VOICE OF FEMALE RELIGIOUS STUDIES POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS ON ACCESS TO E-RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH AT KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY IN ZAMBIA

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Abstract

This research article presents a comprehensive exploration of the perspectives held by female Religious Studies postgraduate students regarding their access to e-resources for research at Kwame Nkrumah University (KNU). The primary aim of the study was to examine the gender-related challenges within the institutional framework that hinder the effective utilisation of available e-resources, thereby affecting the quality of research among female students at KNU. Employing a qualitative approach, a purposively selected sample of 20 participants comprising 16 students and 4 faculty members, a combination of interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) served as the foundation for data collection, with thematic analysis applied to the results. The study unearthed a pressing need, especially in the context of today's information era and growing feminism advocacy, to bridge the gender gap in perceiving Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) concerning accessing and leveraging e-resources, thereby harnessing the full spectrum of global information resources. Moreover, the research identified that some female students still perceive the technology realm as predominantly male-oriented. This perception perpetuates the tendency for several female individuals to depend on male counterparts for support and, in some instances, to enlist their assistance in data searches and accessing e-resources during the research process. The study recommended that female postgraduate RS students at Kwame Nkrumah University and indeed other universities globally, need to develop positive attitudes towards the use of e-resources to maximise the usefulness of the resources which can enhance their academic career.

Keywords: *E-resources, Service delivery, Postgraduate students, Religious Studies, Kwame Nkrumah*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary academic landscape, the role of electronic resources (e-resources) in facilitating research and scholarship cannot be overstated. As universities strive to embrace digital transformation, the accessibility of e-resources becomes a crucial factor influencing the quality and depth of academic inquiry. This study delved into the experiences and perspectives of female postgraduate students in the field of Religious Studies at Kwame Nkrumah University, examining their access to e-resources and shedding light on the challenges and opportunities they encountered in utilising digital platforms for research. The unique focus on female scholars is essential, as it contributes to a nicety understanding of gender-specific factors that may impact their engagement with e-resources.

According to UNESCO (2017), ICTs are defined as a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to transmit, store, create, and exchange information. These technological tools and resources include computers, the internet (websites and emails), live broadcasting technologies (radio, television, and webcasting), and recorded broadcasting technologies (podcasting, audio and video players, and storage devices), among others. Kwame Nkrumah University, situated at the intersection of academic excellence and technological advancements, provides an appropriate context for investigating the dynamics of e-resource accessibility. While the university has undoubtedly embraced the digital era, it is imperative to scrutinize the extent to which these advancements translate into equitable access for all students, particularly within the realm of Religious Studies. As we embarked on this exploration, it was important to recognize that access to information was not only a technological concern but also a social and gendered issue. Thus, understanding the voices of female postgraduate students in Religious Studies was pivotal in identifying potential disparities and devising strategies to address them.

The study aligned with the broader discourse on gender inclusivity in academia, emphasising the need to bridge digital divides that might exist among students pursuing advanced degrees. By amplifying the voices of female postgraduate students, this research sought to contribute valuable insights to the ongoing dialogue surrounding gender, education, and technology. Furthermore, the findings are expected to inform university policies and practices, fostering an environment that supports the diverse needs of scholars in Religious Studies and beyond.

In the subsequent sections, we delve into the objectives, theoretical framework and methodology employed in this qualitative study, offering a comprehensive overview of our approach to understanding the distinctive experiences of female Religious Studies postgraduate students in accessing e-resources at Kwame Nkrumah University.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In the contemporary academic landscape, the utilisation of electronic resources (e-resources) plays a pivotal role in shaping the research endeavours of postgraduate students in the field of Religious Studies. However, there exists a notable gap in understanding the unique challenges faced by female postgraduate students pursuing Religious Studies at Kwame Nkrumah University in accessing these crucial e-resources for their research pursuits. This research aims to explore and elucidate the voices, experiences, and perspectives of female postgraduate students in Religious Studies regarding their access to e-resources at Kwame Nkrumah University, with a specific focus on identifying barriers, limitations, and potential areas for improvement. By

delving into the lived experiences of these students, this study sought to contribute valuable insights that could inform institutional policies, support systems, and technological infrastructure enhancements to foster equitable and inclusive access to e-resources, thereby empowering female postgraduate students in Religious Studies to thrive in their academic and research endeavours.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

a) To examine the current state of accessibility of electronic resources for research among female postgraduate students in the field of Religious Studies at Kwame Nkrumah University.

b) To analyse the specific challenges, if any, that female postgraduate students in Religious Studies encounter in accessing electronic resources for their research at Kwame Nkrumah University.

c) To formulate practical recommendations to enhance the access to e-resources for female postgraduate students in Religious Studies at Kwame Nkrumah University.

1.3 Theoretical Underpinning

The theory underpinning this study is the Relational Dependency Theory. Since the 1980s, debates around gender dynamics have twisted towards recognising and acknowledging the differences between women and men. One difference is how men and women develop psychologically. Jean Baker Miller (cited in Colette, 1981) posed the question of how women develop in her 1976 book, Toward a New Psychology of Women. Until then, traditional theories of psychology described development as a climb from childlike dependence to mature independence. A person's goal, according to these theories, was to become a self-sufficient, clearly differentiated, autonomous self. A person would spend his or her life separating and individuating until he or she reached maturity, at which point the person was equipped for intimacy. Miller challenged the assumption that separation was the route to maturity. She suggested that those theories might be describing men's experience, while a woman's path to maturity was different. A woman's primary motivation, said Miller, is to build a sense of connection with others. Women develop a sense of self and self-worth when their actions arise out of, and lead back into, connections with others. Connection, not separation, is the guiding principle of growth for women.

Previously, theoreticians had treated women's emphasis on connection as a sign of deficiency. Working at the same time as Miller (1981), Carol Gilligan, a developmental psychologist, was gathering empirical data that reflected fundamental gender differences in the psychological and moral development of women and men (Colette, 1981). In her book, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development, Carol Gilligan observed, "The disparity between women's experience and the representation of human development, noted throughout the psychological literature, has generally been seen to signify a problem in women's development. Instead, the failure of The Stone Centre at Wellesley College was created to think through the qualities of relationships that foster healthy growth in women (Ibid). The basic assumption of the Stone Centre model is that "connection" is a basic human need,

and that this need is especially strong in women (Jordan, Kaplan, & Miller, 1991). All people need both connection with others and differentiation from others, but females are more attuned to connection while males are more attuned to differentiation. Belington (1997) explained this connection as follows: Theoretically, girls perceive themselves to be more similar than different to their earliest maternal caretakers, so they do not have to differentiate from their mothers to continue to develop their identities. This is in contrast to boys, who must develop an identity that is different from the mother's to continue their development. Thus, women's psychological growth and development occur through adding to rather than separating from relationships. Consequently, defining themselves as similar to others through relationships is fundamental to women's identities.

A "connection" in the Stone Centre relational model is "an interaction that engenders a sense of being in tune with self and others, of being understood and valued" (Ibid: 35). True connections are mutual, empathic, creative, energy-releasing, and empowering for all participants (Miller, 1986). Such connections are so crucial for women that women's psychological problems can be traced to disconnections or violations within relationships - whether in families, with personal acquaintances, or in society at large. The relational Dependency theory, in the context of this study, will be critical in examining the current state of accessibility of electronic resources for research among female postgraduate students in the field of Religious Studies at Kwame Nkrumah University.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Access to E-resources
University libraries play a critical role by facilitating the use of their electronic resources and facilities available for students' learning and research activities. Students are expected to use the electronic resources provided for their academic and research work.

According to Charles Pannerdas (2022), libraries have perceived a great metamorphosis in recent years both in their collection development and in their service structures. Thus, Libraries are using technology to improve the management of scholarly information to reinforce and speed access to scholarly information not held locally. Pannerdas (2022) further asserts that electronic services have made an incredible impact on the academic activities of the faculty, researchers, and students. With the introduction of electronic services, noteworthy transition is seen in their approach and how they seek information. Many publishers are developing e-resources packages including e-books, e-journals, and e-databases for the development of higher education and research (Pannerdas, 2022). The most effective way to provide access to electronic books/journals in academic libraries is through subscription to online databases which can be accessed through the internet. Online databases are a collection of electronic information sources (e-journals/e-books) by publishers from various fields and disciplines, some of these databases are provided free of charge to libraries in developing countries by their publishers or vendors. The accessibility of e-journals has increased exponentially in the last decade. These have become a pivotal part of the libraries' collection (Pannerdas, 2022).

2.2 Utilisation of ICTs for Service Delivery
Literature reveals that the use of ICTs promotes development and improves services in any organisation. It brings changes in today's business environment. In an academic

environment, it speeds up information delivery and facilitates teaching, learning and research (Haliso, 2011). ICTs constitute an input in the student learning process that should help produce better learning output. Scholars have also highlighted some revolutions in the use of ICT, a phenomenon that seems to have profound implications for economic and social development, and indeed on every aspect of human life. Shanker (2008), for instance, contends that the widespread application of ICT today makes it an essential tool for the efficient administration of any organisation and in the delivery of services to clients. Schware (2003) has also observed that ICT is being integrated into procedures, structures, and products throughout businesses, governments, and communities. However, none of the above studies considered the accessibility of electronic resources for research among female postgraduate students which the current study endeavours to interrogate. The use of ICT, thereby, increasing the supply of information as ICT plays a key role in information sharing and dissemination. The use of ICT has, therefore, become the order of the day for most organisations as it greatly helps in knowledge production. Information and communication have an increasingly pervasive influence on almost every aspect of social cohesion and human development.

2.3   **Awareness of the Existence of E-resources among Library Users**
According to Mohd Shoaib Ansari (2020), the study conducted was an endeavour to analyse the awareness and utilisation of e-resources by the research scholars of the Faculty of Arts, Banaras Hindu University, and to find out the problems and constraints the users face in accessing the e-resources with some purposeful suggestions for its improvement. The findings showed that libraries need to improve the facilities and services to their users. The libraries also need to focus on acquiring more online resources to be made available for the maximum number of users. A single window also needed to be developed to find the required content at a single click. The library also has a helpline desk to solve e-resources-related issues. Awareness is essential for maximum utilisation of the e-resources so, libraries must conduct awareness programs for newly admitted students every year. The above study was generic in its approach as it did not focus on any particular type of students whereas the current study focuses on religious postgraduate students at Kwame Nkrumah University.

2.4   **Available E-resources**
E-resources are valuable tools for teaching, learning and research. Some examples of e-resources are magazines, encyclopaedias, newspapers, journals or published articles These may be accessed on Internet-connected devices such as computers, tablets, and smartphones,. In education and research, websites and internet services are important tools for accessing e-resources.

A study done by Bahat Ishtiyaq Hussain (2019), was based on the comparison between Remote access facilities provided by Allama Iqbal Library using different software viz., EZproxy and RemoteXs and its impact on the user community at the University. The findings were based on the usage statistics of different categories of users like faculty members, research scholars, students and staff members who had been registered at Allama Iqbal Library System for online and remote access to e-resources via EZproxy and RemoteXs softwares. The Library has been providing single window access to its digital content/e-resources through EZproxy software to its huge collection of online resources from 2010 and upto January, 2019. Since February, 2019, Library has shifted to the new and latest state-of-the-art RemoteXs software which acts as a gateway to accessing digital resources of Library from anywhere and anytime.

The study indicated that the cost-effective cloud-based service model of RemoteXs has enabled the Allama Iqbal Library system to create its digital library portal with facilities to reach the target users efficiently. Remote Xs has also eased the library from investing and marinating huge hardware infrastructure of e-mail servers, central servers, bandwidth costs, IP address registration etc. This indeed has helped the University to focus on core academic research activities and use saved funds aptly. The findings show that users from all these categories were using e-resources; the awareness about e-resources encourages users to use such resources to the maximum; and the users are using personal computers, laptops, tablet computers, and mobile devices more for accessing the information. The impact of e-resources was visible from the decrease in the number of printed journals in comparison to the increase in the number of electronic journals and online databases. The use of e-journals/e-databases has increased manifold. The printed material is being quickly replaced by electronic resources due to its ease of access and availability.

Awareness is core to the usage of e-resources. In a situation where materials are in closed access, users' ease of access to such e-resources is reduced. Awareness of the changes in technology in recent years has dramatically altered how information is accessed, stored and disseminated (Tsakomas and Papatheodorou, 2006). As the use of computers and related technologies spread over the years, library users began accessing and managing information on their own therefore alienating librarians' role as information keepers. The library is one department at the university which offers support services through users having access to its database to enhance service delivery.

With advances in technology and e-publishing, online test full-text databases, Emerald, Science Direct, Ebscohost, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), CD-ROM (Compact Disc- Read-only memory, e-books collections, e- journals covering a wide variety of subjects and major bibliographic databases like AGORA and MEDLARS, access to information on a local, regional, national and international basis has overcome the traditional barriers of time, ease of accessibility and space (Prangya and Rabindra, 2013; Sharma, 2009).

2.5 Factors that Hinder Effective Use of E-resources for Research
In a study carried out by Chandel & Mukesh (2012) at Tepuz University in India, Challenges and opportunities of e-resources, the study indicated that the advent of e-resources and their increased use have changed the library scenario from physical to virtual. Users' preferences are more for e-resources and virtual libraries with little attraction for physical libraries. Despite innumerable advantages of e-resources, there are certain problems also relating to their acquisition, maintenance, management, and much else which need collaborative efforts of professionals and all other bodies associated with the creation, distribution and use of these resources to establish the sound practices and the models. The paper highlights these issues, emphasising the need to develop or procure an Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) which can integrate all these resources along with printed material to provide a single-window approach to all resources available locally as well as globally in a universal library.

Other factors that hinder the effective use of e-resources include lack of skills, lack of awareness, computer illiteracy skills, unreliable internet connectivity, power

fluctuations and difficulty in identifying the right resources to meet one's information needs.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The current study utilised a qualitative research approach to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of female religious studies postgraduate students. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to gather in-depth information. The study adopted a phenomenological research design to understand the essence of the experiences of female students in accessing e-resources. In terms of the study population, the study targeted female religious studies postgraduate students at Kwame Nkrumah University who are actively engaged in research. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure the representation of participants with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and research interests. A sample size of 20 participants (16 students and 4 Religious Studies lecturers) was considered suitable to allow for saturation of the themes and meaningful insights. Data collection was done via semi-structured interviews using an interview guide with open-ended questions to elicit detailed responses. Data were analysed thematically to identify recurring themes and patterns in participants' responses. Before data analysis, a coding system to categorise data and derive meaningful insights was developed. Ethical consideration was taken into account by obtaining informed consent from all participants, explaining the purpose of the study and assuring confidentiality. The researchers ensured the anonymity of participants by assigning pseudonyms in reporting findings while safeguarding collected data using secure storage methods to protect participants' privacy. The study, however, has potential limitations such as the focus on a single institution, potential biases, and other constraints in the research design.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Access to Electronic Resources for Research among Female Postgraduate Students in Religious Studies at Kwame Nkrumah University

The findings indicated that out of the sixteen female postgraduate students in RS at students, 10 were not able to access e-resources mainly because they did not have relevant ICT skills to search and retrieve the needed information.

4.2 Challenges Female Postgraduate Students in Religious Studies Faced

4.2.1 Gender-Specific Challenges

Respondents were asked whether they faced gender-specific challenges in accessing e-resources. In their responses, they brought out the following gender-related factors (the factors have not been stated) which they indicated had affected their ability to engage with digital resources for research. Both the Focus Group Discussion and the interview unearthed a few elements of gender-related challenges relating to accessing e-resources by female postgraduate students at Kwame Nkrumah University. Most of them (except for three) indicated that they depended on their male counterparts. It was, however, noted that those in exception simply never utilised the e-facilities.

There was a sense in the respondents' opinions that their fellow ladies were less bound to offer them the needed assistance when faced with ICT-related challenges in accessing e-resources. One Participant recounted:

Indeed were are not fond of helping each other because of that feeling of jealousy among ourselves. Even if a lady agrees to provide a clue to a given ICT-related challenge, she will still give you limited information and reserve much to herself (Interview with a Religious Studies Postgraduate Student, KNU, November 2, 2023).

When asked for their opinion on whether the male colleagues were naturally more gifted with the ICT skills to be considered more dependable than themselves, respondents said both males and females were equally gifted, just like they were equally affected by the prevailing challenges, but they made an observation that the females were more inclined towards males in seeking for help, due to what they termed as lack of **self-efficacy** and **natural feminine disposition** (Cinderella Complex). Another respondent narrated:

As regards the question of whether we ladies are as competent as men in terms of ICT skills acquisition, I would say we are pretty much as smart as they are, except that we keep it to ourselves by not proving that we are competent. Sometimes even when we know that we have to take pre-eminence in solving our own problems or help our fellow women, there is still that feeling that it is not our primary duty, but men's (Interview with an RS Postgraduate Student 2, KNU, November 2, 2023).

The above findings were in agreement with Chandel & Mukesh (2012) at Tepuz University in India who noted that the factors that hindered the effective use of e-resources include lack of skills, lack of awareness, computer illiteracy skills and difficulty in identifying the right resources to meet one's information needs.

4.3   Inadequate Stoke of Information in the E-repositories
Other challenges that emanated from the findings were those that related to the general access and utilisation of the e-resources at the institution such as limited information in the e-repositories, students not well informed about free information repositories available, inadequate orientation to e-resources, inadequate time allocated given to students to access e-resources. Chandel & Mukesh (2012) also found out that despite innumerable advantages of e-resources, there were certain problems also relating to their acquisition, maintenance, and management, among others, which needed collaborative efforts of professionals and all other bodies associated with the creation, distribution and use of these resources to establish the sound practices and the models.

4.3.1   Limited Access to E-resources Facilities
Students' access to e-services at Kwame Nkrumah University was exacerbated by inadequate e-laboratory facility.

Siame and Hachintu (2023) conducted a study on effectiveness of eLearning during Post Covid-19 at Kwame Nkrumah University (in Zambia) which revealed that students had limited access to e-learning facilities. Firstly, the instituting only had one room with twenty computers which was too small to cater for the student population of over eight thousand seven hundred (8,700). Secondly, results showed that the computer laboratory was not open to students all the time, hence worsening the problem of access to the available facility. The duo suggested the need to assign more officers to man the laboratory so that it would

constantly open to students for them to freely access e-learning services which the educators upload to the institution's website.

The other limitation to accessibility of the facilities and materials revealed in the duo's study was that students were denied access to e-learning platforms, such as Moodle, if they did not pay 50% towards their user/tuition fees. This hindrance posed a great challenge and compromised the effectiveness of e-learning at the higher learning institution. The duo further suggested the need for the university to remove the restrictions to access e-learning in order to increase access to e-learning facilities. This would eventually make the learning and research more effective and raise the quality of graduate produced by the institution and improve the research output.

The challenge of access to e-resources happens to be but part of the general problem of students access to information repositories at Kwame Nkrumah University. Indeed, as Hachintu (2023) observes in his separate study of the availability of information resources and services for quality research of the religious studies postgraduate students at Kwame Nkrumah University, one would obviously wonder how postgraduate students at the institution would managed to undertake successful research, let alone successfully graduate in their study programme, against the backdrop of underutilising the available information resources due to poor access to information repositories.

4.4 Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy or the low perception, as conceived in this study by participants concerning gender-related challenges compounded in the access and utilisation of e-resources might seem to be consistent with the findings of other scholars concerning self-efficacy and the feminine gender. Efficacy can be defined as the ability to produce the results that are wanted (Concise Oxford English Dictionary). Self-efficacy in the context of the current study, therefore, implied the ability of female students to believe in themselves that they had what it took for them to strive as their male counterparts, to face and handle the ICT-related challenges in their endeavours to access and utilise e-resources. The female students' self-efficacy or lack of it, as suggested by the current study, had a considerable bearing on the current low rate of female students taking pre-eminence or taking it upon themselves to handle challenges they encountered in their utilisation of e-resources. To this end, Miller's (1986) theory refers to true connections as mutual, empathic, creative, energy-releasing, and empowering for all participants. The researchers found such connections to be crucial for postgraduate female students in RS at Kwame Nkrumah University they might enable their psychological enhancement in access to e-learning ICTs.

4.5 The Cinderella Complex

Males are educated for independence from the day they're born. Females are taught that they have an option-that someday, in some way, they are going to be rescued from independent living. Women may venture out on their own for a while; they may go away to school, work, and travel; may even make good money, but underneath there is insecurity towards independence. "Only hang on long enough, the childhood story goes, and someday someone will come along to rescue you from the anxiety of authentic living" (Colette, 1981). The concept of Cinderella Complex (also known as the Cinderella syndrome), was first coined by New York therapist Colette Dowling in the early 80s. It is a complex (or syndrome) that leads women to believe that they are 'damsels in distress

in need of rescuing from a male suitor. Women wait for a "man" to come and take control of their lives so that they can live happily and content with standing behind their men. Cinderella Complex is the largely repressed attitudes and fears that keep women from the full use of their minds and creativity forcing them to wait for something or someone external to transform their lives. "Cinderella Complex" finds its name from the fairy tale princess Cinderella, waiting for her prince charming to rescue her from the evil stepmother and stepsisters. Most modern adaptations of fairy tales, as well as original versions, place gender expectations on women.

Colette's (1981) Cinderella concept provides an example of how the heroine of the story must be "rescued" by a man of princely matter and helped by outward forces to achieve recognition and respect. Cinderella does not bear grudges against her oppressors, the stepsisters and stepmother; she is civil and kind-hearted. Through this plot, a woman is told that to overcome such oppression, one must be patient and virtuous and wait for the day the reward for such endurance arrives in the form of a man. Thus, young women are trained into dependency. Its story revolves around the assumption that women should be "beautiful, polite, graceful, industrious, obedient, and passive". Cinderella operates as a patriarchal instrument, producing and nurturing a psychological dependence in women. The qualities of feminine beauty and virtue are always related to that of conscience. For a woman to be virtuous, she must be beautiful, obedient, patient, sacrificial, and sexually innocent. When a woman lacks any of these feminine qualities, she feels guilty. Dependence, therefore, becomes a source of freedom from perceived hardship.

Instead of becoming independent, women rely on a man as a source of protection, identity, and proof of love. In Cinderella, the prince validates the womanly qualities through admiration. Her insecurities and hardships vanish at the site of her prince. With the Cinderella complex internalised so deeply in their minds, these females believe that their submissiveness and obedience to the wills of others will help them win a "prince" with whom they would live happily ever after. Therefore, instead of acting out their potential, they look for a man to lean on and something external to give their lives meaning. They see themselves as princesses waiting for a prince to come to their rescue (Snaha &Tanishka, 2016; Colette, 1981).

4.6 The Symptoms of the Cinderella Complex
The revelations by the current study, of the tendency of most respondents to manifest attitudes and preferences of heavily relying upon their male counterparts in solving ICT-related challenges in accessing and utilising e-resources may be symptoms of the Cinderella syndrome. Most doctors believe that women who suffer from this complex usually have other deep-seated emotional problems such as low self-esteem and dependency issues.

4.7 The Possible Resulting Effects
The most outstanding among the possible effects heavily dependent upon their male counterparts for help when faced with ICT-related hurdles was the possibility of falling vulnerable to being exploited financially, in kind or otherwise.

4.8   Hiring the Services of Other People
Scholars have reported cases of dishonest practices in institutions of learning involving students who cannot depend on their own in their studies, and the hiring of services

from other people stands common among them. This scenario is consistent with Hachintu (2017) whose study on the Effects of Poor Reading Culture among Distance Education at Kwame Nkrumah University unearthed the dishonest tendency among some students to hire the services of other people in assignment writing. Students paid quite substantial amounts of money to have their assignments and project proposals on any topic on their behalf. Though Hachintu's study may not relate directly to the current study whose focus is on gender, ICT and e-resources, its contention is premised on the similar challenges and temptations students in institutions of learning find themselves in. Female students who find themselves in this scenario and can't afford to pay money are more likely going to yield to pay in kind, another vice female students fall vulnerable to.

4.9 **Sexual Abuse**
Some respondents said in as much as both males and females face ICT-related challenges in accessing the available e-resources, the situation got exacerbated for ladies because it rendered them more vulnerable to their male counterparts, who, when approached for help or consultation, took advantage of the situation and demand for payment in kind, such as sex or relationships.

5.0 **CONCLUSION**
The study was anchored on Miller's (1986) theory in which she challenged the assumption that separation was the route to maturity. She suggested that those theories might be describing men's experience, while a woman's path to maturity was different. A woman's primary motivation was to build a sense of connection with others (Miller, 1986). Women develop a sense of self and self-worth when their actions arise out of, and lead back into, connections with others. Connection, not separation, was the guiding principle of growth for women. In a way, the current study did not fully agree with Miller's ideas as the study established that female RS Postgraduate students at Kwame Nkrumah could not easily access e-resources because they had limited ICT skills and they heavily relied upon their male counterparts in solving ICT-related challenges in accessing and utilising e-resources, thereby exhibiting the dependence syndrome. So the connection or interaction the female students had with their male counterparts was futile.

However, in this study, the female students had the ability and what it took for them to strive as their male counterparts if only they developed a positive attitude towards access and utilisation of e-resources. In the changing electronic era, ICT and e-resources have become of great importance in research activities. As such, female postgraduate RS students at Kwame Nkrumah University and indeed other universities globally, need to develop positive attitudes towards the use of e-resources to maximize the usefulness of the resources which can enhance their academic career. This might become a reality if e-resource access pieces of training are provided to the users regularly

5.1 **Recommendations**
Based on the findings of the study, the authors recommend that the female postgraduate RS students at Kwame Nkrumah University and indeed other universities globally, need to develop positive attitudes towards the use of e-resources to maximise the usefulness of the resources which can enhance their academic career.

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