

The impact of electronic information resource use on research output: experiences from Universities in Tanzania

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of the use of electronic information resources on research output in the universities in Tanzania. Research for this paper was conducted in five public universities in Tanzania with varied levels of access to electronic information resources. The selection of the sample universities was purposive. Data was collected using face-to-face interviews, questionnaires and key informant interviews. Analysis of data employed descriptive and quantitative techniques. Empirical data revealed that the use of online information resources has a positive impact on various research activities and milestones such as research proposal submission, research proposal funding, and research report writing and journal article publishing. The results therefore provide empirical support for a positive relationship between the use of electronic information resources and research output and publishing in general. This was demonstrated in the increased number of proposals prepared, submitted and funded, research reports submitted, journal articles published and chapters in books and books published with increased access to and use of electronic information resources. Results also show that although researchers who are actually using the scholarly databases are small in number the core group of researchers using these resources is growing and the use of resources is becoming more frequent and diverse. The major challenges observed include ineffective marketing strategies on the availability of the resources, inadequate training of end users, questionable content relevance of some of the resources and issues of sustainability of access given high levels of donor dependency for subscriptions. Finally, limited variations in terms of intensity of use of resources were observed between junior and higher ranking academics; and younger and older members of faculty. The paper makes a number of recommendations.

Keywords:

Electronic information resource; research output; Public Universities in Tanzania