Citation and Referencing as a Catalyst for Optimizing E-Resource Utilization: The Case of Graduate Students in Christian Universities in Nairobi County

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Abstract

Sophisticated systems and technologies have led to the proliferation of e-resources and their adoption alongside print media in higher learning institutions, particularly with the rise of e-learning. To ensure effective utilization of e-resources, citation and referencing competences remain integral in graduate students' research, learning and scholastic achievement. Nonetheless, studies done reveal that e-resources remain underutilized. This study aimed at investigating the role of citation and referencing competences in enhancing e-resource utilization among graduate students in Christian Universities in Nairobi County. Descriptive survey research design was used to gather comprehensive data. Stratified and systematic sampling was employed to select graduate students, and purposive sampling to select librarians. The target population was 843 graduate students and 8 library staff. A 20% sample was selected, resulting to 168 graduate students and 8 librarians. Questionnaires collected data from graduate students and the librarians were interviewed. Thematic analysis was done for qualitative data, which was presented thematically and using verbatim. Quantitative data analysis was conducted using SPSS, employing descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The results were presented in tables and figures. The findings revealed that graduate students showed a strong preference for and effectively utilized a variety of e-resources. Additionally, they demonstrated a satisfactory understanding and application of citation, referencing styles, and reference management software/tools. The Pearson correlation analysis indicated a strong positive linear association. Consequently, the study concluded that citing and referencing significantly affected graduate students' use of e-resources. Based on these findings, the study recommends mandatory training in citing and referencing for graduate students in Christian universities in Nairobi County. It emphasizes the need to market e-resources, analyze usage statistics, and reassess the library budget. Additionally, attention should be given to mastering referencing, improving citation ability, and utilizing reference management tools/software in a bid to optimizing e-resource use and overall academic success.

Keywords: *Citation and referencing, reference management software, reference management tools, e-resources, Christian Universities, e-resources utilization, Nairobi County*

1.0 Introduction

The evolution and integration of transformative technologies, infrastructure, networks and policies in the education sector, has resulted in the significant proliferation of electronic resources, and their adoption in tertiary education, primarily universities, globally. According to Pandit (2019), not only do e-resources complement the print media, but they are also preferred by the majority of the students enrolled in universities, particularly the digital natives. Furthermore, the popularity of electronic resources is enhanced by their distinctive features, which include interoperability, accessibility, cost and portability. In a bid to enhance scholastic achievement, research and innovation in universities, the library administration invests significant funds in the acquisition of e-resources (Agyapong et al., 2019; Tlakula & Fombad, 2017).

".Research reveals that citation and referencing, as well as user's proficiency in English language have a positive significant correlation with the academic performance of students"

The utilization of electronic resources in university libraries serves as an indicative measure that user demands are effectively addressed and aligned to collection development policies. To optimize their use, libraries need a robust ICT infrastructure with high-speed internet, an engaging website, sufficient computers, an efficient resource management system, and a reliable server.

Countries such as France, the USA, and China are renowned for their advanced technologies and their efforts to integrate transformative systems and technologies into their university libraries to enhance access to electronic resources.

A case example is the Washington University Library (2022) in USA that has exemplified the implementation of cutting-edge system and technologies in a bid to enhance use of electronic resources. Further, the establishment of library consortia on a global scale has been integral in the promotion, administration and adoption of electronic resources. Notably, consortia such as the DRAA of China and the COUPERIN in France, have facilitated the acquisition of electronic resources, gathered usage statistics, provided user support, managed collections, and conducted marketing activities for its members (Boukacem-Zeghmouri & Schöpfel, 2012; Ye et al., 2018).

These examples highlight the numerous benefits and advantages of library consortia. Conversely, in developing countries like India, Pakistan, Ghana, Uganda, and Tanzania, studies have focused on optimizing e-resource utilization. Factors affecting usage of e-resources include internet exposure, availability or lack thereof, and challenges such as low power supply, inadequate technologies, and information literacy skills (Ankrah & Atuase, 2018; Gakibayo et al., 2013; Mwantimwa et al., 2017). Proficient

citation and referencing skills have been highlighted as crucial for effective utilization of electronic resources.

The need to have effective citation and referencing competencies has burgeoned in the present age of information owing to the proliferation of e-resources and interoperable systems. According to Bautista et al. (2022), citation and referencing not only accredits authors, but it also upholds the intellectual property rights of works used. This denotes its significance in upholding ethical writing, whilst mitigating plagiarism which infringes copyright laws. Citation and referencing proficiency not only involves knowledge of an array of referencing styles and their application, but also effective generation of in-text and reference lists (citation-ability) (Tunney & Wilson, 2018). Blicblau et al. (2016) opine that in recent years, reference management tools and software have revolutionized citation and referencing through automatic generation of in-text citations, collation of materials used, back up of data on cloud, generation of reference and bibliographic lists.

Therefore, the ability to integrate reference management tools and software is an added advantage in the present-day scholarly landscape. Research reveals that citation and referencing, as well as user's proficiency in English language have a positive significant correlation with the academic performance of students (Bautista & Pentang, 2022; Muzata & Banja, 2019). This study sought to explore the role of citation and referencing in optimizing e-resource use among graduate students. In Kenya, Christian university libraries have made immense development in the provision of e-resources through fusion of

information technology and social media tools to facilitate access to, and use of e-resources.

Moreover, subscription to the Kenya Libraries and Information Services consortium, has not only facilitated access to an array of e-resources and e-resources databases, but also database systems responsible for the collation and management of e-resources at the institutional level. Despite Christian universities' efforts to create an engaging virtual environment with diverse and valuable electronic resources, statistical analysis supports Amunga (2011) findings that highlight the underutilization of electronic materials. Research done credits the underutilization to lack of awareness, insufficient information technology and inadequate information literacy skills (Ankrah & Atuase, 2018; Nyamboga et al., 2014).

Additionally, studies done indicate that low use of e-resources could affect scholastic achievement, affect teaching and learning at universities, and even lead to collapse of consortia (Akussah et al., 2015; Banik & Kumar, 2019; Chadwell, 2011). Nonetheless, the role citation and referencing plays in enhancing e-resource use has not been explored, thus highlighting the need for this study.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the role of citation and referencing competences in optimizing e-resource utilization among graduate students in Christian Universities in Nairobi County.

Hypothesis of the Study

$H_0 1$: Citation and referencing does not significantly optimize e-resource use by graduate students in Christian universities in Nairobi County.

2.0 Materials and Methods

In this study, the descriptive survey design was employed. This design was found ideal for the large population that constituted 843 graduate students and 8 librarians from the selected Christian universities; namely, Daystar University, Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), Africa International University (AIU) and Kenya Methodist University (KeMU). Singh (2017) suggests that a sample size ranging from 10% to 30% can be representative of an entire population. Therefore, a 20% proportion was selected, resulting in the participation of 168 graduate students and all the 8 librarians participated. Graduate students were stratified into those taking master's and doctorate degrees, then picked through systematic sampling. The 5th was picked, a sample interval arrived at by dividing the target population number and the sample size, thus 843/168 hence 5.017. The select library staff that comprised of the university librarians and systems librarians were purposively picked for this study.

Questionnaires and interviews were identified as the instruments of data collection and used in this study. The questionnaires were sent to all the sampled graduate students via email, while the researcher interviewed the librarians. Pretesting of the instruments was done at Tangaza University College where 38 graduate students participated. Pernerger et al. (2015) assert that a sample of 30 participants is preferable for pretesting. Construct, face and content validity was ensured prior to the study. Cronbach alpha was computed to guarantee internal consistency of data. The study led to the generation of both quantitative and qualitative data. The study employed IBM SPSS for the analysis of quantitative data, encompassing descriptive and inferential statistics, whereby correlation analysis was done. Additionally, diagnostic tests were done to ensure the appropriateness of the data.

3.0 Results and Discussion

To ensure reliability of data, the internal consistency of the data was assessed using Cronbach Alpha, resulting to a value of 0.902, confirming the instrument's reliability for data collection. This finding aligns with Mohajan (2017) statement that a correlation coefficient above 0.7 is considered dependable. Regarding the response rate, 126 out of the 168 questionnaires were filled, while all 8 interviews were conducted. This translates to a 75% response rate for questionnaires, and 100% for interviews. This response rate meets the acceptable standard suggested by Mugenda and Mugenda (2019), who stated that a 60% response rate was sufficient for data analysis and representative of the findings.

Background Information

The respondents primarily constituted of graduate students and library staff. According to the results shown in Table 1, a majority of graduate students in Christian universities in Nairobi County were female (64.3%), indicating a modest gender balance. Most students were pursuing a master's degree

(63.5%), while a smaller percentage were enrolled in a doctoral (PhD) program (36.5%). These findings align with the guidelines of the Commission for University Education (2014) which emphasize the significance of master's and doctoral programs in accredited universities. Additionally, the study revealed that distance learning was preferred by the majority of students (53.2%), while part-time/evening study was chosen by others (46%). These trends support the shift towards e-learning platforms, as observed in previous research on the relevance of libraries in universities beyond the pandemic (Ifijeh & Yusuf, 2020).

Table 1

Demographic information of graduate students

Demographic Information	Subset	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	45	35.7
	Female	81	64.3
	Total	126	100
Academic Program Pursuing	PhD	46	36.5
	Masters	80	63.5
	Total	126	100
Mode of Study	Full-time	1	0.8
	Part-time/ Evening	58	46.0
	Distance Learning	67	53.2
	Total	100	100

In addition, interviews were conducted with the systems librarians and the University librarians. The University librarians are responsible for managing various aspects of the library department, such as information literacy framework, and IL policy implementation. The gender distribution among the interviewed University librarians was equal, with two males (50%) and two females (50%). Findings showed that three of the University librarians (75%) held a master's degree, while one librarian had a PhD (25%). In terms of experience, two University librarians (50%) had 1-5 years of experience, while the other two (50%) had over 11 years. In addition, systems librarians responsible for managing e-resources and the database systems were interviewed. Among them, three were male (75%) and one was female (25%). Most systems librarians held a master's degree (75%), while only one had a bachelor's degree (25%). In terms of experience, one systems librarian had over 11 years, while the remaining three had 1-5 years of experience. These academic qualifications and years of experience align with the recommendations set by the Commission for University Education (2014) for university library staff. Table 2 outlines the demographic information of the selected librarians.

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Table 2

Demographic information of the select librarians

Library Staff			Frequency	Percentage
University Librarian	Gender	Male	2	50
		Female	2	50
		Total	4	100
	Highest Academic Qualification	PhD	1	25
		Masters	3	75
		Total	4	100
	Years of Experience	1-5 years	2	50
		6-10 years	0	0
		11 years and above	2	50
		Total	4	100
Systems Librarian	Gender	Male	3	75
		Female	1	25
		Total	4	100
	Highest Academic Qualification	PhD	0	0
		Masters	3	75
		Bachelors	1	25
		Total	100	100
	Years of Experience	1-5 years	3	75
		6-10 years	0	0
		11 years and above	1	25
		Total	100	100

Results on the Utilization of E-resources

A 5-level Likert scale coded 1 to 5; where 1 represented "Strongly Disagree" (SD), 2 denoted "Disagree" (D), 3 indicated "Moderately Agree" (MA), 4 stood for "Agree" (A), and 5 represented "Strongly Agree" (SA) was used to measure degree of concurrence with respect to statements formulated pertaining to the utilization of electronic resources by graduate students. The outcomes of the descriptive statistics are summarized in Table 3.

Based on the tabulated data, it is evident that a considerable portion of the participants agreed with various statements regarding the utilization of e-resources. The aggregate mean score was 3.68 with a standard deviation of 1.196, indicating a relatively high dispersion or variability of the responses around the mean. Among the responses, the top three statements that garnered agreement were as follows: I am capable of navigating the OPAC to find the most recent information (81, 64.3%, m=3.79, SD=1.335); I access and utilize e-books in my academic work (88, 69.9%, m=3.75, SD=1.198); and I access the library website regularly to keep up with current information (87, 69.1%, m=3.70, SD=1.228). These findings indicate that electronic resources serve diverse objectives for graduate students, as corroborated by the

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claims of Ali et al. (2018), who explain that learners utilize these resources not only for academic pursuits but also for recreational purposes, staying informed, seeking employment opportunities, and enhancing their prospects of career advancement.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics on the utilization of e-resources

Utilizing e-resources (N = 126)	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	STD Dev
I access and utilize e-books in my academic work	11 (8.7%)	8 (6.3%)	19 (15.1%)	51 (40.5%)	37 (29.4%)	3.75	1.198
I am capable of evaluating and finding journals that I can use freely	10 (7.9%)	7 (5.6%)	31 (24.6%)	52 (41.3%)	26 (20.6%)	3.61	1.117
I utilize information on the institutional repository in my research work	9 (7.1%)	10 (7.9%)	26 (20.6%)	58 (46%)	23 (18.3%)	3.60	1.096
I am capable of applying the information literacy guides in my academic work	14 (11.1%)	4 (3.2%)	27 (21.4%)	52 (41.3%)	29 (23%)	3.62	1.199
I am capable of navigating the OPAC to find the information I need	14 (11.1%)	6 (4.8%)	25 (19.8%)	28 (22.2%)	53 (42.1%)	3.79	1.335
I access the library website regularly to keep up with current information	14 (11.1%)	5 (4%)	20 (15.9%)	53 (42.1%)	34 (27%)	3.70	1.228
Aggregate mean						3.68	1.196

The statements that received the least agreement among the participants included: utilizing information from the institutional repository in research work (81, 64.3%, mean=3.60, SD=1.096); and being capable of evaluating and finding freely accessible journals (78, 61.9%, mean=3.61, SD=1.117). However, despite the lower level of agreement for these statements, more than

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(50%) of the respondents indicated their agreement; suggesting that graduate students do have access to the institutional repository and e-journals. This finding supports Hendal (2020) claim that the use of e-journals has increased during and after the COVID-19 period.The systems librarians were also interviewed, and asked to give their suggestions that would enhance graduate students use of e-resources.

Systems librarian-02 noted *"Universities should have basic computer skills course as a compulsory in the first semester, since this will help graduate students, mostly the older students get IT skills that will enhance utilization of e-resources."* Systems librarian-04 added: *"Continuous awareness and marketing of e-resources will enhance utilization."*

During the interview, the university librarians were requested to provide their insights on the usage of e-resources and offer suggestions to improve their utilization.

University librarian-02 stated: *"During COVID-19 period, we transitioned to e-learning fully and we are yet to return to physical learning especially for graduate students. We have thus intensified the use of e-resources and the uptake is very high. Making sure the interfaces are user friendly will enhance utilization."*

University librarian-03 added*: "Use of e-resources is much higher than the physical ones, 60 – 40 percent. There should be emphasis on discipline-based training. Graduate students need to be trained separately, that way they will be introduced to discipline specific databases that focus on the disciplines they are studying; either psychology, education or theology."*

The results indicate that the library fulfills its responsibility by offering a diverse collection of e-resources and providing the necessary support services to facilitate their usage among graduate students. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate a strong awareness of e-resources, which aligns with the findings of Akussah et al. (2015) who emphasize the link between awareness and utilization of e-resources in the library. Further, these findings challenge the notion presented by Amunga (2011) that the extent of e-resources use is limited. This can be attributed to significant advancements in technology, particularly during the COVID-19 period, which greatly enhanced e-learning and facilitated virtual library operations and services, as confirmed by Singh (2017).

Results on Citing and Referencing for E-resources Utilization

The study investigated the role of citing and referencing in optimizing e-resources use among graduate students in Christian universities in Nairobi County. Citation and referencing ability was the main independent variable. The first segment sought to assess the graduate students' ability to cite using a 5-level Likert scale coded 1 to 5; where 1 represented "Strongly Disagree" (SD), 2 denoted "Disagree" (D), 3 indicated "Moderately Agree" (MA), 4 stood for "Agree" (A), and 5 represented "Strongly Agree" (SA). The outcomes of the descriptive statistics are summarized in Table 4.

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Table 4

Descriptive statistics on citing ability

Citing ability (N = 126)	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	STD Dev
I have a clear understanding of citation styles	13 (10.3%)	3 (2.4%)	32 (25.4%)	44 (34.9%)	34 (27%)	3.66	1.201
I pay close attention to detail such as punctuation, capitalization and spacing in citation and references	11 (8.7%)	7 (5.6%)	30 (23.8%)	30 (23.8%)	48 (38.1%)	3.77	1.260
I am familiar with plagiarism and how to avoid it using proper citation	11 (8.7%)	6 (4.8%)	40 (31.7%)	33 (26.2%)	36 (28.6%)	3.61	1.200
I am capable of applying in-text citations accurately	15 (11.9%)	4 (3.2%)	30 (23.8%)	46 (36.5%)	31 (24.6%)	3.50	1.205
I can consistently use a citation style and format in written work	15 (11.9%)	4 (3.2%)	30 (23.8%)	46 (36.5%)	31 (24.6%)	3.59	1.235
I am familiar with the use of reference management tools	11 (8.7%)	7 (5.6%)	34 (27%)	37 (29.4%)	37 (29.4%)	3.65	1.209
Aggregate mean						3.63	1.218

Table 4 indicates that a significant number of participants demonstrated agreement in their citing ability, with an average score of 3.63, and a standard deviation of 1.218. These findings indicate that the participants had a satisfactory understanding of citation styles, thereby preventing plagiarism, employing appropriate citation practices, and maintaining citation accuracy. These results align with Blicblau et al. (2016) assertion that enhancing students' citation skills can improve their research habits and overall research proficiency.

The second segment assessed graduate students' familiarity with different referencing styles. Results indicated that graduate students were well-versed with two prominent referencing styles; namely, the American Psychological Association (APA), with a familiarity rate of (90.5%); and the Modern Language Association (MLA), with a familiarity rate of (84.9%). On the other hand, the referencing styles that graduate
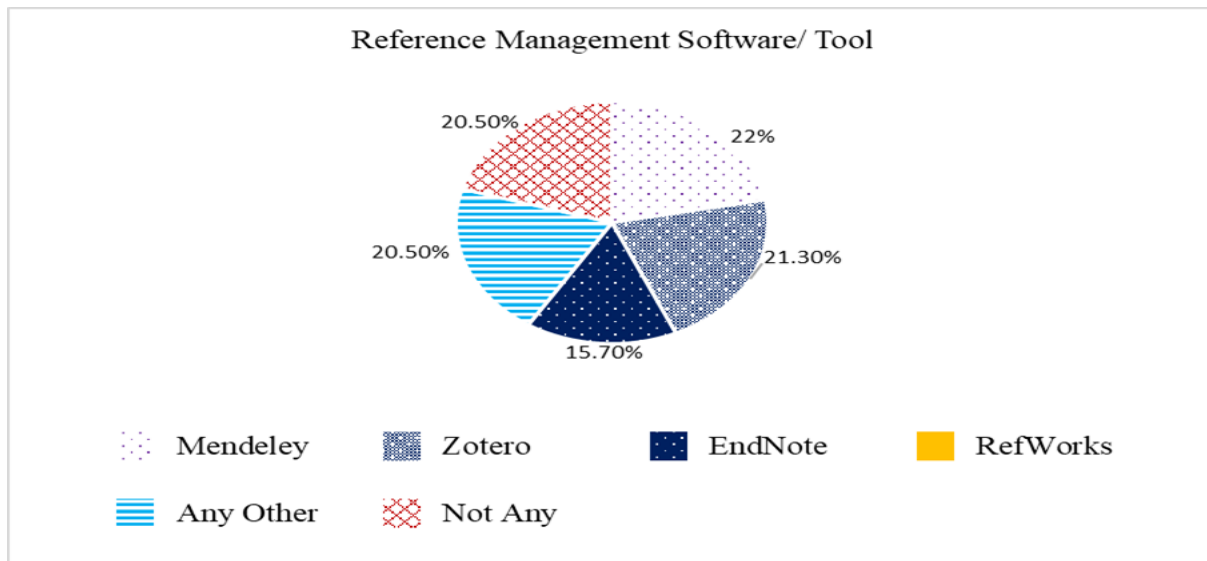
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students were less acquainted with were the Vancouver (40.5%) and the Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) (43.7%). These results suggest that graduate students demonstrated a strong proficiency in a variety of referencing styles, supporting the assertion by Muzata and Banja (2019) that students possess knowledge of multiple referencing styles.

The last segment examined graduate students' use of reference management software/ tools. The findings revealed that Mendeley was the most commonly used reference management software/tool, with a usage rate of (22%). It was followed by Zotero (21.3%) and EndNote at (15.7%). However, a notable proportion of respondents (20.5%) reported not using any reference management software/tool in their work. These results suggest that a significant number of individuals rely on technological tools to assist them in their citation and referencing practices. These findings contradict the conclusions drawn by Blicblau et al. (2016), who stated that the majority of students do not utilize reference software to enhance their writing abilities. Figure 1 shows the results for reference management software tool used.

Figure 1

Reference Management Software tool used

The systems librarians' interview on citing and referencing revealed that the library provides references services in regard to e-resource use that include: plagiarism check, referral services, installation of reference management software, APA check, consultancy services, exposure of e-resources to graduate students and information literacy training. Furthermore, mandatory and continuous training was suggested.

During the interview, university librarians were asked to comment on graduate students' ability to cite and reference, and suggest ways to enhance the ability in regard to e-resource use optimization.

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University librarian-02 noted: "*At the moment, the ability of graduate students is good since we intensify training of referencing. There's need for more exposure and making IL an examinable course with the librarians teaching the course.*"

University librarian-03 added: "*It depends, a good number have an idea of how to cite and reference. It is good that graduate students are introduced to other citation and referencing styles, to increase conversance with these other styles.*"

The findings demonstrate the importance of proficient citation and referencing skills for graduate students when utilizing e-resources. These findings are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the significance of

these skills in academic research and writing (Bautista & Pentang, 2022; Muzata & Banja, 2019). Prior to hypothesis testing, diagnostic tests were done and the results indicated there was no violation of assumption; hence, necessitating the adoption of statistical analytical techniques.

Correlation Analysis of Citing and Referencing, and Utilization of E-resources

The study was guided by a null hypothesis that stated that citing and referencing does not significantly optimize e-resources use by graduate students in Christian universities in Nairobi County. Therefore, the Pearson correlation was used to measure the hypothesis.

Table 5

Results of Correlation analysis

		Utilization of E-resources
Utilization of E-resources	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	126
Citing and referencing	Pearson Correlation	.958**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	126

Based on the data presented in Table 5, there is a strong positive relationship between citing and referencing abilities, and the utilization of e-resources among graduate students in Christian universities in Nairobi County. The correlation analysis revealed a significant positive linear association (r=0.958, p-value < 0.001). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a meaningful and positive correlation between

citing and referencing skills, and the extent of e-resource utilization.

This contradicts Kanori (2018) claim that citation and referencing have no impact on e-resource usage, and supports Blicblau et al. (2016) suggestion that reference software can enhance referencing abilities and subsequently improve e-resource utilization. Thus, the finding emphasizes that citing and referencing information could optimize e-

resource utilization among graduate students in Christian universities in Nairobi County.

4.0 Conclusion

Drawing upon the study's findings, it can be concluded that citing and referencing significantly affects graduate students' use of e-resources in Christian universities in Nairobi County. The study shows that proficiency in citation ability, referencing styles and the use of reference management software/ tool can not only enhance research proficiency, but also contribute to scholastic achievement via optimization of e-resource use among graduate students. The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between the ability to cite and reference information sources, and the use of e-resources. The study suggests that mandatory and continuous training on citation and referencing, exposure to different citation styles, and the use of reference management software, such as Mendeley and Zotero, can improve students' referencing skills.

5.0 Recommendations

The study proposes regular user studies for graduate students in Christian universities located in Nairobi County. The study emphasizes the need to market, advertise and advocate the use of e-resources. Moreover, continuous analysis of usage statistics, monitoring and gathering feedback is advised. Additionally, it is recommended that the library budget be reassessed and enhanced to align with the current reliance on e-resources, as the current allocation of 10% specified by the CUE may not adequately cater to this requirement. Further, integrating information literacy into the curriculum at all educational levels is crucial in order to enhance citation and referencing skills. To ensure effectiveness in citation and referencing competencies, particular attention should be given to mastering referencing styles, improving citation ability, and utilizing reference management tools/software.

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