

## Preference and Use Pattern of Electronic Books among Postgraduate Students in a Nigerian University

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the preferences and use patterns of e-books among postgraduate students at Prince Abubakar Audu University. Four (4) research objectives guided the conduct of this study. A descriptive survey method was used for the study and a questionnaire was used for data collection. Statistical tools used for this analysis were frequency counts, simple percentages, and mean scores. The study concludes that eBooks are highly valued by postgraduate students, due to their ability to enhance productivity and effective learning. The ease of use and clear graphical illustrations further contribute to the preference for eBooks, making them indispensable tools in the academic pursuits of postgraduate students. The study highlights that eBooks are extensively utilized for a variety of academic purposes, including coursework completion, research, exam preparation, assignments, and reference needs. Despite the evident benefits, the study reveals varying levels of satisfaction among students, with a significant portion using eBooks only to some extent. Several challenges impede the optimal use of eBooks, such as high costs, device-related inefficiencies, limited access to computers or the internet, readability issues, and the need for operational skills. The study recommended that university libraries should expand their eBook collections and seek partnerships with publishers to provide more affordable or even free access to essential academic texts and universities should consider initiatives to provide or subsidize devices optimized for reading eBooks, such as tablets or e-readers with suitable screen sizes.

**Keywords:** Ebook, postgraduates, preferences, use patterns, library

### INTRODUCTION

The term "electronic book" (e-book) refers to a variety of digital publications. These can be called e-books, digital books, or electronic editions of print books, and they contain text, images, or both, accessible on computers and other electronic devices. In Nigeria, many academic institutions are incorporating e-books into their learning, teaching, and research processes (Okocha, 2020). Universities like Covenant University and Landmark University, among others, are leveraging various devices and platforms to provide students with e-books, thereby enhancing their educational and research activities (Tella et al., 2018). The functionality and accessibility of e-books are often supported by databases, with popular providers like NetLibrary, Books 24x7, Qwestia, and Ebrary integrating these resources into libraries (Rabiu et al., 2016).

E-books offer enhanced features such as embedded hyperlinks, bookmarks, annotations, text searching, and the integration of complex multimedia objects, which are particularly beneficial for individuals with disabilities (Tella et al., 2018). The growing popularity of e-books has led academic libraries to play a vital role in providing access to and distributing information within

educational and research communities. Their responsibilities have expanded to include facilitating access to electronic resources like e-journals and e-books using innovative technologies. Libraries are increasingly adopting e-book services due to budget limitations, insufficient shelving space, rising costs of new buildings and resources, the high expenses of repairing or replacing printed books, the growing demand for electronic resources, the escalating costs of inter-library loan services, and the need to support distance or distributed learning (Liasu & Bakrin, 2022).

An e-book represents a technological advancement where texts are digitized and can be read on specially designed devices, enhancing and supporting learning activities while transforming scholarly engagement. As these digital environments grow in popularity, it is essential to consider their advantages and disadvantages. According to Tella et al. (2018), e-books offer several benefits over printed books, particularly for specific settings and purposes. Two notable advantages are their searchability and 24/7 availability. E-book readers can locate specific content more efficiently than in printed books, as e-books consist of a digital body of text with a defined scope. Studies have shown that carrying heavy school bags at an early age can lead to waist and joint disorders later in life (Majid et al., 2019; Sanika, 2020).

Numerous academic institutions in Nigeria are currently integrating e-books into their learning, teaching, and research activities. Academic libraries employ various devices and platforms to give learners access to e-books, thereby supporting their educational and research activities (Tella et al., 2018). A study by Liasu & Bakrin (2022) indicates that a substantial number of students in Nigeria depend on electronic resources (ERs) to succeed in exams and enhance their knowledge. Nonetheless, obstacles such as poor internet connectivity, power outages, and a shortage of workstations prevent the full utilization of these resources. In Pakistan, Khan et al. (2016) examined the usage patterns of e-books among students in the fields of social sciences, agricultural sciences, and engineering. Their research found that e-books have become a crucial part of academic library services, with students increasingly relying on them for academic and research purposes. Engineering students, in particular, showed a higher daily usage of e-books compared to their peers in agricultural and social sciences. The preference for e-books is driven by their ability to support research, improve academic performance, and provide a convenient format for reading and managing information. However, challenges such as insufficient e-content, a lack of personal computers, and the variety of e-book formats hinder the effective use of e-books for learning, education, and research.

The research problem addressed in this study is the limited understanding of e-book preferences and usage patterns among postgraduate students in Nigerian universities. This gap in knowledge hinders the development of effective library services and digital resource acquisition strategies tailored to postgraduate students' needs. This research addresses the need to understand these preferences and usage patterns among postgraduate students at a Nigerian university. This understanding is essential for informing library service development, guiding digital resource acquisition, and supporting educational policies that enhance e-book access and effectiveness in higher education.

Tella et al. (2018) conducted research in Nigeria and found that undergraduate students in Library and Information Science (LIS) generally have a positive perception of e-books. They believe e-books enhance learning efficiency, help complete course content more quickly, are user-friendly, and offer clear graphical illustrations. Among LIS undergraduates, e-books are primarily used for research, with high levels of satisfaction reported. However, challenges include difficulties reading e-books on computers or the internet and the cost of e-book readers. Okocha (2020) also investigated the adoption of academic e-books by Nigerian university students and found that while most students were aware of e-books, only 44.5% used them frequently. Surprisingly, over half of the students did not use e-books, with many first learning about them from lecturers. Key factors influencing e-book adoption included performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and facilitating conditions, with social influence and gender also playing roles.

Additionally, Bana et al. (2019) compared the use of electronic resources (e-resources) among undergraduate students in LIS and computer science programs at two Nigerian universities.

They discovered that while some e-resources were used, others were not due to a lack of awareness or skills. Nearly half of the students rated their e-resource skills as high, with significant differences observed between LIS and computer science students' usage patterns. Similarly, [Roesnita & Zainab \(2013\)](#) examined e-book usage among undergraduates at the Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology (FCSIT) at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. Despite being proficient internet users, only 39% frequently used e-books. Awareness of e-books mainly came through the university library website and referrals from lecturers, friends, or librarians. Those who used e-books found them user-friendly, primarily for assignments or project work, and preferred e-versions of textbooks and reference sources.

[Ranaweera \(2016\)](#) conducted a study on the use of e-books by undergraduates in Sri Lanka, revealing a preference for e-books over traditional printed books. The study found that 89.65% of students would use e-books more frequently for academic purposes if their recommended textbooks were available electronically in university libraries. Furthermore, an impressive 97.12% of students believed that e-books would significantly impact Sri Lanka's academic environment in the future. In a similar study, [Rabiu et al. \(2016\)](#) explored the availability and accessibility of e-books in Nigerian libraries, noting a low penetration of e-books. Respondents accessed both paid and free e-books but faced challenges such as embargo periods, payment per loan, and re-licensing titles. In Kenya, [Wendo & Mwanzu \(2016\)](#) discovered that while most students were computer-literate and understood e-books well, they experienced difficulties in searching for e-books and lacked knowledge about the e-books subscribed to by their university library. Finally, [Islami & Warni \(2020\)](#) examined the perceptions of EFL students regarding electronic books. Although most participants were generally satisfied with e-books, they still preferred printed books due to various issues. The limited availability of e-books in university libraries was one reason for this preference, with e-books often considered supplementary materials rather than primary resources. E-books make it easy for individuals to find information and determine a book's relevance without needing to visit a library, thus saving time and effort. According to [Rabiu et al. \(2016\)](#), students value the lightness, portability, navigation capabilities, ease of use, storage capacity, and e-ink displays of e-book devices. Due to their efficiency, [Tella et al. \(2018\)](#) predicted that "all new works will soon be born digital." E-books have become a widely accepted medium for delivering information online, gaining mainstream recognition. The sales of e-readers like Kindles and iPads have been increasing rapidly, helping the general public, including students, understand the benefits and challenges of e-books. Furthermore, e-books eliminate the need for unpacking, processing, or shelving, saving the time previously required for handling physical books. Their user-friendly features for browsing, navigating, viewing graphics and videos, submitting keywords, and conducting full-text searches within a book or a collection of books further enhance the e-book experience.

[Tella et al. \(2018\)](#) suggest that proper utilization means using a resource or material to meet one's needs or demands. The perception of e-books, whether positive or negative, greatly influences their usage. In recent years, the advent of e-books has transformed academic resources and reading habits globally, though the extent of this transformation varies across regions and educational contexts. In Nigeria, there is limited empirical evidence on postgraduate students' preferences and use patterns for e-books, despite their growing availability and potential benefits for academic research and learning. Previous studies indicate that various investigations have explored the perceptions and utilization of e-books among undergraduates in Nigeria, Kenya, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. However, none of these studies have examined the preferences and usage patterns of e-books among postgraduate students in Nigerian universities. Despite several studies delving into e-book usage in Nigeria, empirical evidence regarding the preferences and usage patterns specifically among postgraduate students is lacking. Therefore, this present study sought to address this gap by investigating the preferences and usage patterns of e-books among postgraduates in Nigeria.

Given the identified gap in understanding e-book preferences and usage patterns among postgraduate students in Nigerian universities, this study aims to (1) determine the preference for

e-books among postgraduate students at Prince Abubakar Audu University, (2) assess their use patterns, (3) evaluate their level of satisfaction with e-book usage, and (4) identify the challenges they encounter

## METHOD

This study employs a descriptive survey research design, which is well-suited for gathering detailed and comprehensive data regarding the characteristics, behaviors, and perceptions of a specific population. In this case, it allows researchers to collect extensive information on the preferences and usage patterns of e-books among postgraduate students in Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba. Prince Abubakar Audu University is a public owned university by the Kogi State Government of Nigeria. The University was established by Prince Abubakar Audu, who was the first executive governor of Kogi State in 1999 and situated in Anyigba in Dekina Local Government Area. The population under study consisted of 1,767 postgraduate students at Prince Abubakar Audu University, spanning across faculties such as Management Science, Social Science, Education, Arts and Humanities, Law, Natural Science, and Agricultural Science (Source: School of Postgraduate Studies, 2023). Following Krejcie and Morgan's method as outlined in [Gray et al. \(2016\)](#), a sample size of 313 postgraduate students was determined for the population of 1,767.

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select 313 respondents from various departments offering postgraduate programs within the aforementioned faculties. The first stage involved systematically selecting two departments from each of the seven faculties offering postgraduate programs. In the second stage, 22 postgraduate students were systematically chosen from each of the selected departments, totaling 308 students. Finally, in the third stage, 308 postgraduate students from each selected department in the seven faculties were identified using their departmental identity cards before the administration of questionnaires to the respective students. Given the large population, it would be logistically challenging and resource-intensive to survey every individual. Multi-stage sampling breaks down the population into manageable subgroups, making the data collection process more practical and efficient. In so doing, a multi-stage sampling ensures that each subgroup (faculty and department) is adequately represented in the sample.

In this study, data was collected through a structured questionnaire designed by the researchers. The choice of a questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection in this study is justified on the basis that questionnaires can be distributed to a large number of participants simultaneously, making them suitable for studies with large sample sizes or dispersed populations

The questionnaire items are formulated based on the study's objectives, research questions, and insights from relevant literature. The questionnaire comprises two sections: Section A gathers background information from respondents, including gender, year of study, and faculty, while Section B addresses the four research objectives. In Section B, Research Question 1 has 8 items; Research Question 2 has 5 items, Research Question 3 has 4 items; and Research Question has 6 items, making 23 items in total. To ensure the questionnaire's validity, two experts in the field of librarianship reviewed it. They provided feedback on grammatical errors, item sequencing, appropriateness of response options, and other relevant aspects. Given the extensive scope of the study, two research assistants were enlisted to aid in distributing the questionnaires manually and collecting them within a specified timeframe.

Data collected from respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The arithmetic mean, based on a 4-point rating scale, was employed to address the research questions. Response options in the questionnaire were assigned the following values: Strongly Agree (SA-4), Agree (A-3), Disagree (D-2), and Strongly Disagree (SD-1). The Likert scale allows respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements, typically ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. By employing a Likert scale in the questionnaire, researchers quantified participants' preferences and use patterns of ebooks in a structured and standardized manner.



Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistical techniques were employed to summarize and describe the sample population's characteristics and their responses to the research questions. These techniques included the calculation of means which provided insights into the data's overall pattern and distribution. In so doing, the mean of 2.50 served as the threshold, derived from the upper and lower limits of the scale (4, 3, 2, 1). Any item with a mean below 2.50 was categorized as disagreed, while any item with a mean of 2.50 or above was considered agreed. The decision to use a mean score of 2.50 as a threshold for agreement is a common practice in Likert scale analysis. This threshold is often referred to as the neutral point, where responses above 2.50 indicate agreement with the statement, while responses below 2.50 indicate disagreement. In the context of this study, using a mean score of 2.50 as a threshold for agreement allows the researchers to distinguish between positive and negative perceptions of postgraduate students with the preferences and use patterns of ebooks. Responses with mean scores above 2.50 indicate positive perceptions, while responses with mean scores below 2.50 indicate negative perceptions. The collected data underwent analysis employing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, a reputable and widely employed tool for statistical assessments. The subsequent outcomes of this analysis were presented in clear and concise tables, facilitating the comprehension and interpretation of the study's findings. The study was conducted in adherence to strict ethical considerations, ensuring the confidentiality of participants, obtaining informed consent, and following guidelines for responsible research conduct.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The collected data is presented and analyzed utilizing frequency counts, percentages, and mean values. Out of the 313 questionnaires distributed to postgraduate students of Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, 237 copies were returned, representing a response rate of 96.2%. [Table 1](#) illustrates that of these respondents, 166 (70%) were male, while 71 (30%) were female. This indicates a higher representation of male respondents compared to female respondents. Also, the result revealed that 45 (19%) were between 21 and 30 years, 172 (72.6%) were between 31 and 50 years and 20 (8.4) were 51 and above. This implies that respondents between 31 and 50 years of age were in the majority. Furthermore, the data shows that 45 (19%) were PGD candidates, 131 (55%) were running master's programmes and 58 (25%) were Ph.D students. This implies that master's students were in the majority.

Table 1. Biodata of Respondents

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	166	70
Female	71	30
Age		
21-30	45	19
31-50	172	72.6
51 and above	20	8.4
Programme		
PGD	45	19
M.A/MSC	131	55
Ph.D	58	25

### Level of Preference for E-Books among Postgraduate Students

Data in [Table 2](#) indicates the level of preference for eBooks among postgraduate students. Data in the table above shows that postgraduates make use of ebooks to enhance productivity, enhance effective learning, and increase productivity in the course of study. This finding implies that eBooks are essential tools for postgraduate students, playing a critical role in enhancing their

academic productivity and learning efficiency. The clear graphical illustrations and ease of use make eBooks particularly valuable, suggesting that investments in high-quality, user-friendly eBook platforms can significantly benefit students.

Table 2. Level of Preference for e-books among Postgraduate Students

S/N	Items	N	$\bar{x}$	Decision
1.	Using e-books enhances learning effectiveness	237	3.3	Accepted
2.	The use of e-books makes me finish my course content/outline quickly.	237	3.3	Accepted
3.	Using e-books has increased my productivity in my course of study	237	3.2	Accepted
4.	E-book usage gives me control when reading and makes my reading faster	237	3.3	Accepted
5.	The use of e-books makes me unproductive	237	1.9	Rejected
6.	E-books are easy to use.	237	3.2	Accepted
7.	I can read e-books on screen for a long time	237	3.1	Accepted
8.	E-books have clear graphical illustrations which aid my learning	237	3.3	Accepted

#### Use Patterns of E-books among Postgraduate Students

Also, Table 3 indicates the use pattern of ebooks among postgraduate students. Data further reveals that postgraduate students used ebooks to complete learning, for research purposes, for examinations, assignments, and reference purposes. This finding implies that eBooks are integral to various academic activities for postgraduate students, serving as crucial resources for completing coursework, conducting research, preparing for exams, and fulfilling assignments and reference needs. This emphasizes the necessity for libraries and academic institutions to ensure comprehensive access to a diverse and extensive collection of eBooks that cater to these varied academic purposes.

Table 3. Use Patterns of E-books among Postgraduate Students

S/N	Use pattern of ebooks	N	$\bar{x}$	Decision
9.	Complement learning	237	3.3	Accepted
10.	Research	237	3.3	Accepted
11.	Reference purpose	237	3.1	Accepted
12.	Preparing for examinations	237	3.3	Accepted
13.	Doing assignments	237	3.2	Accepted

#### Level of Satisfaction among Postgraduate Students with the Use of E-books

Data in Table 4 indicates the level of satisfaction among postgraduate students in the use of ebooks. Data shows that 80 (26.6%) use eBooks to a great extent, 129 (42.9%) use eBook to some extent 28 (30.5) use eBooks to a small extent. The implication of this finding is that while a significant portion of postgraduate students use eBooks extensively, a substantial number only use them to some extent or to a small extent. This suggests there are factors limiting the full adoption and satisfaction of eBook usage among many students. Libraries and academic institutions need to investigate and address the underlying reasons for these varying levels of satisfaction.

Table 4. Level of Satisfaction among Postgraduate Students with the Use of E-books

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
14.	Great Extent	80	26.6
15.	Some Extent	129	42.9
16.	Little Extent	28	30.5
17.	No Extent	0	0

### Problems Encountered by Postgraduate Students When Using E-books

Table 5 shows the problems encountered by education postgraduate students when using eBooks. These problems ranged from the cost of affording ebook resources being high, the use of ebooks is not efficient because of the screen size of my device, difficulties in accessing computers or the internet to be able to read ebooks, hard to read and browse, use of books requires a lot of mental and use of ebooks requires operational skills that most students do not have. The implication of this finding is that several significant barriers impede the optimal use of eBooks among postgraduate students. The high cost of eBook resources, device-related inefficiencies, difficulties in accessing necessary technology, readability issues, and the requirement for operational skills collectively hinder students from fully leveraging eBooks for their academic needs.

Table 5. Problems Encountered by Postgraduate Students When Using E-books

S/N	Items	N	$\bar{x}$	Decision
18.	The cost of affording e-book resources is high	237	3.2	Accepted
19.	Difficulties in accessing computers or the internet to be able to read e-books	237	3.1	Accepted
20.	Hard to read and browse	237	3.0	Accepted
21.	The use of e-books requires operational skills that I don't have	237	2.9	Accepted
22.	The use of e-books will not be efficient because the screen of my device is not big enough	237	3.2	Accepted
23.	The use of e-books requires a lot of mental effort	237	3.0	Accepted

### Discussion

The findings reveal that postgraduate students have a notable preference for eBooks, primarily due to their ability to enhance productivity and effective learning. This validates the findings of Tella et al. (2018) and Rabiou et al. (2016). Additionally, the ease of use and clear graphical illustrations that eBooks provide are significant factors contributing to this preference. These insights suggest that eBooks are considered valuable tools in the academic toolkit of postgraduate students, supporting various aspects of their study routines.

Postgraduate students utilize eBooks for a range of academic activities including completing coursework, conducting research, preparing for exams, working on assignments, and for reference purposes. The findings of this study also validate the results of Okocha (2020) and Islami & Warni (2020). This diverse use pattern indicates that eBooks are integral to multiple facets of postgraduate education, highlighting their versatility and importance in supporting academic success.

The study indicates varied levels of satisfaction with eBook usage. Findings revealed that 26.6% of students use them extensively, 42.9% to some extent, and 30.5% to a small extent. These findings contradict the results of Tella et al. (2018). This variation suggests that while eBooks are generally beneficial, there are differing degrees of reliance and satisfaction among students.

The majority find them somewhat useful, but there is room for increasing their utility and satisfaction.

Several challenges hinder the optimal use of eBooks. High costs, inefficient use due to device screen size, difficulty accessing computers or the internet, readability issues, and the need for operational skills are significant barriers. The results of the study are in tandem with the findings of [Liasu & Bakrin \(2022\)](#) and [Majid et al. \(2019\)](#). These problems indicate that while eBooks are advantageous, there are critical areas that need to be addressed to maximize their benefits.

### Implication of the Findings

The findings of this study have significant implications for both practice and policy within the field of librarianship. Librarians and academic institutions should prioritize the integration and promotion of eBooks within their resources, recognizing their critical role in enhancing postgraduate students' productivity and learning. Practical steps may include expanding the collection of eBooks, and ensuring they cover a broad range of subjects relevant to postgraduate coursework and research. Additionally, libraries should invest in user-friendly eBook platforms that provide easy navigation and access to high-quality graphical illustrations, as these features are highly valued by students. Moreover, librarians can develop targeted training programs to enhance students' operational skills in using eBooks effectively, thereby addressing some of the usage barriers identified in the study.

On a policy level, academic institutions and library administrations should consider the financial barriers that limit eBook accessibility. Policies could be implemented to subsidize the cost of eBook purchases or subscriptions, ensuring equitable access for all students. Additionally, institutions should improve the infrastructure for eBook usage, such as enhancing internet connectivity and providing access to necessary devices within library spaces. Policymakers should also focus on negotiating with publishers to obtain more favorable terms for eBook access, which could alleviate cost-related challenges. By addressing these issues, libraries can significantly improve the satisfaction and utility of eBooks, thereby supporting the academic success of postgraduate students more effectively.

### CONCLUSION

The study concludes that eBooks are highly valued by postgraduate students, due to their ability to enhance productivity and effective learning. The ease of use and clear graphical illustrations further contribute to the preference for eBooks, making them indispensable tools in the academic pursuits of postgraduate students. The research highlights that eBooks are extensively utilized for a variety of academic purposes, including coursework completion, research, exam preparation, assignments, and reference needs. This versatility underscores the integral role of eBooks in postgraduate education, supporting diverse academic activities and facilitating academic success.

Despite the evident benefits, the study reveals varying levels of satisfaction among students, with a significant portion using eBooks only to some extent. This suggests that while eBooks are generally beneficial, there is potential to enhance their utility and satisfaction among users. Several challenges impede the optimal use of eBooks, such as high costs, device-related inefficiencies, limited access to computers or the internet, readability issues, and the need for operational skills. Addressing these barriers is crucial to maximizing the advantages of eBooks for postgraduate students. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. University libraries should expand their eBook collections and seek partnerships with publishers to provide more affordable or even free access to essential academic texts. This can be achieved through bulk purchasing agreements, subscription models, or participation in consortia that negotiate lower prices.
2. Universities should consider initiatives to provide or subsidize devices optimized for reading eBooks, such as tablets or e-readers with suitable screen sizes. Moreover, university management should encourage faculty to incorporate eBooks into their course materials.



and reading lists. This integration can include assignments that specifically require the use of eBooks, fostering familiarity and competence in their use.

3. Universities offer regular workshops and training sessions to teach students how to effectively use eBooks and related digital tools. These sessions should cover topics such as navigating eBook platforms, utilizing search functions, and managing digital annotations.

These findings contribute to the body of knowledge by elucidating the pivotal role eBooks play in the academic lives of postgraduate students, highlighting their multifaceted use for coursework, research, and exam preparation. The study provides empirical evidence of the benefits and challenges associated with eBook usage, offering a nuanced understanding of how digital resources can enhance academic productivity and learning. It identifies key factors that influence the effectiveness and satisfaction of eBook use, such as cost, device efficiency, accessibility, readability, and the need for operational skills. This comprehensive insight guides future research, informs library practices, and shapes policies to optimize the integration and utilization of eBooks in higher education. However, the study has several limitations. The sample size may restrict the generalizability of the findings beyond the specific context examined. The results could be influenced by the cultural and institutional contexts of the geographical area under study, potentially limiting their applicability to other regions. Additionally, the study's methodology, including data collection techniques and analytical approaches, may have inherent limitations that could impact the robustness of the findings.

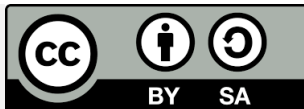
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