

**THE EFFECT OF ONLINE JOURNAL PUBLISHING IN PROMOTING RESEARCH
VISIBILITY AMONG LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATORS IN
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Rivers State University.****okpokwasili.nonyelum@ust.edu.ng, nonyesil@ymail.com****Abstract**

The study investigated the effect of online publishing in promoting research activities among Library and Information Science Educators in higher institutions in Port Harcourt. The theoretical framework for the study was the diffusion of innovation theory. The study adopted the descriptive research design. The population of the study is 49 LIS Educators which is made up of Rivers State University (11), University of Port Harcourt (19), Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (10), and Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic (9). The census sampling technique was used for the study. A structured questionnaire titled the effect of online publishing in promoting research activities among Library and Information Science Educators in higher institutions in Port Harcourt (EOPPRALISEHIPH) was used to gather data for the study. The data gathered was analyzed using mean scores. Findings from the study revealed some of the effect of online publishing as promoting digital preservation, increased research visibility, access to larger reader base amongst others. The study also revealed lack of awareness and training, lack of research support units, poor internet connectivity as some of the challenges LIS Educators face in using online publishing for research. Online publishing has therefore emerged as an effective driver for research activity among Library and Information Science (LIS) Educators. Some of the recommendation from the study are improved internet connectivity, allocate research funds to LIS educators, and subscribing to reputable research databases.

Keywords: Online Journal Publishing, Research Visibility, LIS Educators, Higher Institutions**Introduction**

Academic research is a very important aspect of higher education that brings about development in the society and this role has been greatly facilitated by the use of online publishing. Research can be simply described as search for new knowledge. According to Cresswell (2014), research is defined as a systematic and scientific method that involves gathering, analyzing, and giving meaning to data in order to answer questions, test hypotheses, or develop new knowledge. Research provides a base for understanding, growth and progress in different fields. Similarly, Polit and Beck (2017), opined that the concept of research follows a scientific method which basically begins with problem identification,

formulating hypothesis, collecting and analyzing data and finally drawing inference from the data gathered. Research is very important because it helps us to understand the world around us by engaging in activities which brings about development of theories and advancement in knowledge.

Research activities are an essential part of academic work. There are several types of research activities, each having its unique approach and methodology as it relates to different disciplines. Some examples of research activities include empirical studies, theoretical analysis, and experimental investigations, survey research, case study and action research. Empirical research, which is one of the most important type of research activity is based on the gathering and analyzing data. Empirical research is aimed at testing hypotheses, and theories using observable evidence, that is data gathered for the research. In theoretical research, the basis is the development of concepts, models and theories. The aim of this research is to explain phenomena and useful insight into the basic mechanisms that govern them (Dan, 2017)

Another type of research activity is the experimental research. This type of research involves the manipulation of one variable to observe their effect on a dependent variable. The aim of experimental research is to show cause-and-effect relationships and to identify the basic mechanisms that guide these relationships (Kothari, 2004). This type of research is common among disciplines in the natural sciences such as chemistry and biology.

The survey research is popular among disciplines in the social sciences such as psychology, sociology, and economics. It is a type of research that involves collecting data using questionnaires, interviews or other data collection instrument from a sample of individuals who are representatives of the larger population. They are majorly used to explore opinions, attitudes and behaviors of people (Babbie, 2016). Case study research involves the thorough and critical examination of a single entity or a small group of cases. It is commonly used in the social sciences to examine complex phenomena and provide elaborate description situations that happen in real-world. (Coombs, 2022) Action research is a type of research that involves the collaborative efforts of researchers and practitioners to enhance a peculiar problem or to improve a policy or practice. It is commonly used in healthcare, education, etc. (Kemmis, 2001). All these types of research activities explained are carried out by different categories of individuals such as students (undergraduate and postgraduate), Lecturers and Researchers for the sole purpose of creating new knowledge. This new knowledge can only be made known to the public through a concept known as publishing.

Publishing can be defined as the act of making information materials of various forms (print and non-

print) available to the public through different means such as books, websites, newspapers, podcasts, or social media platforms (National Archives, 2023). Publishing is a long chain of activities that ensures that the final products get to a wider audience. These activities include; production, distribution, marketing and sale of the published material. The concept of publishing has witnessed a paradigm shift from traditional publishing which involved printing hard copies of books and distributing same through the conventional bookshops, to digital or online publishing which has created an avenue for scholars to publish their intellectual works online with an added advantage of reaching a wider audience.

Web publishing is also called online publishing. According to afolaranmi (2023) the term online publishing was introduced by William Dijkhuis in 1977. It is simply the process of publishing content on the Internet. It includes creating and uploading web sites, updating web pages and posting blogs online (Abdu, 2023). The published content may include text, images, videos and other types of media. It may be seen as the process of posting or publishing information on the Internet. It involves creating and uploading web sites, restoring web sites posting and commenting on blogs. All these may include videos, images, scripts, documentaries and other categories of media content. Web publishing is therefore, seen as the act of creating a web domain in which information is shared with others that access the site. This can be done by creating a web page and putting the desired information, ranging from books, newspapers, magazines, journal articles, etc.

Online publishing involves the activity of publishing information on the internet and making it available to a global audience through various digital platforms such as websites, blogs, social media, e-books, and online magazine. This enables content creators not only to reach a wider audience but also to sell their ideas and knowledge in a cost effective and efficient manner. Online publishing also known as digital publishing is the practice that involves writing, organizing, editing and making available various kinds of information materials available on the internet through the use of online tools (Dewi, 2022). According to the author, these information materials are not only made through the internet, but they are also shared and optimized to be used on various devices such as computers, laptops and other personal digital assistants. However, it should be noted that other print resources can also be transferred to an online platform for better visibility. Online publishing has transformed the publishing industry by removing the barriers associated with hard copies and making room for easy distribution of digital information resources (Haco-Obasi & Chukwu, 2021). According to Afolaranmi (2023), there are several platforms where scholars can publish their materials online, they include; academia.edu, research gate, amazon kindle direct publishing (KDP), Scribd, Barnes and Noble press,

apple e-book store (iBooks), Rakuten Kobo publishing, IngramSpark and Universe. Most of these platforms only requires a sign up or registration on the website before any activity of publishing can begin on the website.

Online publishing has also encouraged individuals to engage in self-publishing thereby giving them the opportunity to develop and publish their work without the assistance of traditional publishers. According to Rákosník and Teschke (2014), other benefits associated with online publishing are ability to reach a wider and global audience, increase in visibility and discoverability, better control over the publication process and access to a various tools and platforms for publishing. Furthermore, Brinton (2021) stressed that online publishing provides the opportunity for researchers to make public their findings and also build their academic profiles. This can be achieved by creating profiles on academic networking sites such as Google scholar, ResearchGate and Academia.com thereby increasing the visibility of their findings and also providing better opportunity for collaboration and funding.

However, it is interesting to note that despite the perceived benefits of online publishing, it is still bedeviled with some challenges. These challenges as highlighted by Bashorun et al (2013) are; lack of adequate supply of electricity; language barriers of e-publishing equipment sent from developed countries; lack of qualified manpower; low and irregular internet connections; lack of sustainable funding and high tariff charges for telecommunication services and power supply. Afolaranmi (2023) further stated some challenges that are peculiar to Nigeria such as erratic power supply, failure or interruption of internet, cybercrime or internet fraud, low standard of living among Nigerians, internet illiteracy and unavailability of technological gadgets that can be used to compose messages and publish them online.

For institutions and relevant stakeholders to tackle these challenges, the following strategies by Putri, Wulandari, Nilasari and Taruna (2019) must be put in place: create a safe learning environment, provide institutional support and improve the research climate by supporting collaboration among lecturers.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt appears relying on the traditional method of sharing their research findings through academic journals and conferences. It is also worthy to note that majority of these academic journals and conferences appears not published online and this tends to limit the reach and visibility of their research work. This lack of wider dissemination of research output seems to have a negative impact of hindering research productivity, engagement and collaboration among LIS Educators in Port Harcourt.

Purpose of the Study

This research work is focused on the effect and extent to which online publishing promotes research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives of the study include to:

- i. Determine the extent to which online publishing promotes research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
- ii. Find out the effect of online publishing in promoting research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
- iii. Determine the challenges LIS Educators face in using online publishing for research activities.
- iv. Suggest policy recommendations for institutions to promote the use of online publishing in enhancing research activities of LIS Educators in Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this work are;

- i. What is the extent to which online publishing promotes research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?
- ii. What is the effect of online publishing in promoting research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?
- iii. What are the challenges LIS Educators face in using online publishing for research activities?
- iv. What are the policy recommendations for institutions to promote the use of online publishing in enhancing research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is the diffusion of innovations theory by Everett Rogers in the year (1967). The theory shows how new ideas, innovations and technologies are spread and adopted by individuals or groups over time. For the purpose of this study, online publishing signifies the innovation that is being investigated to find out its adoption and impact on research activities among LIS Educators. This innovation has the potential to transform research activities among these educators. In the diffusion of innovation theory, individuals are classified into varying categories based on their willingness to embrace new innovation. These categories are;

- i. Innovators: this is the first group to adopt the innovation. They are usually willing to try out new things not minding the risks involved.
- ii. Early adopters: they are often seen as the influential and well-connected individuals in the academic community.
- iii. Early majority: this group adopts the innovation after majority of individuals has accepted the innovation.
- iv. Late majority: this group accepts to adopt the innovation only after it has become widely accepted by all.
- v. Laggards: this last group is often resistant to change and therefore the last group to accept the innovation.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design to investigate the effect of online publishing in promoting research activities among LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Rivers State. The purpose of this design is to get the views of LIS Educators on the effect online publishing has made on their research. A well-structured online questionnaire titled the effect of online publishing in promoting research activities among Library and Information Science Educators in higher institutions in Port Harcourt (EOPPRALISEHIPH) was used to garner responses from the respondents.

The population of the study comprised of all the LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt, which are eleven (11) staff from Rivers State University, nineteen (19) staff from University of Port Harcourt, ten (10) staff from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, and nine (9) from Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic. This comprises a total number of forty-nine (49) LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Rivers State as at time of the research.

Table 1: Population Distribution Table

<i>S/N</i>	<i>University</i>	<i>Number of Respondents</i>
1	Rivers State University	11
2	University of Port Harcourt	19
3	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education	10
4	Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic	9
Total		49

Source: Researchers field work, 2024

Census sampling was used since the population is manageable. The questionnaire was structured into two sections. The first section was used to elicit their demographic information. The second section

consisted of four (4) research questions on the effect of online publishing in promoting research activities among LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Rivers State. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by experts in the LIS profession. A total of 34 questionnaires were filled and submitted out of the 49 that was administered. Therefore 34 respondents were used as the population for the study.

Mean scores were used to analyze data collected in line with the research questions designed for this study on a 4-point Likert scale (ranging from 4-1). Decision for acceptance was made based on the scores obtained from the results. Any mean score from 2.50 and above were accepted and any mean score below 2.50 were rejected.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

Research question 1: What is the extent to which online publishing promotes research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean rating of extent to which online publishing promotes research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State

S/N	ITEMS STATEMENT	VHE 4	HE 3	ME 2	LE 1	N	\bar{X}	D
1	Increased research visibility	27	7	0	0	34	3.7	Accepted
2	Access to larger reader base	24	10	0	0	34	3.7	Accepted
3	Faster dissemination of findings	26	6	4	0	34	3.7	Accepted
4	Enhanced collaboration opportunities	26	4	4	0	34	3.6	Accepted
5	Promotes digital preservation	10	24	0	0	34	3.2	Accepted
6	Opportunities for multidisciplinary research	26	8	0	0	34	3.7	Accepted
7	Promotion and career advancement	26	8	0	0	34	3.7	Accepted

Key: *Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Moderate Extent (ME), Low Extent (LE); N-Total; X-Mean; D-Decision*

Source: Researchers field work, 2024

Table 1 shows the extent to which online publishing promotes research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. From the table, increased research visibility (3.7), access to larger reader base (3.7), faster dissemination of findings (3.7) amongst others indicates the high extent to which online publishing promotes research activities of LIS educators.

Research question 2: What is the effect of online publishing in promoting research activities of LIS

Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean rating of effect of online publishing in promoting research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

S/N	ITEMS STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD	N	\bar{X}	D
		4	3	2	1			
1	Increased research visibility	30	4	0	0	34	3.8	Accepted
2	Access to larger reader base	26	8	0	0	34	3.7	Accepted
3	Faster dissemination of findings	26	8	0	0	34	3.7	Accepted
4	Enhanced collaboration opportunities	27	5	2	0	34	3.7	Accepted
5	Promotes digital preservation	34	0	0	0	34	4.0	Accepted
6	Opportunities for multidisciplinary research	26	8	0	0	34	3.7	Accepted
7	Promotion and career advancement	28	4	0	0	34	3.6	Accepted

Key: SA-Strongly Agree; A- Agree; D-Disagree; SD-Strongly Disagree; N-Total; X-Mean; D-Decision

Source: Researchers field work, 2024

Table 2 shows the effect of online publishing in promoting research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions. From the table, the major effect online publishing has on LIS Educators includes, promotes digital preservation (4.0), increased research visibility (3.8), access to larger reader base (3.7), amongst others.

Research question 3: What are the challenges LIS Educators face in using online publishing for research activities?

Table 4: Mean rating of the challenges LIS Educators face in using online publishing for research activities.

S/N	ITEMS STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD	N	\bar{X}	D
		4	3	2	1			
1	Poor internet connectivity	26	8	0	0	34	3.7	Accepted
2	Lack of awareness and training	28	6	0	0	34	3.8	Accepted
3	Limited funding and resources	4	27	3	0	34	3.0	Accepted
4	Poor professional development programs for staff	26	8	0	0	34	3.7	Accepted
5	Limited access to research databases	4	26	4	0	34	3.0	Accepted

6	Lack of recognition of online publishing	4	4	26	0	34	2.3	Rejected
7	Lack of research support units	30	4	0	0	34	3.8	Accepted
8	Poor interdisciplinary collaboration	26	8	0	0	34	3.7	Accepted

Key: SA-Strongly Agree; A- Agree; D-Disagree; SD-Strongly Disagree; N-Total; X-Mean; D-Decision

Source: Researchers field work, 2024

Table 3 shows the challenges LIS Educators face in using online publishing for research activities. From the table, Lack of awareness and training (3.8), Lack of research support units (3.8), Poor internet connectivity (3.7) and Poor professional development programs for staff (3.7) are the major challenges LIS Educators face in using online publishing for research activities.

Research question 4: What are the policy recommendations for institutions to promote the use of online publishing in enhancing research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?

Table 5: Mean rating of the policy recommendations for institutions to promote the use of online publishing in enhancing research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

S/N	ITEMS STATEMENT	VA 4	A 3	LA 2	NA 1	N	\bar{X}	D
1	Improved internet connectivity	30	4	0	0	34	3.8	Accepted
2	Create awareness on the benefit of online publishing	26	8	0	0	34	3.7	Accepted
3	Allocate research funding to LIS educators	30	4	0	0	34	3.8	Accepted
4	Encourage professional development programs	26	8	0	0	34	3.7	Accepted
5	Subscribe to reputable research databases	30	4	0	0	34	3.8	Accepted
6	Recognize online publications	26	8	0	0	34	3.7	Accepted
7	Create research support units	26	8	0	0	34	3.7	Accepted

8	Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration	26	8	0	0	34	3.7	Accepted
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Key: VA-*Very Appropriate*; A- *Appropriate*; LA- *Less Appropriate*; NA- *Not Appropriate*; N-*Total*; X-*Mean*; D-*Decision*
Source: Researchers field work, 2024

Table 4 shows the policy recommendations for institutions to promote the use of online publishing in enhancing research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. From the table, Improved internet connectivity (3.8), allocate research funding to LIS educators (3.8), subscribe to reputable research databases (3.8) were highly accepted as the policy recommendation for institutions to promote the use of online publish publishing.

The effect of online publishing in promoting research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions in Port Harcourt

The findings of the study show that promoting digital preservation, increased research visibility and access to larger reader base are some of the effects of online publishing in promoting research activities of LIS Educators in Higher Institutions. This is in agreement with Rákosník and Teschke (2014) which also identified ability to reach a wider and global audience and increase in visibility and discoverability as some of the effect of online publishing in promoting research. However, there are other effects of online publishing in promoting research as identified in this study, such as faster dissemination of findings, enhanced collaboration opportunities, opportunities for multidisciplinary research and promotion/career advancement.

The challenges LIS Educators face in using online publishing for research activities

From the findings of the study, it was revealed that lack of awareness and training, lack of research support units, poor internet connectivity and poor professional development programs for staff are the major challenges LIS Educators face in using online publishing for research activities. This corroborates the findings of Bashorun et al (2013) which identified low and irregular internet connectivity as one of the challenges associated with using online publishing for research. Consequently, these challenges and other challenges such as poor interdisciplinary collaboration, limited funding and resources, limited access to research database must be addressed for LIS educators to enjoy the benefits associated with utilizing online publishing.

The policy recommendations for institutions to promote the use of online publishing in enhancing research activities of LIS Educators

The study shows improved internet connectivity, allocating research funding to LIS educators and subscribing to reputable research databases as some of the policy recommendations for institutions to promote the use of online publishing in enhancing research activities of LIS Educators. This relates to the study conducted by Putri, Wulandari, Nilasari and Taruna (2019) which states that providing institutional support, creating a safe learning environment and supporting collaboration among lecturers through improved research climate as some of the recommendation for promoting the use of online publishing. Other recommendation such as recognize online publications, create awareness on the benefit of online publishing, encourage professional development programs and encourage interdisciplinary collaboration were also identified by the study as policy recommendation for institutions to promote the use of online publishing in enhancing research activities of LIS Educators.

Conclusion

Online publishing has emerged as an effective driver for research activity among Library and Information Science (LIS) educators. The study was able to empirically identify the effect of online publishing in promoting the research activities of LIS Educators such as increased research visibility, promoting digital preservation and access to larger reader base. It also identified the challenges LIS Educators face in using online publishing to be lack of awareness and training, lack of research support units, poor internet connectivity, poor professional development programs for staff amongst others. These challenges however, can be combated by the institution or parent body using the recommendation identified in the study. By using online platforms, LIS educators can considerably improve their research profiles and contribute to the growth of the profession.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. University management to organize regular training and workshops for LIS Educators on how to navigate online journal publishing platforms, manage publication ethics and enhance the quality of their publication for greater visibility.
2. University management to provide free internet wireless fidelity (WIFI) in strategic location to promote research activities of both staff (LIS Educators) and students.
3. LIS educators are encouraged to collaborate with their colleagues from other disciplines within and outside their institution to come up with better research output.

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