate. It was identified that discipline has a major influence on usage patterns and preferences and that faculty members in science tend to use the internet more intensively than faculty members in the humanities or social sciences (Lazinger et al., 1997; Bar-Ilan et al., 2003). Age also plays an important role in usage; the younger the student and faculty members are, the more they use electronic sources (Bar-Ilan et al, 2003).

Falak (2003) reported the rapid growth and use of e-books in schools and universities in developing countries. Ashcroft and Watts (2004) also mentioned the potential advantages of e-books including easier access, speedy publications space-saving, and lower costs. Various studies have also been carried out on the use of electronic resources by students, and research staff of institutions of higher learning. Most of these studies reported high usage of internet resources (De Vicente et al 2004; Falk, 2003).

Agaba (2003) carried out a study on e-resources usage at Makerere University; the results of this study indicated low usage. Electronic books have many functions and benefits that can be of immense use to students in schools and particularly in research institutions. Once a user is connected to the Internet such a user can link up with any part of the world for whatever purpose the user has in mind, Osunrinde (2002). There is a need to equip end-users with skills such as information literacy skills, information retrieval skills, and computer skills among others as a strategy to promote e-book usage, especially among students in Academic libraries such as Mbarara University Library for effective utilization of e-resources. From this study's perspective, students who have confidence in themselves use e-resources more than those with low self-esteem. The perceived usefulness of the Internet is an important influence on internet use (Teo, 2001 & Shih, 2003).

Thus, education is moving more towards e-learning and open learning platforms thus encouraging the use of laptops and other hand-held devices that enable e-users to have access to e-books through major online search engines such as Wikipedia, Google Chrome, Yahoo.com, Ask.com, info seek, Lycos, Excite, WebCrawler, Rediff, OPAC, Flipora and even libraries websites (Nyambala, 2015).

The importance of digital libraries in the area of information and knowledge provisions to human resources in all spheres of life cannot be over-emphasized. Academic libraries all over the world particularly in Nigeria are challenged with issues such as paucity of finance to acquire information resources in print form, and even subscribe to electronic resources; competent library professionals suitable for the digital era are also inadequate (Urhiewhu, 2014).

Postgraduate students’ perceived quality of electronic books to a very large extent determines either increasing or decreasing usage of electronic books (Moon & Kim, 2001). Likewise, the quality-related concerns surrounding e-books significantly influence their adoption and utilization. Krystyna (2012) also reported that students perception of electronic books were based on its relevance of content, coverage and currency.

However, many argue that E-booking as a new learning technology will significantly contribute to the learning environment. Technology advances day after day, while traditional methods, such as tutorials and face-to-face lectures, are still strongly dominant in most universities, and educational arenas. Despite the widespread adoption of e-books to enhance e-learning in Nigerian higher education institutions, there remains a surprising dearth of empirical evidence specifically concerning the perceived quality and utilization of e-books by postgraduate students.

**Methodology**

The research design employed for this study was the descriptive survey method. The descriptive survey design was adopted because of the wide spread of the respondents. The target population consisted of postgraduate students from three selected universities in Southwest Nigeria amounting to 13,500. In determining sample size, Israel’s model (2009) in Krystyna (2012) was utilized, as result 390 was selected as sample. Data collection for this study was conducted using a self-developed questionnaire. The questionnaire was based on a 4-point Likert rating scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) =4 to Strongly Disagree (SD)= 1. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher in each part of the selected universities. For the administration of the questionnaire, the researchers moved around the three (3) selected university main campuses to administer the questionnaire to the students.

**Results**

The study investigated the perceived quality as a determinant of e-book usage by postgraduate students in universities in Southwest, Nigeria. Five (3) research objectives were formulated for this study. A total of three hundred seventy-five (375) copies of the questionnaire were administered to postgraduate students in the three selected Universities and a total of Two hundred and fifty-nine (259) participants responded and completed the survey questionnaire giving a response rate of 69%.

**Analysis of Research Questions**

Research Question One: What is the perception of quality of e-books?

**Table 1: Perception of Quality as a Determinant Factor to E-Books Usage by the Postgraduate Students**

Factors	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
i) Using e-books would help me to get an up-to-date information	158	61.0	96	37.1	5	1.9	-	-

**resource**

<b>Using e-books would help me to get relevant information resources to complement reading and course work</b>	162	62.5	93	35.9	4	1.5	-	-
<b>ii) Using e-books would help me to present a relevant ideas in the world of knowledge</b>	147	56.8	109	42.1	1	.4	2	.8
<b>iii) Using e-books would assist me making accurate decision in selecting research topic(s)</b>	147	56.8	102	39.4	8	3.1	2	.8
<b>iv) Using e-books would help me to get reliable information that would assist me in the field of knowledge</b>	141	54.4	115	44.4	3	1.2	-	-
<b>v) Using e-books would help me to move around with thousands of information resources unnoticed</b>	171	66.0	86	33.2	2	.8	-	-
<b>vi) Using e-books would introduce me to in-depth collections of relevant information resources</b>	164	63.3	90	34.7	5	1.9	-	-

Table 1 reveals the perception of the quality of e-book usage among postgraduate students. It shows that 254 (98.1%) of the respondents agreed that using e-books would help them to get up-to-date information resources; 255 (98.4%) of the respondents agreed that using e-books would help them to get relevant information resources to complement reading and course work; 249 (96.2%) of the respondents agreed that using e-books would assist them making accurate decision in selecting research topic(s).

It further shows that, 256 (98.8%) of the respondents agreed that using e-books would help them to get reliable information that would assist them in the field of knowledge; 257 (99.2%) of the respondents agreed that using e-books would help them move around with thousands of information resources unnoticed and 254 (98%) of the respondents agreed that using e-books would introduce them to depth collections of relevant information resources. Thus, the majority of the respondents agreed that using e-books would help them to move around with thousands of information resources unnoticed. This study is similar to Krystyna (2012) who reported that students perception of electronic books were based on its relevance of content, coverage and currency.

**Table 2: Correlation Analysis on Perception of Quality and E-books usage**

Variable	N	M	SD	R	P
Perceived Quality	259	3.5814	0.41818	.804	.000
Extent of E-books Usage	259	3.3874	0.70319		

As shown in Table 2 Regression Correlation was run to determine the relationship between the perception of quality and e-books usage by postgraduate students in the South West University of Nigeria.”. The Regression correlation value is .804, this indicates a strong correlation between the perceived usefulness and e-books usage by postgraduate students. Also since p-value .0000 is less than 0.05 (significant level), the null hypothesis is rejected and concluded that there is a significant relationship between the perception of quality and e-books usage by postgraduate students in the South West University of Nigeria. This implies that there is a significant correlate between the perceived usefulness and e-books usage by postgraduate students.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has been able to establish empirical evidence on the perceived quality as a determinant of e-books usage by postgraduate students in universities in Southwest, Nigeria. The role of e-books cannot be overemphasized; it can provide better knowledge delivery and accessibility. University libraries in Southwest, Nigeria should encourage postgraduate students the use e-books by subscribing to the appropriate e-book website and acquiring more e-books, downloading a separate e-book collection, assistance should be rendered to access e-books, and organizing raining on the better use of e-books. From the findings of this study, it is observed that e-books were getting acceptance among postgraduate students in universities in South-West, Nigeria. Lastly, university library in universities in Southwest, Nigeria should create closer communication with students to address their need for e-book collection and to teach the skills for locating and using e-books. Based on the findings of this study and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations directed at the management of universities and government agencies should ensure that they subscribe to the appropriate website e.g., EBSCOhost and higher quality E-books to have access to up-to-date e-books and e-resources. As a result of this, this might attract the students to make regular use of e-books provided by the university management when they find the e-books more relevant to their needs.

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