Library Subscribed Electronic Resources and Research Performance among the Student-researchers in the Higher Education Institutions in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT
The digital information environment has dramatically changed the way that user's access and utilize information worldwide. This change has therefore led to availability of electronic resources (E-resources) in libraries of Higher Education Institutions; however, their common, proper and maximum use is a matter for discussion. This paper therefore assessed on the influence of the library subscribed electronic resources on research performance among the student-researchers in the Higher Education Institutions in Tanzania. It specifically determines the knowledge level of research-students on subscribed e-resources; investigates the types of library’s subscribed e-resources applied by student-researchers and it examines the influence of subscribed e-resources on research performance among the research-students in the public Higher Education Institutions. The study at hand assessed e-resources such as e-books and texts, e-journals, library catalogues, reference sources, statistical sources, sound recordings, research guides by subject, indexes and image databases. Data were collected using questionnaire from 300 research-students sampled using stratified simple random technique. The collected data were mainly analyzed using Multiple Linear Regressions. The findings show that, the subscribed e-resources influence positively and significantly research performance among student-researchers in the Higher Education Institutions; however, they had low knowledge level on subscribed e-resources. This low knowledge and awareness made the student-researchers to apply e-resources in small extent in Higher Education Institutions. The study recommends that, the library management of Higher Education Institutions is advised to advocate awareness of subscribed e-resources to the users in raising their knowledge level and eventually access and utilize them in contributing research performance in Higher Education Institutions in Tanzania.

Key Words: E-resources, Research Performance, Student-Researchers
1. INTRODUCTION

The digital information environment has dramatically changed the way that users access information worldwide (Brinley 2007) and that environment led to the emergence of electronic (e) resources. Since the rapid evolution of electronic resources, there has been increased production of and reliance on them which in turn demands sustained effort in identifying and acquiring them in various libraries in the world (Library of Congress Policy Statements, 2008). The e-resources represent an increasingly important component of the collection-building activities of libraries (Johnson, Evensen, Gelfand, Lammers, Sipe&Zilper, 2012). As an emerging field, e-resources fulfill the day to day academic and research requirements of the academicians (Kumar, Gauri, & Bimal, 2011). They play an important role in teaching and learning process at university level and provide superior assistance to its users. E-Resources are used by university lecturers, students, employees of government and private sector organizations, scientist and others for a multitude of reasons (Sivathaasan & Velnampy, 2013). They are used not only by university teachers, but also by students, employees of government and private sector organizations, scientist and others for a multitude of reasons (Sivathaasan & Velnampy, 2013).

The application of such e-resources depends on the role played by the university library in subscribing, purchasing, collecting, preserving and ensuring accessibility to its electronic resources (Library of Congress Policy Statements, 2008). Furthermore, the Library is responsible to negotiate permission to archive electronic resources either upon collecting or for future archiving when the content provider is no longer be able to provide access to the resource.

E-resources present a number of challenges encountered with the selection and acquisition of traditional analog materials and it is advisable for the library to develop clear policies and processes for the selection and management of such resources (Johnson et al, 2012). The study (Ojo & Akande 2005) revealed that the level of usage of the electronic information resources is not high in Africa.

In the current study done by Thanuskodi (2012) it was found that, many academicians are unaware and have not used on-line thesis/dissertations, abstracts/indexes, OPAC, on-line databases, which are very relevant for their study and research. Bashorun (2011) revealed by
research that frequency of use of electronic resources by academic staff of the university was low.

The usage and access of e-resources in Tanzania among researchers is still low, possibly due to limited awareness, limited ICT infrastructure, budgetary constraints and low information literacy levels, and limited subscriptions made by institutes, most of the researchers and extension staff involved in the study relied on freely available and open access e-resources (Mtega, Dulle, Malekani & Chailla 2014).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Advances in computer applications during the past few decades have brought radical changes in the way information is gathered, stored, organized, accessed, retrieved and consumed (Sharma 2009). The application of computers in information processing has brought several products and services to the scene of which print medium is increasingly giving way to the electronic form of materials (Poornima & Goudar 2005).

Today availability of e-resources in Higher Education Institutions’ (HEIs) library is very common but their proper and maximum use is a matter for discussion (Sharma2009). The reasons for this lack of proper and maximum use are not yet established especially in Tanzania. They have been shown to be very helpful, especially, to post graduate students and distance learners who may have limited access to library resources in traditional formats (Egberongbe 2011; Sharma 2009). The frequency of use of electronic resources by academic staff of the university is low (Bashorun2011). Many academicians are unaware and have not used on-line thesis/dissertations, abstracts/indexes, OPAC, on-line databases, which are very relevant for their study and research.

In accessing the e-resources, the student-researchers face some problems especially the failure to access and use some particular types of e-resources which are limited. These limited e-resources can only be accessed after buying them.

Due to the problems, the HEIs including decided to purchase the subscriptions of some e-resources to ease the researchers accessing and applying the resources. Though several researches have been done about e-resources and academic performance, the studies specifically on the HEIs’ library subscribed e-resources usage are very limited.

This study comes forth therefore to assess the usage of e-resources subscribed by the HEIs’ libraries in relation to performance in research. The costs of buying the limited e-resources
by the student-researchers are now incurred by the libraries by purchasing the subscriptions of the e-resources. The big question then comes if the research performance has been raised after the costs of the e-resources incurred by the libraries instead of the individual researcher. Are the student-researchers aware about the subscribed e-resources?

This paper assessed the influence of the library subscribed electronic resources on research performance among the student-researchers in the higher education institutions in Tanzania by specifically:

a) determining the knowledge level of student-researchers on e-resources subscribed by the library in the higher education institutions in Tanzania

b) investigating the types of library’s subscribed e-resources applied by student-researchers in the higher education institutions in Tanzania

c) examining the influence of e-resources on research performance among the student-researchers in the public higher education institutions in Tanzania

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Approach

Quantitative approach was used in this study due to the nature of the study’s main objective with causal-effect. This nature of the given objective demanded the study to be approached quantitatively. The nature of this study’s objective needed a support of quantitative data. The approach of the study facilitated the understanding of the research problem more completely particularly by explaining relationship between variables, that is, e-resources on research performance among the student-researchers in the public higher education institutions in Tanzania.

3.2 Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design was used as it assisted in studying individual-student researcher as a unit of analysis. According to (Isaga 2012; Thomas 2010), this design enables to cover large geographical area. It measures individual attitudes, characteristics and provide a quick, efficient and accurate means of assessing information about the study population regarding subscribed e-resources. The “what” questions of the study likewise required the survey design to be used (Yin 2003; Saunders 2011).
3.1 Area of the Study
The study was carried out in government-owned HEIs providing postgraduate programmes in Tanzania. The institutions included University of Dar es Salaam in Dar es Salaam (UDSM), Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) and Mzumbe University (MU) in Morogoro. The mentioned institutions serve the postgraduate students who are student-researchers at Masters’ or PhD levels in longer time compare to other HEIs in Tanzania. Serving such up-coming researchers make them to have similar operating characteristics. They have academic libraries with subscribed e-resources being variables in the study. Emphatically, the similar relatively operating characteristics would likely to lead the same performance in research.

3.2 Units of Analysis
The target population of this study was the students of the HEIs. The units of analysis were postgraduate students who at research level in their programmes. They were also supplemented with key administrative staff (library-director and heads of postgraduate, research and publications). The student-researchers face the problem of buying the e-resources and they are the ones required to perform research in HEIs, that is, the student-researchers have the knowledge and ideas on the topic being investigated in the study. Additionally, the key administrative staff have key qualitative information about the e-resources usage in research.

3.3 Sample Size, Sampling Techniques and Procedures
Stratified random sampling technique was applied as it provided an equal chance of selecting each unit from the population being studied from the given HEIs. It was also used because there was a complete list of all the members of the population. There was an accurate and up-to-date sampling frame of the research-students from the HEIs studied. Also, the purposive sampling technique was used to sample the library-director and heads/directors of postgraduate, research and publications offices. The technique enabled a researcher to choose such specific respondents due to their positions in usage of e-resources and research performance. These directors/heads were expected to have overall administrative information regarding the e-resources and research performance.
Generally, a sample was chosen from three institutions (UDSM, SUA and MU). In the second stage, a sample of respondents (student-researchers) within selected institutions was obtained. The following formula from Kothari (2004) was used to calculate the sample size.

\[
 n = \frac{Z^2 pqN}{e^2 (N-1) + Z^2 pq}
\]

Using the above formula, the sample size for this study was 300; where, 294 student-researchers, 3 Library directors and 3 Heads/Directors of postgraduate, research and publications.

3.4 Data Collection Methods
The questionnaires were principally used to collect data of this study. The data of the questionnaire were supplemented using an interview. The questionnaire facilitated to elicit information from the main study respondents (student-researchers). The questionnaires gave the respondents adequate time to give well thought out answers at their own time.

The interviews were used to explore the views, experiences and attitudes of the respondents sampled through purposive sampling regarding the e-resources and performance of research in their institutions. Semi-structured interviews specifically were used as they essentially contained list of predetermined questions to be asked; they were relatively quick and easy to administer, provide opportunity for clarification of certain questions required.

3.5 Measurement of Variables
This study had two primary variables which were research performance and subscribed resources. Research Performance is the continuous variable captured in terms of number of presentations done for the research proposal, number of presentations done for the research report, number of months in which research proposal is developed to approval, number of months in which research report is developed to approval and number of papers developed and number of papers published. The e-resources included; e-books and texts, e-journals, library catalogues, reference sources, statistical sources, sound recordings, research guides by subject, indexes and image databases. The 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Small
Extent) to 5 (Very Large Extent) was used to measure the statement items of e-resources in the surveyed HEIs.

3.6 Data Analysis Methods
The collected data were analyzed using two methods: Descriptive Statistics and Multiple Linear Regression. The descriptive statistics was used to calculate frequencies and percentage distributions especially for specific objective number one and two. The Multiple Linear Regression analysis was used for objective number three because of showing causal-effect. A computer software Statistical Packages of Social Science (SPSS) version 21 was used in all processes.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Statistics
Both sexes of student-researchers were remarkable in the surveyed HEIs. Among the student-researchers surveyed, 60.0% were male and 40.0% were female as shown in Table 1. The majority of the surveyed student-researchers were the male. This implies that, the male is still leading in HEIs pursuing postgraduate programmes compare to female.

Concerning the respondents’ age, the range of ages is from 25 to 40 and above years. The results of surveyed student-researchers revealed that, 10.0% of the student-researchers had the age between 25-29 years, 20.0% between 30-34 years, 40.0% between 35-39 years, and 30.0% of the research-students had 40 years and above as shown in Table 1. The majority of the surveyed student-researchers had therefore the age between 35 and 39 years old.

Marital status was one of the demographic information obtained among the surveyed student-researchers in this study. The results illustrate that, 13.0% of the surveyed student-researchers were single, 70.0% married, 5.0% divorced and 14.0% widow as shown in Table 1. The majority of the TVET Technician graduates were single. This means that, TVET technician graduates who graduated since 2011 to 2015 were single in Tanzania.

Since the area of this study was three HEIs in Tanzania, the student-researchers were asked to identify the particular university they were pursuing their postgraduate programmes. In so doing, 37.0% of the research students are in UDSM, 32.0% in SUA and 31.0% pursued in
MUas shown in Table 1. The majority of the surveyed student-researchers were therefore in UDSM although minimal difference is noted from the rest of institutions.

The employment status may in one way or another influence the research performance of the student-researchers in HEIs. The results in Table 1 established that, 24.0% of the surveyed student-researchers were had no employment, 27.0% had self-employment while 66.0% had paid-employment. The majority of the surveyed student-researchers had paid employment. Table 1 results indicate that, 62.0% of the surveyed student-researchers were pursuing Masters’ degree while 38.0% of them were pursuing PhD. The majority of the surveyed student-researchers were therefore pursuing Masters’ degree.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Information</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Male</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Female</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. 25-29 years</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 30-34 years</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 35-39 years</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 40 and above years</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Single</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Married</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Divorced</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Widow</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. UDSM</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SUA</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. MU</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. No employment</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Self-employment</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Paid employment</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level Being</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Masters’ Degree</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Knowledge Level of the Student Researchers on Subscribed E-Resources

One of the objectives of this paper was to determine the knowledge level of surveyed student-researchers on Subscribed E-resources in HEIs.

Table 2: Knowledge Level of the Student Researchers on Subscribed E-Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>E-books</th>
<th>E-journals</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in Table 2 point out that, 50.0%, 63.0% and 77.0% of the student-researchers had low knowledge level on e-books, e-journals and other e-resources respectively. On the other hand, 33.0%, 19.0% and 10.0% of the surveyed student-researchers had moderate knowledge level on e-books, e-journals and other e-resources respectively. Finally, 17.0%, 18.0% and 13.0% of the surveyed student-researchers had high knowledge level on e-books, e-journals and other e-resources respectively. All the results showed that, the average of 63.3% of the surveyed student-researchers had low knowledge level on Subscribed E-resources.

4.3 Types of Subscribed E-Resources Applied by the Student Researchers

This section purposely addresses the extent to which surveyed student-researchers apply Subscribed E-resources in the HEIs.

Table 3: Types of Subscribed E-Resources Applied by the Student Researchers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>E-books</th>
<th>E-journals</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results in Table 3 indicate that, the subscribed e-books, e-journals and other e-resources are applied by the surveyed student-researchers in very small extent by 7%, 7% and 41% respectively. Furthermore, the subscribed e-books, e-journals and other e-resources are applied by the surveyed student-researchers in small extent by 50%, 9% and 32% respectively. Moreover, the results stipulate that, the subscribed e-books, e-journals and other e-resources are applied by the surveyed student-researchers in large extent by 12%, 23% and 7% respectively. On the other hand, the subscribed e-books, e-journals and other e-resources are applied by the surveyed research-students in very large extent by 17%, 47% and 9% respectively. 14%, 14% and 11% of the surveyed student-researchers were neutral on the extent they applied subscribed e-books, e-journals and other e-resources respectively. The majority of the surveyed student-researchers applied subscribed e-books in small extent, e-journals in very large extent and other e-resources in very small extent respectively.

4.4 Influence of E-Resources on Research Performance among the Student-researchers

A Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) was run to envisage research performance based on subscribed e-resources amongst student-researchers in HEIs. The groundwork was done in avoiding violation of the MLR assumptions. The assumptions addressed included sample size, independence of residuals/relations, outliers, multicollinearity, normality, linearity and Homoscedasticity.

Table 4: Summary of Regression Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.107</td>
<td>2.187</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-journals</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>12.897</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The study at hand used Adjusted R Square in assessing how much of the variance in research performance (dependent variable) was explained by the model with the subscribed e-resources (independent variable). The value obtained was .313 which means the model explained 31.1% of the variance in research performance as shown in Table 4.

In testing how well the regression model fitted the data, it was found that the computed F statistics was 31.121 with an observed significance level of 0.000. The models reached the statistical significance which was p<0.01 as shown in Table 4. It was expected that, the subscribed e-resources had positive relationship with research performance among the surveyed student-researchers in HEIs.

The results indicate that, e-journals had a statistically significant and positive relationship with research performance (Beta=.096, t=12.897, p<0.001). These results entail that, the more the student-researchers access and utilize subscribed e-journals, the more they perform in research.

Furthermore, subscribed e-books had a statistically significant and positive relationship with the research performance among the surveyed TVET Technical graduates in Tanzania (Beta=.067, t=2.317, p<0.05). These results may suggest that, the more the student-researchers access and utilize subscribed e-books, the more they perform research.

Likewise, other e-resources had significant relationship with research performance among research-students in HEIs (Beta=.073, t=2.212, p>0.05). These results necessitate that, the more the student-researchers access and utilize other subscribed e-resources, the more they perform in research.

4.5 Discussions of the Findings

Generally, the results in Table 1 indicate that, the majority of the surveyed student-researchers had low knowledge level on subscribed e-resources such as e-books, e-journals and other e-resources like library catalogues, reference sources, statistical sources, and sound recordings, research guides by subject, indexes and image databases. These results imply that,
the student-researchers have knowledge on e-resources but not subscribed ones. The research-students continue to incur costs on e-resources while the HEIs have already subscribed for them as the HEIs’ library users and customers. This is supported by Thanuskodi (2012) who maintains that, many academicians are unaware and have not used on-line thesis/dissertations, abstracts/indexes, OPAC, on-line databases, which are very relevant for their study and research. Bashorun (2011) revealed by research that frequency of use of electronic resources by academic staff of the university was low.

Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that, studied types of subscribed e-resources; e-books were applied by student-researchers in small extent; e-journals in very large extent and other e-resources in very small extent in the surveyed HEIs. The study by Ojo & Akande (2005) likewise reveals that, the level of usage of the electronic information resources is not high in Africa including Tanzania. These findings generally entail that, the student-researchers still use and apply e-resources in small extent. There is a worry that, even the e-resources claimed to be used in very large extent is not the ones subscribed as the student-researchers have already demonstrated poor knowledge on subscribed e-resources.

The found small extent application of subscribed by the student-researchers in surveyed HEIs is contrary to what is found by various previous studies. For example, Kumar, Gauri and Bimal (2011) state that, e-resources fulfill the day to day academic and research requirements of the ................. i.e. e-resources play an important role in teaching and learning process at university level and provide superior assistance to its users. E-Resources are used by university lecturers, students, employees of government and private sector organizations, scientist and others for a multitude of reasons (Sivathaasan & Velnampy, 2013). They are used not only by university teachers, but also by students, employees of government and private sector organizations, scientist and others for a multitude of reasons (Sivathaasan & Velnampy, 2013).

The results of this study goes hand in hand with what was previously found in Tanzania except it was just e-resources but not subscribed e-resources. The usage and access of e-resources in Tanzania among researchers is still low, possibly due to limited awareness, limited ICT infrastructure, budgetary constraints and low information literacy levels and limited subscriptions made by institutes, most of the researchers and extension staff involved in the study relied on freely available and open access e-resources (Mtega et al., 2014).
Additionally, all the subscribed e-resources were found to be significantly and positively influence research performance among the student-researchers in the surveyed HEIs in Tanzania; however, the users who are student-researchers were found unknowledgeable and hence they use the subscribed e-resources in small extent.

The above results are likewise supported by Kumar, Gauri and Bimal (2011), Sivathaasan & Velnampy, 2013) who found that, e-resources contribute positively to performance in teaching-learning and research in the universities. For this reason, the e-resources are therefore used by university lecturers, students, employees of government and private sector organizations, scientist and others for a multitude of reasons including fulfilling the day to day academic and research requirements.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Subscribed E-resources influence positively and significantly research performance among student-researchers in the HEIs in Tanzania. However, the findings of this paper conclude that, the surveyed research-students had low knowledge level on Subscribed E-resources in the HEIs. This low knowledge and awareness make the student-researchers to apply e-resources in small extent in HEIs.

The library management of HEIs is advised to advocate awareness of subscribed e-resources to the users i.e. student-researchers in order to raise their knowledge level and eventually access and utilize them in contributing research performance in HEIs in Tanzania. This will in turn reduce costs of student-researchers using unsubscribed e-resources in doing their research in HEIs in Tanzania.

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