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AWARENESS OF COPYRIGHT POLICIES AS A DETERMINANT OF UTILISATION OF LIBRARY RESOURCES AMONG POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

Purpose: *This study examined the relationship between awareness of copyright policies and utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. It specifically sought to determine whether copyright policy awareness significantly influences students' utilisation of library resources.*
Design/Methodology/Approach: *The study adopted a correlational research design. The population comprised 1,059 postgraduate students in federal universities in South-South Nigeria, from which a sample of 318 students was selected. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, with 234 valid copies retrieved, representing a 74% response rate. Data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), with the hypothesis tested at the 0.05 level of significance.*
Findings: *The study revealed a strong, positive and statistically significant relationship between awareness of copyright policies and utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students ($r = 0.634$, $p < 0.05$). The finding indicates that students with greater awareness of copyright policies tend to utilise library resources more effectively, confidently and responsibly. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.*
Originality/Value: *The study contributes empirical evidence on the relationship between copyright policy awareness and library resource utilisation among postgraduate students in federal universities in South-South Nigeria, an area identified as relatively underexplored. It highlights the importance of integrating copyright literacy into postgraduate research training and library user education programmes to promote ethical information use and effective engagement with scholarly resources.*
Keywords: *Copyright awareness; copyright policies; library resource utilisation; postgraduate students; intellectual property; information literacy.*
Paper type: Empirical research

Introduction

The advancement of postgraduate education depends significantly on access to and effective utilisation of scholarly information resources. Academic libraries provide a broad range of resources and services designed to support research, teaching, and learning activities (Daniel, 2022; Francis, 2023). These resources include books, journals, electronic databases, institutional repositories, digital archives, reference materials, and research

support services that facilitate scholarly inquiry and knowledge creation (Yahaya, 2025). For postgraduate students, effective utilisation of library resources is indispensable. Research activities at the postgraduate level require extensive engagement with scholarly literature, access to current information sources, and adherence to accepted standards of academic writing and ethical scholarship. Consequently, postgraduate students depend heavily on library resources in conducting literature reviews, developing theoretical frameworks, analysing research findings, and disseminating scholarly outputs (Daniel et al., 2017; Muhammad & Otobo, 2022).

In recent years, the rapid growth of digital information technologies has expanded access to information resources beyond traditional library collections. Electronic books, online journals, institutional repositories, and open-access resources have transformed the information landscape. While these developments have enhanced access to information, they have also introduced new challenges related to copyright compliance and intellectual property protection (Mukhtar & Maidabino, 2021; Muhammad & Otobo, 2022).

Copyright policies constitute an important legal and ethical framework governing the use, reproduction, distribution, and dissemination of intellectual works. These policies are designed to protect the rights of authors and creators while simultaneously facilitating legitimate educational and research use of information resources. Within academic environments, awareness of copyright policies is increasingly recognised as an essential component of information literacy and responsible scholarship (Secker et al., 2019; Todorova et al., 2017). Awareness of copyright policies refers to the extent to which individuals understand legal provisions, institutional regulations, licensing agreements, and ethical obligations associated with the use of copyrighted materials. Such awareness enables students to utilise information resources appropriately, avoid copyright infringement, and make informed decisions regarding the use of academic content (Todorova et al., 2017; Secker et al., 2019).

As postgraduate students engage extensively with electronic and print information resources, knowledge of copyright policies becomes increasingly important. Students who understand copyright provisions are more likely to utilise scholarly materials confidently and responsibly, while those with limited

awareness may either misuse information resources or avoid their utilisation due to uncertainty regarding legal restrictions (Secker et al., 2019). Academic libraries play a critical role in promoting copyright awareness through user education programmes, information literacy instruction, copyright guidance services, and access to licensed information resources. These initiatives help students understand the legal and ethical dimensions of information use and encourage responsible engagement with scholarly materials (IFLA, 2018; Secker et al., 2019).

Despite the growing importance of copyright literacy, empirical evidence regarding its influence on library resource utilisation among postgraduate students in federal universities in South-South Nigeria remains limited. This study therefore examines awareness of copyright policies as a determinant of utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students in the region.

Statement of the Problem

University libraries continue to invest heavily in acquiring print and electronic information resources to support postgraduate teaching, learning, and research. However, effective utilisation of these resources requires not only access but also adequate understanding of the legal and ethical frameworks governing information use. One of the major challenges confronting higher education institutions is the increasing complexity of copyright regulations associated with digital information resources. "Many postgraduate students **access and utilise** scholarly materials without adequate understanding of copyright provisions and licensing requirements (Secker et al., 2019). This situation exposes students to the risk of copyright infringement and may discourage effective utilisation of available library resources.

Although universities have implemented various initiatives aimed at promoting academic integrity and responsible information use, limited attention has been given to the role of copyright awareness in shaping library resource utilisation. Existing studies have focused predominantly on information literacy skills, technological competence, and access-related challenges, while the influence of copyright awareness remains underexplored.

Consequently, it is unclear whether postgraduate students who possess higher levels of copyright awareness utilise library resources more effectively than those with lower levels of awareness. This gap necessitates empirical investigation.

The study therefore seeks to determine whether awareness of copyright policies significantly influences utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to determine the relationship between awareness of copyright policies and utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Research Question

What relationship exists between awareness of copyright policies and utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students in federal universities in South-South Nigeria?

H_0: There is no significant relationship between awareness of copyright policies and utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Literature Review

Concept of Copyright Policy Awareness

Copyright policy awareness refers to the extent to which individuals understand the legal, institutional, and ethical principles governing the use, reproduction, distribution, and dissemination of intellectual works. It encompasses knowledge of copyright laws, licensing agreements, fair dealing provisions, institutional regulations, and other guidelines that regulate access to and use of copyrighted materials (Todorova et al., 2017; Secker et al., 2019). Copyright serves as a legal mechanism for protecting the intellectual property rights of authors, researchers, publishers, and creators. It grants creators exclusive rights over the reproduction, adaptation, distribution, and communication of their works while also providing certain exceptions for educational, research, and library purposes (Walia et al., 2023). According to Secker et al. (2019), copyright literacy is an important component of information literacy because it enables users to make informed decisions regarding the lawful use of information resources.

Within academic environments, copyright awareness has become increasingly important due to the widespread availability of digital information resources. The growth of electronic journals, e-books, institutional repositories, online databases, and open-access materials has created new opportunities for information access while simultaneously increasing the complexity of copyright compliance (Todorova et al.,

2017; IFLA, 2018). For postgraduate students, awareness of copyright policies extends beyond mere familiarity with legal provisions. It involves understanding how copyright regulations apply to scholarly activities such as downloading articles, reproducing figures and tables, sharing academic materials, depositing research outputs in repositories, and using copyrighted content in dissertations, theses, and publications (Secker et al., 2019). Students who possess adequate copyright awareness are more likely to engage in ethical information practices and utilise scholarly resources responsibly. Conversely, inadequate awareness may result in copyright infringement, misuse of information resources, or reluctance to utilise available materials due to uncertainty regarding legal restrictions (Todorova et al., 2017).

Copyright Law and Higher Education

Copyright law plays a critical role in higher education by balancing the rights of creators with the educational and research needs of users. Universities, libraries, researchers, and students operate within a framework of copyright regulations that govern access to and use of scholarly information (IFLA, 2018). In Nigeria, the Copyright Act 2022 introduced significant reforms aimed at modernising copyright protection and aligning national legislation with international standards. The Act provides legal protection for literary, artistic, musical, and other intellectual works while also recognising educational and research-related exceptions that facilitate legitimate academic use of information resources (Walia et al., 2023).

The Act contains provisions that permit certain forms of reproduction and use for research, private study, library preservation, and educational purposes, provided such use complies with established legal requirements. These exceptions are particularly important for postgraduate students who depend heavily on scholarly information resources for research and academic writing (Walia et al., 2023). Universities and academic libraries therefore have a responsibility to educate students about copyright provisions, permissible uses of information resources, and the legal implications of copyright infringement. Such education promotes responsible scholarship and encourages effective utilisation of available information resources (Secker et al., 2019; IFLA, 2018).

Copyright Literacy among Postgraduate Students

Copyright literacy refers to the knowledge, skills, and confidence required

to understand and apply copyright principles in academic and professional contexts. It encompasses awareness of copyright ownership, licensing agreements, fair dealing provisions, open-access publishing, and intellectual property rights (Secker et al., 2019). Studies have shown that postgraduate students generally possess varying levels of copyright literacy. While many students demonstrate basic awareness of copyright concepts, research indicates that significant gaps remain in their understanding of licensing terms, copyright exceptions, ownership of scholarly outputs, and lawful reuse of information resources (Todorova et al., 2017; Secker et al., 2019).

Several factors influence copyright literacy among postgraduate students. These include information literacy training, exposure to research methodology courses, institutional policies, library orientation programmes, and access to copyright education initiatives. Secker et al. (2019) reported that information literacy instruction and copyright education significantly improve students' understanding of intellectual property rights and lawful information use. Academic libraries have increasingly assumed responsibility for promoting copyright literacy through workshops, information literacy programmes, online tutorials, and consultation services. These interventions aim to improve students' understanding of copyright regulations and encourage responsible use of scholarly information resources (IFLA, 2018).

Despite these efforts, evidence suggests that many postgraduate students continue to experience difficulties in applying copyright principles to practical research situations (Todorova et al., 2017). Consequently, strengthening copyright literacy remains a priority for higher education institutions and academic libraries.

Concept of Library Resource Utilisation

Library resource utilisation refers to the degree to which library users access and employ available information resources and services to meet their academic, research, and informational needs (Daniel, 2022; Francis, 2023). Utilisation encompasses both physical and electronic engagement with library collections, databases, repositories, and support services. Academic libraries provide a diverse range of information resources designed to facilitate learning, teaching, and research. These include books, journals, reference materials, electronic databases, institutional repositories, multimedia resources, and internet-based information services

(Yahaya, 2025). For postgraduate students, effective utilisation of library resources is essential for conducting comprehensive literature reviews, identifying research gaps, developing conceptual frameworks, analysing data, and producing scholarly publications. The quality and effectiveness of postgraduate research are therefore closely linked to the extent of library resource utilisation (Daniel et al., 2017; Muhammad & Otobo, 2022).

Modern information technologies have significantly expanded opportunities for resource utilisation by enabling remote access to digital collections and online information services. However, effective utilisation depends not only on availability and accessibility but also on users' competencies, awareness, and confidence in using information resources appropriately (Agboke & Oladokun, 2024; Mukhtar & Maidabino, 2021).

Relationship between Copyright Policy Awareness and Utilisation of Library Resources

Awareness of copyright policies and utilisation of library resources are closely interconnected within the broader context of information literacy and ethical information use (ACRL, 2000; Secker et al., 2019). Copyright awareness provides users with the knowledge required to engage confidently and responsibly with scholarly information resources. Students who understand copyright regulations are generally more willing to utilise library resources because they possess greater confidence regarding the lawful use of academic materials. Such students are better able to access, download, reproduce, and cite scholarly resources appropriately, thereby enhancing their engagement with library collections and services (Todorova et al., 2017). Copyright awareness also facilitates effective use of electronic resources. Understanding licensing agreements, fair dealing provisions, and institutional access rights enables students to maximise the benefits of library subscriptions and digital collections while avoiding copyright violations (IFLA, 2018).

Conversely, inadequate copyright awareness may hinder resource utilisation. Students who are uncertain about copyright restrictions may avoid using certain materials, limit their engagement with information resources, or inadvertently violate copyright regulations through inappropriate use of academic content (Secker et al., 2019). Studies suggest that library-based copyright education programmes contribute positively to both copyright literacy and resource utilisation. Through workshops,

user education sessions, and information literacy instruction, libraries help students understand the legal and ethical dimensions of information use, thereby encouraging more effective utilisation of available resources (IFLA, 2018; Secker et al., 2019). The relationship between copyright awareness and library resource utilisation therefore extends beyond legal compliance. It reflects broader issues of information literacy, academic confidence, and responsible scholarly behaviour.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the investigation of the relationship between awareness of copyright policies and utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students without manipulating any variable. The population of the study comprised 1,059 postgraduate students in federal universities located within South-South Nigeria. A sample size of 318 postgraduate students representing 30% of the population was used for the study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to obtain information on respondents' awareness of copyright policies and utilisation of library resources. The instrument was subjected to expert validation and reliability assessment before administration. A total of 318 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, while 234 valid copies were retrieved and used for analysis, representing a response rate of 74%. Data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	152	65.0
Female	82	35.0
Total	234	100.0

Table 1 presents the gender distribution of the respondents. The results indicate that the majority of the respondents were male, accounting for 152 (65.0%), while female respondents constituted 82 (35.0%). This suggests that male postgraduate students were more represented in the study than their female counterparts. Overall, the distribution reflects a gender imbalance in favour of male respondents.

Table 2: Year of Study of the Respondents

Year of Study	Frequency	Percentage (%)
First Year	68	29.1
Second Year	74	31.6
Third Year or above	92	39.3
Total	**234**	**100.0**

Table 2 revealed that the largest proportion of the respondents were in their third year or above, accounting for 39.3% (92 respondents). This is followed by second-year students, who constituted 31.6% (74 respondents), while first-year students made up 29.1% (68 respondents) of the respondents. Conclusively, the distribution indicates that a higher proportion of the respondents were in the advanced stages of their postgraduate programmes, with fewer respondents in the earlier years of study. This suggests that the study largely captured the views of postgraduate students with substantial academic experience in their respective programmes.

Research Question: What relationship exists between awareness of copyright policies and utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students in federal universities in South-South Nigeria?

Table 3: Pearson's r Between Postgraduate Students' Awareness of Copyright Policies and Utilisation of Library Resources

Variances	N	Awareness of Copyright Policies	Utilisation of Library Resources	Decision
Awareness of Copyright Policies	234	1	.634	Strong
Utilisation of Library Resources	234	.634	1	

Decision Rule: .00 to 0.30: Weak; 0.31 to 0.50: Moderate; 0.51 to 0.70: Strong; 0.71 and above: Very strong

The results revealed a strong positive relationship between awareness of copyright policies and utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students (r = 0.634). This indicates that students with greater awareness of copyright policies

tend to utilise library resources more effectively. The finding suggests that knowledge of copyright regulations promotes ethical information use and encourages greater engagement with authorised academic resources.

H_0: There is no significant relationship between awareness of copyright policies and utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Table 4: Relationship Between Postgraduate Students Awareness of Copyright Policies and Utilisation of Library Resources

N	Cal. R	P-value	Cal. p-value	Decision
234	+.634	0.05	0.00	S

S=Significant

The result in Table 4 showed that the relationship between awareness of copyright policies and utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students in federal universities in South-South Nigeria ($r = +0.634$, $p = 0.00 < 0.05$) is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between awareness of copyright policies and utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The finding indicates that awareness of copyright policies is associated with increased utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students. Students with greater awareness of copyright policies are more likely to utilise library resources effectively and responsibly. The finding suggests that knowledge of copyright regulations promotes ethical information use and encourages greater engagement with authorised academic resources. The finding agrees with Todorova et al. (2017) and Secker et al. (2019), who reported that copyright literacy enhances users' confidence in accessing and utilising scholarly information resources. The finding also supports the Information Literacy Competency Standards (ACRL, 2000), which emphasise ethical and legal use of information as an important component of information literacy.

The study further established that the relationship between awareness of

copyright policies and utilisation of library resources was statistically significant ($r = 0.634$, $p < 0.05$). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding indicates that awareness of copyright policies significantly influences postgraduate students' utilisation of library resources. The finding is consistent with Secker et al. (2019) and IFLA (2018), who observed that copyright education promotes responsible information behaviour and encourages greater use of scholarly information resources. The result underscores the importance of copyright literacy programmes in enhancing both ethical information use and effective utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students.

Conclusion

This study investigated awareness of copyright policies as a determinant of utilisation of library resources among postgraduate students in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. The study established that awareness of copyright policies has a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship with utilisation of library resources. Postgraduate students who possess higher levels of copyright awareness are more likely to utilise library resources effectively, responsibly, and confidently than those with lower levels of awareness.

The study therefore concludes that copyright awareness is an important component of information literacy and a significant factor in promoting effective utilisation of scholarly information resources. Improving postgraduate students' understanding of copyright regulations can contribute substantially to responsible information use, enhanced research productivity, and increased utilisation of library resources.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Universities should incorporate copyright literacy education into postgraduate research methodology and academic writing courses.
2. Academic libraries should implement comprehensive copyright literacy programmes through workshops, seminars, user education sessions, practical training, and online instructional modules on copyright policies, intellectual property rights, licensing agreements, fair dealing provisions, and ethical use of information resources.
3. Librarians should provide continuous guidance on the lawful use of electronic resources, scholarly

publications, institutional repositories, and digital information materials.

4. Universities should develop and disseminate clear copyright policies and guidelines to enhance students' understanding of their rights and responsibilities regarding information use.
5. Greater collaboration should be encouraged among librarians, academic supervisors, and postgraduate coordinators in promoting copyright awareness and responsible scholarly communication.
6. Universities should periodically assess students' copyright literacy levels and implement targeted interventions to address identified knowledge gaps.

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