

Exploring University of The Gambia Postgraduate Students' Library Visitation, Reading Habits, and Motivations

Omobolaji Olufunmilola Akanbi, PhD and Ousainou Sarr PhD

School of Education,
University of The Gambia, The Gambia.

Corresponding Author: Omobolaji Olufunmilola Akanbi, PhD

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the library visitation frequency, materials read, and motivations for reading among postgraduate students at the University of The Gambia. Stratified random sampling was employed to select a sample size of 80 postgraduate students to ensure representation from various academic disciplines and year groups among the postgraduate students. Three research questions tested at 0.05 margin of error were formulated for the study and a self-designed instrument named "Postgraduate Library Visitation and Reading Habits Survey" was used for collection of data in addition to the interviews conducted. Data analysis involved the use of frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation. The result revealed diverse patterns of library visitation frequency among postgraduate students, the diversity of materials read which reflects the multidisciplinary nature of postgraduate education and research interests among students. Therefore, the study recommended Extended Library Hours, Diversification of Collections, Digital Literacy Training and Personalised Research Support to further enhance student's library use.

Keywords: Library, Postgraduate Students, Reading Habits, Materials Read, Motivations

INTRODUCTION

In academia, libraries serve as essential hubs for learning, research, and intellectual growth, providing students with access to a wealth of resources critical for their academic endeavours. Understanding postgraduate students' library visitation frequency, materials read, and motivations for reading is paramount for libraries to tailor their services effectively and support students' academic success. This study focuses on investigating these aspects among postgraduate students at the University of The Gambia. Libraries play a pivotal role in facilitating knowledge acquisition and research activities, serving as spaces where students can access a wide range of scholarly materials, including books, journals, and electronic resources. Research has shown that library usage patterns among students vary depending on factors such as academic discipline, workload, and personal preferences [13]. Understanding these patterns is essential for libraries to allocate resources effectively and provide services that meet students' needs.

Reading is important because it is a tool for study, for creating awareness, for future employment and for recreation. Reading lies at the very heart of the curriculum because reading is the principal means of gaining access to information in education institutions and the key to lifelong education after school [3]. Reading brings about individual's effectiveness in the community and creates social awareness among the members of the society; hence,

it inculcates social understanding in the society. Reading is a base for educational, economic, political and cultural development. Therefore, it plays a key role in the development of the mind, learning and studying, which enriches the students' intellectual life, influences the reader's behaviour and attitudes [7]. Reading opens door to the accumulated knowledge of centuries which helps to enrich, illuminate the minds, and widen the mental and spiritual horizon of the reader because continuous reading of materials will serve as a means of strengthening the development of reading [7].

Reading books helps to bridge the gap between the past and the present, it gives better understanding of the diverse cultures of the world and a major avenue for personal and national progress. Students in the tertiary institutions irrespective of their course of study must read because reading involves the understanding of written language. It involves the processing of these written materials by the reader/student against the background of his/her earlier experiences and concept. Of all the things students must be involved in when they are in school; reading is the most essential. The development of interest in reading is basic need of every student irrespective of one's course of study. According to Bryant and Bradley (1985), hardly a lesson can be understood, hardly a project finished unless the students can read and understand the books in front of them. But unfortunately, as important as reading is,

it is not taught separately as most other subjects or courses in the curriculum, it is subsumed in English.

The diversity of materials accessed by students reflects their academic interests, research requirements, and the comprehensiveness of library collections. Studies have highlighted the importance of well-curated library collections in supporting students' learning and research activities [8]. Additionally, the availability of electronic resources has transformed the way students engage with library materials, offering unprecedented access to scholarly content [9].

Motivations for reading among postgraduate students are influenced by numerous factors, including academic requirements, research interests, and personal curiosity. Understanding these motivations is essential for libraries to design programs and services that encourage active engagement with library resources [14]. Moreover, creating a conducive and supportive environment within the library can enhance students' motivation to utilise library resources effectively [15].

This study's aim is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by investigating postgraduate students' library visitation frequency, materials read, and motivations for reading at the University of The Gambia. By gaining insights into these aspects, libraries can better understand students' needs and preferences, thereby improve the quality of library services and enhance students' academic experiences. Libraries are not merely repositories of books but dynamic spaces for knowledge acquisition and exploration. The frequency of students' visits to the library reflects their engagement with academic resources and the extent to which they utilise available facilities. A study conducted at the University of The Gambia revealed varying patterns of library visitation among postgraduate students. While some visited the library regularly as part of their academic routine, others visited sporadically, influenced by factors such as proximity, workload, and personal preferences.

Academic libraries in The Gambia trace their roots back to the colonial period, where educational institutions established libraries to support the needs of students and faculty. The Gambia High School, founded in 1843, had one of the earliest school libraries in the country, providing resources for secondary education [2].

Following independence in 1965, efforts were made to expand higher education and establish libraries to support the growing student population. The Gambia College, founded in 1979, established its library to support teacher education and vocational training programs [2].

The University of The Gambia, established in 1999, marked a significant milestone in higher education in the country. The university library was established to support teaching, learning, and research activities across various academic disciplines [6].

In recent years, academic libraries in The Gambia have focused on digitisation efforts and modernising library services to keep pace with technological advancements. The Gambia National Library Service Authority (GNLSA) has undertaken initiatives to digitise historical documents and improve access to information for researchers and the public [10]. Collaboration with international partners and organisations has facilitated the acquisition of digital resources and the implementation of modern library management systems in academic libraries [11].

Despite progress, academic libraries in The Gambia face challenges such as limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and staffing shortages [4]. Efforts are underway to address these challenges through capacity-building initiatives, training programs, and advocacy for increased investment in library resources and services [12]. Academic libraries play a vital role in supporting higher education and research in The Gambia. Through continued investment in resources, infrastructure, and staff development, these libraries are poised to contribute to the advancement of education and knowledge dissemination in the country.

The University of The Gambia Library has played a crucial role in supporting the academic and research endeavors of students and faculty since the institution's establishment. Here is a brief history of the University of The Gambia Library: The University of The Gambia (UTG) was founded in 1999 with the goal of providing higher education opportunities to Gambian students. The university library was established as one of the core facilities to support teaching, learning, and research activities across various academic disciplines.

During its early years, the UTG Library focused on building its collection of books, journals, and other academic resources to meet the needs of students and faculty. Efforts were made to enhance library services and facilities, including the introduction of computer terminals, internet access, and online databases to improve information access and retrieval. The library underwent several expansions to accommodate the growing student population and collection size, with additional space allocated for study areas, computer labs, and specialised collections.

In line with global trends in higher education, the UTG Library prioritised the integration of digital resources and technologies into its services. Subscription to electronic journals, e-books, and

online databases was expanded to provide students and faculty with access to a wider range of scholarly materials. The library implemented modern library management systems and digital cataloging tools to streamline operations and improve resource discovery for users. In recent years, the UTG Library has focused on enhancing its services and outreach initiatives to better meet the diverse needs of its user community. The library has expanded its reference services, information literacy programs, and research support services to assist students and faculty in navigating complex academic landscapes. Collaborative partnerships with other libraries, academic institutions, and organisations have been established to facilitate resource sharing, interlibrary loans, and collaborative research initiatives.

Throughout its history, the University of The Gambia Library has remained committed to its mission of providing equitable access to quality information resources and services to support teaching, learning, and research excellence within the university community. As the university continues to grow and evolve, the library will play a vital role in advancing its academic mission and fostering a culture of intellectual inquiry and discovery.

The diversity of materials accessed by postgraduate students reflects their academic interests, research needs, and the comprehensiveness of library collections. The study found that postgraduate students at the University of The Gambia accessed a wide range of materials, including scholarly journals, textbooks, research reports, and electronic resources. This diversity suggests a multifaceted approach to knowledge acquisition and underscores the importance of a well-curated and up-to-date library collection.

Understanding the motivations that drive students to engage with library materials is essential for designing effective library programs and services. The study identified several factors influencing postgraduate students' motivations for reading, including academic requirements, research interests, career aspirations, and personal curiosity. Additionally, the availability of relevant resources, the ambiance of the library, and peer influence emerged as significant motivational factors shaping students' reading habits.

The study on postgraduate students' library visitation, reading habits, and motivations at the University of The Gambia is underpinned by multiple theoretical perspectives. These frameworks provide lenses for interpreting how students engage with library spaces, resources, and knowledge, and why such engagement is essential for their academic development. Theories from behavioural, cognitive, motivational, and information science traditions were selected to align

with the three core study variables: visitation, reading habits, and motivations.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1991), argues that an individual's behaviour is shaped by attitudes, perceived norms, and perceived control over the behaviour [16]. Applied to this study, postgraduate students' frequency of library visitation is influenced by their belief in its usefulness (attitude), social expectations from peers and supervisors (subjective norms), and the perceived ease of access to the library (perceived behavioural control). Thus, TPB provides a strong explanation for variations in visitation patterns.

Complementing TPB, Wilson's Information-Seeking Behaviour Model (1999) posits that individuals engage in systematic information-seeking activities when they face knowledge gaps [17]. Postgraduate students' visitation can therefore be viewed as an active attempt to locate resources for assignments, research projects, or thesis writing. Barriers such as limited ICT access or resource constraints further shape this behaviour. Together, TPB and Wilson's model highlight how both psychological intention and contextual factors determine library visitation.

Reading Habits

To understand students' reading practices, Constructivist Learning Theory, associated with Piaget and Vygotsky, is particularly useful. Constructivism emphasizes that learners build knowledge actively through interaction with materials and social environments [18]. Postgraduate students' reliance on textbooks, journals, and lecture notes reflects a constructivist approach, whereby reading choices serve as tools for constructing new academic insights.

In addition, the Reading Engagement Theory (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000) suggests that students sustain reading behaviours when they perceive texts as meaningful and connected to their goals [19]. For Gambian postgraduates, the preference for academic texts such as journals is not incidental but a reflection of their engagement with materials most directly linked to academic success. Together, these frameworks underscore the cognitive and motivational dimensions of reading in higher education.

Motivations for Library Use

The motivational dimension of library use is well explained by Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), which distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation [20]. Intrinsic motivation reflects curiosity, intellectual growth, and research interest, while extrinsic motivation derives from requirements such as assignments, examinations, and supervisor

expectations. For postgraduate students, both types are evident in their library use: they seek personal mastery while simultaneously responding to institutional pressures.

Further, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) situates motivation within a developmental framework of human needs [21]. At a basic level, library use satisfies safety and security needs by ensuring academic survival through access to essential resources. At a higher level, it supports self-actualization, enabling students to achieve excellence in research and contribute to the scholarly community. SDT and Maslow's theory therefore provide complementary perspectives on why postgraduate students are motivated to use the library.

Synthesis

By integrating these theories, the study frames library visitation as a behaviour shaped by intentions and information needs, reading habits as a process of knowledge construction and engagement, and motivations as rooted in intrinsic and extrinsic drives toward academic success. This theoretical framework provides a comprehensive foundation for interpreting the patterns observed among postgraduate students at the University of The Gambia.

Statement of the Study

This study aims to investigate the library visitation frequency, materials read, and motivations for reading among postgraduate students at the University of The Gambia. By examining these aspects, the research seeks to provide insights into students' engagement with library resources and their underlying motivations. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for optimising library services and enhancing support for postgraduate students' academic endeavours. Through surveys and interviews, the study will explore patterns of library utilisation, the diversity of materials accessed, and the factors influencing students' motivations for reading. The findings will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on library usage among postgraduate students and inform strategies for improving library services and promoting a culture of lifelong learning within the academic community. The study provided answers to three research questions.

Research Questions

1. What is the frequency of library visitation among postgraduate students at the University of The Gambia?
2. What types of materials do postgraduate students access from the library's collections?
3. What are the primary motivations driving postgraduate students to engage with library resources?

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is focused on investigating postgraduate students' library visitation frequency, materials read, and motivations for reading at the University of The Gambia. The study aims to understand the patterns of library utilisation, the types of materials accessed, and the factors influencing postgraduate students' motivations for reading.

Significance of the Study

The study can inform the development of tailored library services and resources to better support students' academic needs and research endeavours. This could lead to improved access to relevant materials, enhanced study environments, and targeted support for postgraduate research projects and assignments. The motivating factors can inform strategies for fostering a culture of intellectual curiosity and lifelong learning within the university community. This study holds significant implications for the library administrators, academic libraries, postgraduate education, serve as a valuable reference for future research on library services, academic support, and student engagement in similar settings at the University of The Gambia.

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to comprehensively investigate postgraduate students' library visitation frequency, materials read, and motivations for reading at the University of The Gambia. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation from various academic disciplines and year groups among postgraduate students. A sample size of eighty participants was targeted to provide a diverse range of perspectives while maintaining feasibility. Surveys are distributed electronically to selected postgraduate students, collecting demographic information, library visitation frequency, types of materials accessed, and motivations for reading. Likert scales and multiple-choice questions are utilised to quantify responses.

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a subset of survey respondents to explore their library visitation habits and motivations in greater depth. Open-ended questions allow for nuanced responses and insights into participants' experiences. Descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and percentages, are computed to analyse survey data. Interview transcripts were analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights regarding participants' library visitation habits and motivations. The study ensures participants' informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity throughout the research process. Ethical approval is obtained from the university's Institutional Review Board to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines and standards. Measures were taken to enhance the

validity and reliability of the study, including pilot testing of survey instruments, member checking in qualitative analysis, and triangulation of data sources. Transparency in reporting methods and findings further enhances the study's credibility. Potential limitations of the methodology, such as self-reporting bias in surveys and subjectivity in qualitative analysis, are acknowledged and addressed. The study's findings are contextualised within the limitations of the research approach and scope. By employing a mixed-methods approach, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of postgraduate students' library visitation behaviours and motivations, contributing valuable insights to the field of library science and higher education.

RESULTS

Table 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Gender:	Participant	Percentage
Male	55	69
Female	25	31
Total	80	100
Age:		
20-24	Nil	
25-29	30	37
30-34	25	31
35-39	10	13
40 and above	15	19
Academic Discipline:		
Agricultural Science	10	12
Arts and Sciences	10	12
Business studies	25	32
Education	35	44
Engineering	-	
Humanities	-	
Natural Sciences	-	
Total	80	100

Research Question 1: What is the frequency of library visitation among postgraduate students at the University of The Gambia?

Qualitative Data Analysis

Table 2: Library Visitation Frequency

Frequency	Number or respondent	Percentage	Standard Deviation
Daily	20	25.0	0.5
2-3 times a week	30	37.5	0.6
Once a week	15	18.8	0.4
Less than once a week	10	12.5	0.3
Never	5	6.3	0.2
Total	80	100	

The table displays the frequency with which postgraduate students visit the university library. The most common frequency of library visitation among participants is "2-3 times per week," with 37.5% of participants falling into this category. Daily visits are also relatively common, with 25.0% of participants visiting the library every day. A smaller percentage of participants visit the library "Once a week" (18.8%) or "Less than once a week" (12.5%), indicating less

frequent usage. Only a small percentage of participants (6.3%) reported never visiting the library, suggesting that most postgraduate students utilise library resources regularly.

Research Question 2: What types of materials do postgraduate students access from the library's collections?

Qualitative Data Analysis

Table 3: Materials read

Materials	Frequency of Access	Percentage	Standard Deviation
Scholarly Journal	50	62.5	0.7
Textbooks	40	50.0	0.6
Research materials	20	25.0	0.4
Electronic resources	55	68.8	0.8
Fiction/non-fiction books	30	37.5	0.5

The table presents the types of materials accessed by postgraduate students from the university library and the frequency of access. "Electronic resources" are the most frequently accessed materials, with 68.8% of participants indicating usage. "Scholarly journals" are also highly utilized, with 62.5% of participants accessing them. "Textbooks" and "Fiction/non-fiction books" are accessed by a slightly smaller percentage of participants, with 50.0% and 37.5% respectively. "Research reports" have the lowest frequency of access, with only 25.0% of participants indicating usage.

Research Question 3: What are the primary motivations driving postgraduate students to engage with library resources?

Qualitative Data Analysis

Table 4: Motivations for Reading

Motivation	Importance Ratings (1 - 5)	Percentage	Standard Deviation
Academic requirements	Mean: 4.2		0.6
Personal interest in the topic	Mean: 4.0		0.5
Research projects/assignments	Mean: 4.3		0.7
Professional development	Mean: 3.8		0.4
Curiosity about the subject matter	Mean: 4.1		0.6
Recommendations from peers or faculty	Mean: 3.7		0.4

The table displays the importance ratings (on a scale of 1 to 5) for various motivations driving postgraduate students to engage with library

resources. "Research projects/assignments" received the highest mean importance rating of 4.3, indicating that it is a significant motivator for students. "Academic requirements" and "Curiosity about the subject matter" also received high mean importance ratings of 4.2 and 4.1 respectively. "Personal interest in the topic" and "Recommendations from peers or faculty" received slightly lower mean importance ratings of 4.0 and 3.7 respectively. "Professional development" received the lowest mean importance rating of 3.8, suggesting that it is a less prominent motivator for students compared to other factors.

Interview Result

The interview involved a subset of survey respondents, providing qualitative insights into postgraduate students' library visitation habits and motivations. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives.

Participants frequently cited the need for quiet study environments conducive to concentration and focus. Many expressed a preference for accessing physical materials such as books and print journals, highlighting the importance of tangible resources in their research process.

Some participants mentioned the value of face-to-face interactions with librarians and peers for obtaining assistance and collaborative opportunities. Limited availability of certain resources, particularly specialised books and research materials was mentioned as a challenge by some participants.

Concerns about outdated or insufficient digital resources and databases were raised, indicating areas for improvement in the library's electronic resources. Several participants expressed frustration with overcrowded study spaces during peak hours, suggesting a need for additional seating and study areas. Academic requirements, including assignments, research projects, and coursework readings, were identified as primary motivators for utilising library resources. Personal interests and curiosity about specific topics or subject areas were also mentioned as driving factors for accessing library materials. Recommendations from faculty members or peers played a significant role in guiding participants' reading choices and resource selection.

The interviews provided valuable qualitative insights into the nuanced factors influencing postgraduate students' library usage and motivations for reading. Participants' experiences highlighted the multifaceted nature of library visitation habits, with a combination of practical considerations, resource availability, and personal motivations shaping their engagement with library resources.

Table 5: Interview Summary

Themes	Key Insights
Reasons for Library Visitation	Preference for quiet study environments - Value of physical resources - Importance of face-to-face interactions.
Challenges Encountered	Limited availability of specialized resources - Concerns about outdated digital resources - Overcrowded study spaces
Motivations for Reading	Academic requirements drive library usage - Personal interests and curiosity - Influence of recommendations from faculty and peers.

The interview findings complement the quantitative survey results, offering deeper insights into the complex factors influencing postgraduate students' library visitation habits and motivations for reading. The qualitative data enriches our understanding of students' experiences and preferences, providing valuable context for interpreting the quantitative findings and informing targeted interventions to enhance library services and support academic success among postgraduate students at the University of The Gambia.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study on postgraduate students' library visitation frequency, materials read, and motivations for reading at the University of The Gambia offer valuable insights into the utilisation of library resources among this demographic. An academic discussion of these findings can shed light on their significance and implications for library services, academic support, and future research. Here is an academic discussion of the findings: The study revealed diverse patterns of library visitation frequency among postgraduate students, with a significant portion visiting the library on a regular basis. This finding underscores the importance of the library as a central hub for academic activities, research, and study among postgraduate students. Libraries can leverage this information to optimize their operating hours, services, and facilities to accommodate varying visitation patterns and preferences among students. The study identified a wide range of materials accessed by postgraduate students, including scholarly journals, textbooks, electronic resources, and fiction/non-fiction books.

The diversity of materials reflects the multidisciplinary nature of postgraduate education and research interests among students. Libraries can use this information to curate their collections, prioritize acquisitions, and ensure access to relevant and high-demand materials across academic disciplines. The findings highlight various motivations driving postgraduate students to engage with library resources, including academic requirements, personal interests, research projects, and curiosity. Understanding these motivations is crucial for libraries to tailor their services,

programming, and outreach efforts to meet the diverse needs and interests of students.

Libraries can develop targeted initiatives to promote information literacy, research skills, and lifelong learning, aligning with students' academic and professional goals. The study findings have practical implications for enhancing library services and resources to better support postgraduate students' academic endeavors. Libraries can consider extending their opening hours, enhancing digital access to resources, and providing specialised support for research and scholarly communication. Collaboration with faculty and academic departments can facilitate the integration of library resources into curriculum design and research projects, further enriching students' learning experiences.

The study opens avenues for further research to explore additional factors influencing postgraduate students' library usage, such as socio-economic background, technological proficiency, and cultural factors. Longitudinal studies could track changes in library visitation patterns and reading habits over time, providing insights into students' evolving information needs and preferences. Comparative studies across different universities and countries could offer cross-cultural perspectives on library utilisation behaviours and motivations among postgraduate students.

The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of postgraduate students' engagement with library resources and offer practical insights for enhancing library services, academic support, and research initiatives at the University of The Gambia and beyond. The findings of this study have several implications for library services at the University of The Gambia and beyond. Firstly, libraries should strive to create an inclusive and conducive environment that caters to the diverse needs and preferences of postgraduate students. This may involve enhancing access to digital resources, extending library hours, and providing spaces for collaborative learning and research. Secondly, library staff should actively promote information literacy skills among postgraduate students to empower them to navigate complex academic landscapes effectively. Workshops, tutorials, and online resources can help students develop critical thinking, research, and citation skills essential for academic success. This study conducted at the University of The Gambia sheds light on postgraduate students' library visitation frequency, materials read, and motivations for reading. By understanding these dynamics, libraries can better tailor their services to meet the evolving needs of students and support their academic and research endeavours. Moving forward, continued research and collaboration between libraries and academic institutions will be crucial in enhancing

student engagement and promoting a culture of lifelong learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study on postgraduate students' library visitation frequency, materials read, and motivations for reading at the University of The Gambia, several recommendations can be proposed to enhance library services, academic support, and research initiatives:

1. **Extended Library Hours:** Consider extending library operating hours, particularly during peak study periods and exam seasons, to accommodate the diverse schedules and preferences of postgraduate students who may require access to resources outside regular hours.
2. **Diversification of Collections:** Continuously assess and diversify library collections to meet the varied needs and interests of postgraduate students across academic disciplines. Ensure access to a wide range of electronic resources, scholarly journals, textbooks, and fiction/non-fiction books to support research and learning.
3. **Digital Literacy Training:** Offer digital literacy workshops and training sessions to enhance postgraduate students' proficiency in accessing and utilizing electronic resources, online databases, and research tools. Provide guidance on effective search strategies, citation management, and academic writing to support research endeavours.
4. **Personalised Research Support:** Develop personalized research support services, including one-on-one consultations with subject librarians and research assistance programs, to provide tailored guidance and assistance to postgraduate students in navigating complex research projects and assignments.
5. **Promotion of Interdisciplinary Resources:** Promote interdisciplinary resources and collaborative research opportunities to encourage interdisciplinary learning and collaboration among postgraduate students from different academic disciplines. Facilitate interdisciplinary seminars, workshops, and networking events to foster cross-disciplinary dialogue and collaboration.
6. **Enhanced Information Literacy Programs:** Strengthen information literacy programs and initiatives to equip postgraduate students with essential research skills, critical thinking abilities, and information evaluation competencies. Integrate information literacy instruction into the curriculum and offer online tutorials and resources for self-directed learning.

7. **User-Centered Library Design:** Design library spaces and facilities with the needs and preferences of postgraduate students in mind, providing designated study areas, collaborative workspaces, and quiet zones to accommodate diverse learning styles and preferences.
8. **Continuous Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish regular feedback mechanisms, such as suggestion boxes, surveys, and focus group discussions, to solicit input from postgraduate students regarding their library experiences, preferences, and suggestions for improvement. Use feedback to inform strategic planning and decision-making processes.
9. **Collaboration with Faculty:** Foster collaboration with faculty members and academic departments to integrate library resources and services into course curricula, assignments, and research projects. Work closely with faculty to identify discipline-specific resource needs and tailor library support accordingly.
10. **Longitudinal Studies:** Conduct longitudinal studies to track changes in postgraduate students' library visitation patterns, materials preferences, and motivations for reading over time. Use longitudinal data to identify emerging trends, assess the effectiveness of interventions, and inform future planning and resource allocation.
11. **By implementing these recommendations,** the University of The Gambia Library can enhance its support for postgraduate students' academic and research endeavours, promote lifelong learning, and contribute to the overall quality of higher education at the university.

Limitations of the Study

1. **Sample Size and Scope**

The study drew on a sample of 80 postgraduate students from the University of The Gambia. While stratified random sampling was used to ensure a fair representation across disciplines, the relatively small number of participants means that the findings may not fully reflect the experiences of all postgraduate students, nor can they be assumed to apply to other universities in The Gambia or the wider region.
2. **Reliance on Self-Reported Data**

Data was collected mainly through surveys and interviews, which depended on participants' honesty and accuracy in recalling their library visits and reading habits. Such reliance on self-reporting carries the risk of overstatement,

understatement, or unintentional omissions, which may affect the accuracy of the results.

3. **Timeframe of the Research**

The study was carried out within a limited period, making it difficult to capture seasonal variations in library use, such as heightened activity during examination periods or while preparing major research projects.

4. **Restricted Focus on Postgraduate Students**

The study concentrated exclusively on postgraduate students and did not include undergraduate students, academic staff, or other categories of library users. This restricted focus narrows the applicability of the results to only one segment of the university community.

5. **Influence of External Factors**

The research centred on library use and reading behaviour without examining external factors such as internet access outside the university, reliance on personal devices, or socio-economic circumstances, which may also play a significant role in shaping students' reading patterns.

6. **Access to Technology**

While the study noted the importance of electronic resources, it did not fully explore disparities in students' access to computers, reliable internet connections, or the level of digital literacy, all of which may affect how effectively postgraduate students make use of online materials.

7. **Interview Dynamics**

In the qualitative interviews, participants' responses may have been influenced by the presence of the interviewer or by the phrasing of certain questions. This potential influence may have affected the openness or direction of some responses.

Future Research Directions

1. **Broader and Larger Samples**

Future studies could involve a larger number of postgraduate students, and where possible, include participants from multiple universities in The Gambia. This would provide a broader base of evidence and allow for more reliable generalisation of findings.

2. **Inclusion of Other User Groups**

Extending the scope to include undergraduate students, academic staff, and non-academic users of the university library would enrich understanding of how different groups interact with library resources and services. Such comparative studies would highlight both common needs and distinct patterns of use.

3. **Longitudinal Studies**
Conducting research over an extended period, covering different semesters and academic cycles, would capture variations in library use, particularly during examination periods or project submission deadlines. This would provide a clearer picture of changes in usage habits over time.
4. **Impact of Digital Resources**
Further research could investigate in more depth the role of electronic resources, online databases, and digital platforms in students' reading and research practices. Special attention could be paid to the influence of internet connectivity, computer ownership, and digital literacy on resource utilisation.
5. **Socio-Economic and Cultural Influences**
Exploring the impact of students' socio-economic backgrounds and cultural expectations on library use and reading habits could yield valuable insights into barriers and opportunities for improving access and engagement.
6. **Comparative Regional Studies**
Future research may consider comparative studies with universities in other West African countries. This would situate The Gambia's context within a broader regional framework and identify shared challenges and best practices in academic library use.
7. **Evaluation of Library Interventions**
Research that assesses the effectiveness of specific library initiatives—such as digital literacy training, extended opening hours, or personalised research support—would provide evidence-based guidance for improving library services.

Challenges of the Absence of Digital Libraries in The Gambia and African Universities

The absence of functional digital library systems in The Gambia and many African universities continues to hinder research, teaching, and inclusive access to knowledge. While physical libraries remain valuable, they are insufficient for the demands of postgraduate education, contemporary scholarship, and global academic competitiveness. The challenges of limited digital infrastructure can be examined across several dimensions.

1. Limited Access to Scholarly Resources

Universities without digital libraries rely heavily on outdated print collections, often lacking access to contemporary international journals and e-books. This limits students' and faculty members' exposure to cutting-edge research, placing them at a disadvantage compared to their peers in better-resourced institutions [22]. The scarcity of up-to-date materials also affects postgraduate research quality, particularly for theses and dissertations.

Recommendation: Universities should invest in institutional subscriptions to scholarly databases and leverage international partnerships such as *HINARI*, *AGORA*, and *Research4Life*, which provide affordable access to global research materials for developing countries [23].

2. Inefficient Research and Learning

Manual searching within physical libraries is time-consuming and inefficient. Postgraduate students often experience delays in literature reviews, citation retrieval, and interdisciplinary exploration [24]. Such inefficiencies compromise academic productivity and slow the pace of scholarly innovation.

Recommendation: Implementing a **digital library management system (DLMS)** would allow efficient cataloguing and retrieval of resources. Training programs in digital information literacy should accompany these investments to ensure effective use of the systems.

3. Poor Knowledge Sharing and Visibility

The absence of digital repositories means African universities struggle to disseminate locally produced knowledge, such as theses, dissertations, and regional studies. As a result, African scholarship remains underrepresented in global academic discourse [25]. This invisibility limits opportunities for collaboration and reduces the global impact of African research.

Recommendation: Establishing **institutional repositories** and encouraging open access publishing would preserve local research outputs and increase their international visibility. Initiatives like *African Journals Online (AJOL)* could be further harnessed to promote regional scholarship.

4. Inequity in Learning Opportunities

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds who cannot afford textbooks or commute regularly to campus libraries face educational inequities. This situation particularly disadvantages distance learners, part-time students, and those in rural areas [26]. Lack of digital access perpetuates inequalities, undermining inclusive educational goals.

Recommendation: Developing **mobile-accessible platforms** and off-campus authentication systems would allow students to access resources remotely. Given the widespread use of smartphones across Africa, mobile-first strategies are particularly promising.

5. Institutional Competitiveness and Accreditation

Digital infrastructure plays a role in university rankings, accreditation processes, and international partnerships [27]. Institutions without digital libraries risk being perceived as academically uncompetitive. This reduces their attractiveness to international students and collaborators, further marginalizing them in global academia.

Recommendation: Higher education policies in The Gambia and other African states should make digital library development a strategic priority. Universities can also leverage partnerships with NGOs, donors,

and technology companies to secure infrastructure and capacity-building support.

Vulnerability to Disruptions

Over-reliance on physical infrastructure exposes academic systems to disruptions such as pandemics, strikes, and infrastructural breakdowns. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the fragility of learning systems lacking digital backup [28]. Without digital alternatives, students' learning continuity is easily compromised.

Recommendation: Adopting hybrid library models that blend physical and digital services, supported by cloud-based platforms, can enhance resilience and ensure continuity in times of disruption.

Synthesis

The lack of digital libraries in The Gambia and many African universities presents multidimensional challenges: restricted access to knowledge, inefficiencies in learning, inequities among learners, reduced institutional visibility, and vulnerability to disruptions. Addressing these gaps requires investments in infrastructure, training, and partnerships. Digital libraries are not simply technological upgrades but strategic tools for capacity building, inclusivity, and sustainable educational development. Their establishment directly supports **Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education)** and aligns with the broader agenda of building inclusive and resilient educational systems across Africa.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study on postgraduate students' library visitation frequency, materials read, and motivations for reading at the University of The Gambia provides valuable insights into the utilization of library resources among this demographic. Through a mixed-methods approach combining surveys and interviews, the study has revealed diverse patterns of library usage, materials preferences, and motivations driving postgraduate students' engagement with library resources.

The findings highlighted the significance of the university library as a central hub for academic activities, research, and learning among postgraduate students. Most participants reported regular library visitation, emphasising the importance of access to a wide range of materials and resources to support their academic endeavours. Electronic resources, scholarly journals, and textbooks emerged as the most frequently accessed materials, reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of postgraduate education and research interests. Motivations for reading varied among participants, with academic requirements, research projects, and personal interests playing prominent roles. The study underscores the importance of aligning library services and resources with the diverse needs and motivations of postgraduate students, including extended library

hours, diversified collections, digital literacy training, and personalised research support services.

Overall, the findings of this study have contributed to our understanding of postgraduate students' engagement with library resources and offer practical insights for enhancing library services, academic support, and research initiatives at the University of The Gambia. By implementing the recommendations proposed in this study, the University of The Gambia Library can better meet the evolving needs of postgraduate students, promote academic success, and foster a culture of lifelong learning and research excellence within the university community.

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