

Gender Analysis of Electronic Information Resource Use: The Case of the University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

P. Manda., & F. Mukangara

Abstract

This article is based on an empirical study that examined the association between gender and the use of electronic information resources among postgraduate students at the University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. The study was conducted in December 2005 and integrated both qualitative and quantitative research designs. A sample of 100 postgraduate students was selected using a stratified proportionate random sampling procedure with a 97% response rate. Face to face interviews was the major technique of data collection. In addition, focus group discussions (FGDS), key informant interviews, analysis of records and observations were employed in data collection. Data analysis involved the use of cross-tabulation and qualitative descriptions. Findings revealed that gender is associated with the use of electronic information resources and male postgraduate students were more likely to use electronic information resources than female students. Results further showed that even when we controlled for attitude toward the use of electronic information resources or training in the use of e-resources the relationship between gender and electronic information resource use was maintained. Other variables that were found to have positive association with the use of electronic information resources included: training in the use of electronic information resources, access to e-resources, awareness of the availability of resources and year of study. Generally this study revealed that the use of electronic databases and electronic journals among postgraduate students is low although the use of internet search engines such as google, yahoo and other free internet resources was found to be high and frequent. Specifically, female students fared low in the use of electronic information resources. Based on the findings the study concluded that access and use of electronic information resources creates a “social digital divide” along gender lines. The study recommends that: high speed internet connectivity be made available to postgraduate students; and establish computer rooms for female graduate students which are conveniently located. Design and implement free literacy classes for female postgraduate students for capacity building. Develop web site for postgraduate students and a listserv for postgraduate female students only. Computer labs at the University should keep gender disaggregated statistics in the use of electronic information resources. Finally, the library needs to change its marketing strategies on the availability of electronic information resources to increase awareness of these resources.

Keywords:

Gender; Electronic Information Resource Use; University of Dar es Salaam