ASSESSMENT OF INTERNET USAGE BY STUDENTS OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN BENUE STATE NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The paper is an assessment of internet usage by the students of tertiary institutions in Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to find out the types of internet resources used by students, ascertain the level of satisfaction derived from internet usage by the students, identify the problem encountered with Internet usage by the students and find out the strategies for overcoming the problems militating against internet usage by students of tertiary institutions in Benue State. In line with the purpose of the study, four research questions guided the study. The survey research design was adopted in conducting this research. The area of study is Benue State Nigeria. Questionnaire was the instrument employed for data collection. The population of the study consisted of six (6) tertiary institutions across Benue State which covered the three senatorial zones. Questionnaire was the instrument employed for data collection. The sample size for this study was 496 students derived from the population using random sampling. Data collected was orderly organized in tabular form to indicate raw scores which was converted into frequency and simple percentages. Results found the types of internet resources used by students to include; online books, online databases, online academic etc. On the level of satisfaction with the internet resources, the study found that users were satisfied with; online books, online databases, search engines, electronic textbooks, electronic serials publications such as magazines, newspapers. Furthermore, the study found problems encountered by students using internet resources to include; poor internet connectivity making it difficult for students to maximize the full potentials of internet resources, epileptic power supply, lack of knowledge about the existence of the internet resources and highlighted the to overcome the problems of internet use included: management of the schools should urgently improve the bandwidth for full internet connectivity, the management should make provision for a standby generator to complement JED among others. Based on the findings of the study, the paper recommended that: Heads of Institutions liaise with other stakeholders and supporting management to provide internet facilities. This is significant because internet facilities in schools are crucial in supporting academic performance and the School ICT Laboratories should be well equipped with internet facilities to assist student research and Study among others.

Introduction

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Over the years, the internet has been a very important instrument for facilitating academic activities in tertiary institutions in Nigeria and the world at large. The information and communication technology revolution is sweeping through the world and the gale has even caught up with developing countries like Nigeria. There has been a tremendous growth in the use of the Internet and the World Wide Web for finding and sharing information among students. The Internet originated from government and academia and spread to business and industry (Shelley as cited in Ivwighreghweta & Igere, 2014).

According to Agil, and Ahmad (2011) the internet is the transport vehicle for the information stored in files or documents on a computer. It carries together various information and services, such as electronic mail, online chat, file transfer, the interlinked Web pages and other documents of the World Wide Web. In today world, the Internet plays a vital role in the teaching, research and learning process in academic institutions. Thus, the advent of the Internet has heralded the emergence of a new form of knowledge production and distribution – the soft form. This new form of information resources has, as its greatest advantage, a virtually unlimited wealth of information resources which is widely readily available and accessible to hundreds of millions of people simultaneously in many parts of the world (Kumar & Kaur 2006). The Internet is a powerful and efficient tool for searching, retrieving, and disseminating information, with a significant impact on students and scholars worldwide. The Internet can be consulted and like a reference resource, it is broader and highly dynamic. It also provides a means of scholarly communication (Brunning, Schraw, Norby &Ronning, 2004).

The Internet has liberated scholarship from the academic, social, legal, political, economic and geographical constraints associated with traditional print media (Kuma & Kaur 2006). This liberation has had a major effect on scholar's research capacity and productivity. It has also aided scholars, who want to stay at the forefront of research and keep up to date with developments in his or her research fields by utilizing the Internet (Kumar & Kaur 2006).

The use of internet for educational purposes has increased in many folds among Nigerian youths. Online access to e-journals and e-books are the emerging trends among learners. The birth of high-speed internet access and its availability on recently evolved smart phones has opened several new avenues for learning. The growing popularity of these smart phones among the youth can potentially revolutionize the way they learn. The introduction of 4G technology is already being pinned as the next big thing in the mobile internet revolution. The Internet is one of the defining technologies of the digital age. The Internet, which is a global system of interconnected computers, provides many benefits to its users, including access to information from distant documents and databases that can be read and studied to improve knowledge. The Internet combines and presents through the same medium the virtues of print and multimedia resources. With the Internet, students can improve their learning by gaining access to information and materials available online, which they might read online or download and print to read later. The Internet is also not just a passive medium that students might explore to obtain information on their own. It is increasingly also being used by education institutions and teachers as a flexible medium for delivering online education to distant or on-campus students.

According to Omagbemi, Akintola & Olayiwola (2004) internet connectivity is no longer a luxury but a necessity. Typically, in most tertiary institution environments, students have access to the internet almost any time and almost anywhere on campus. Wireless connections now allow internet access from lap-top computers and other hand-held devices, within the library, the dormitory and the classroom.

In spite of the benefits of the Internet for education and learning, there is a growing concern as to whether the increasing number of hours spent by students browsing the Internet limits the amount of time and effort devoted by them to the actual reading and study of the materials obtained from or outside the Internet. This concern is

similar to the motivation for a study, by Bussière and Gluszynski (2004), of the patterns and interrelationships between the computer use and reading behaviour of 15-year-olds in Canada. The study found that promoting effective access to computer among such teenagers may not guarantee the use of computer for serious educational purposes by them, and that policy should also address the latter objective. This study therefore investigated internet usage by students in tertiary institutions in Benue State.

Statement of the Problem

Availability and usage of internet facilities and service in any institution of higher learning justifies its existence. This explains why most effort in the institutions of higher learning especially tertiary institutions is geared towards providing the needed internet facilities and services available to the teaching/non-teaching staff and the students. The lecturers and students need internet services for their teaching and research, while the non-teaching staffs need internet services for their day-to-day activities. In this regard, internet services provision has become a critical factor in the services of tertiary institutions and in developing countries like Nigeria. The institutions of higher learning specifically tertiary institutions provide internet services for accessibility and use by students.

However, preliminary observations by the researcher in the higher institutions understudy have shown that students in tertiary institutions in Benue state likely have access to the internet. Internet facilities and services for research and other academic activities is frustrating due to lack of user education, lack of ICT skills and poor internet connectivity, inadequate Internet services and lack of basic Internet skills to exploit the internet.

It is against this backdrop that this study was undertaken to empirically ascertain to assess the level of internet usage by students of tertiary institutions in Benue State-Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study was to assess internet usage by the students of tertiary institutions in Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to:

The specific objective is:

i.   To find out the types of internet resources used by students
ii. To ascertain the level of satisfaction derived from internet usage by the students.
iii. To identify the problem encountered with Internet usage by the students.
iv. To find out the strategies for overcoming the problems militating against internet usage by students of tertiary institutions in Benue State.

Literature Review

The review of literature discussed here were identified following a search on scholarly databases and search engines such as Library and Information Science Abstract (LISA), EBSCO host, Google Scholar, Emerald Insight, Wiley Online Library, Science Direct, google, etc. Scholarly databases were used in this study since it contains peer reviewed and current researches about internet use by students while search engine such as google was also used to capture literature that are peer reviewed and published on open-source journals. The review of literature is obtained from both print and electronic resources and material selection was based upon the relevancy to the objectives of the study.

Parameshwar and Patil (2009) investigated the use of the internet by faculty and research scholars at Gulbarga University's library in India. The study revealed that the challenges faced included downloading problems, information overload and finding relevant information. As part of the "PEW Internet Life Project", Jones et al. (2007) examined a sample of 7421 undergraduate students across the United States. Parameshwar and Patil (2009) revealed that the students reported using the internet for academic purposes and the internet had positively impacted their academic lives.

A study conducted by Patel and Darbar (2016) on internet usage among students of CK Shah Vijapurwala Institute of Management Library, India revealed 100% of the respondents use the internet and majorly for their studies and social networking. More than half of the students were satisfied with the WIFI access on their campus and a major problem to internet use is the low-speed internet connectivity. Similarly, Kumar (2017)

using a survey studied the internet access and use among face-to-face program students of Indira Gandhi National Open University, India. The study revealed majority of the respondents use the internet for academic purposes and social networking. The respondents also reported that the internet improved their professional competence and improved their research process.

A review of literature shows several other studies in Africa that have established a high degree of internet use among university students and inadequate internet access. A study by Badu and Markwei (2005) on awareness and use of the internet at the University of Ghana showed that the students were aware and use the internet. The results showed that e-mail was the commonly used internet service followed by information search.

In Nigeria, Anasi (2006) highlighted that the low pattern of internet use among undergraduates' students from the Faculties of Education and Law at the University of Lagos. Furthermore, the study revealed that though most of the students browsed the internet, many of them lacked search strategies skills even though their Internet use had very high impact on their academic or career related activities. Olufemi (2006) in the investigation of internet use among undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria reported a high level of use of the internet and their major access was through the commercial cybercafés where they paid for access time. The study also showed that problems experienced by the students when using the internet include slowness of the server and high payment of the access to the internet. Similarly,

Awoleye, Siyanbola & Oladipupo (2008) examined the level of penetration of internet usage among undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria reported that the students had high level of internet usage and use the internet mostly for email, information research and online-chat.

Adekunmisi, Ajala & Iyoro (2013) in their study on the internet access and usage by undergraduate students of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria indicated that majority of the respondents had access to the internet. The students accessed internet facilities from the privately-owned cybercafés in town despite the fact that the university grossly lacks internet facilities. Furthermore, the students use the internet mostly for emails, academic purpose and getting information while the high cost of browsing, slow internet access speed, power outage and few internet facilities are challenges identified as impediments to internet by the students.

A review of related literature shows that there have been many studies on internet use globally and most of them reached a consensus that internet usage is most prevalent among tertiary institutions', but no in-depth study has been reported on the use of internet in tertiary institutions in the study area. Therefore, this study was carried out to ascertain internet use in the selected tertiary institutions in Benue State.

Research Method

The survey research design was adopted in conducting this research. Questionnaire was the instrument employed for data collection. The area of study is Benue State Nigeria. Benue state is located in the North-Central geo-political zone of Nigeria. It is made up of 23 local government areas and 3 senatorial zones namely; Benue North West, Benue North East and Benue South West. The population of the study consisted of six (6) tertiary institutions across Benue State which covered the three senatorial zones. The institutions are listed below with their population; Federal Polytechnic Wannune with the population of 110, Benue State University Makurdi with the population of 32,000, Ashi Polytechnic Anyiin, with the population of 3,345, Benue State polytechnic Ugbokolo with the population of 5000, Fidel Polytechnic Gboko with the population of 6200, University of Mkar, Mkar with the population of 5734. The total population is 52,389 (Source: Academic Records of the studied institutions, 2025).

The sample size for this study was 496 students derived using random sampling. Random sampling gives each member of the population equal chance to participate. The choice random sampling technique was to enable the researcher to have equal right of randomly making a uniform selection from all participants. Therefore, 496 students formed the sample size. Data collected was orderly organized in tabular form to indicate raw scores which was converted into frequency and simple percentages.

Results

4.1   Response Rate

Table 1: Response Rate of Respondents

Response Rate	No. of Questionnaires of Administered	No. of Questionnaires Returned	Percentage (%)
	496 (100%)	486 (97.9%)	

Source: Field work, 2025

Table 1 revealed that 496 representing (100%) copies of questionnaires were issued out to the respondents and only 486 (97.9%) were returned and found useable for the study. The high return rate of the instrument was because of the researcher's diligence during the process of administering the questionnaire.

Table 2:   Types of Internet resources used by students

S/N	Types of internet resources used by students	SA Freq.	%	A Freq.	%	D Freq	%	SD Freq.	%
1.	Online books	123	25.30	196	40.32	97	19.95	70	14.40
2.	Online databases	86	17.69	203	41.76	98	20.16	89	16.31
3.	Online academic Journals Database	213	43.82	26	5.34	53	10.90	109	22.42
4.	Online Search Engines	109	22.42	204	41.17	79	16.25	94	19.34
5	Electronic thesis/projects	26	5.34	86	17.69	301	61.93	73	15.03
6	Electronic textbooks	213	43.82	111	22.83	53	10.90	109	22.42
7	Electronic reference materials	70	14.40	96	19.75	29	5.96	291	59.87
8	Electronic serials publications such as magazines, newspapers, journals	86	17.69	296	60.90	93	19.13	11	2.26

Source: Field work, 2025.

Table 2 above show the types of internet resources used by students. It revealed that 123 (25.30%) strongly agreed to online books, 196 (40.32%) agreed, 97 (19.95%) disagreed and 70 (14.40%) strongly disagreed. Also, 86 (17.69%) strongly agreed to online databases, 203 (4.175%) agreed, 98 (20.16%) disagreed and 89 (16.31%) strongly disagreed. On the use of online academic journals, 213 (43.82%) strongly agreed, 26 (5.24%), 53 (10.10%) agreed, 53 (10.90%) disagreed while 109 (22.42%) strongly disagreed. Similarly, 109 (22.42%) strongly disagreed to online search engines, 204 (41.17%) agreed, 79 (16.25%) disagreed while 94 (19.34%) strongly disagreed. 26 (5.35%) strongly agreed to electronic thesis/projects, 86 (17.69%) agreed, 301 (61.93%) disagreed and 94 (19.34%) strongly disagreed. Furthermore, 213 (43.82%) strongly agreed to electronic textbooks, 111 (22.83%) agreed, 53 (10.90%) disagreed and 109 (22.42%) strongly disagreed. Moreso, 70 (14.40%) strongly agreed to electronic reference materials, 96 (19.75%) agreed, 29 (5.96%) disagreed while 291 (59.87) strongly disagreed. Lastly but not on the items, 86 (17.69%) strongly agreed there are electronic serials publications such as magazines, newspapers and journals, 296 (60.90%) agreed, 93 (19.13%) disagreed and 11 (2.26%) strongly disagreed.

From the table therefore, internet resources used by students were online books, online databases, online academic journals, search engines, electronic textbooks and electronic serials publications such as magazines, newspapers and journals. This is evidenced on their frequency and percentage scores.

Table 3: Level of Satisfaction derived from Internet Resources by the Students.

S/N	Level of satisfaction derived from the use of internet and library resources	VHS Freq.	%	HS Freq.	%	S Freq	%	NS Freq.	%
9.	Online books	79	16.25	189	38.88	97	19.95	121	24.89
10	Online databases	63	12.96	93	19.13	201	41.45	129	26.54
11	Online academic Journals Database	23	4.73	59	12.13	301	61.93	103	21.19
12.	Online Search Engines	14	2.88	101	29.78	209	43.01	162	33.33
13	Electronic thesis/projects	29	5.96	99	20.37	296	60.93	62	12.75
14	Electronic textbooks	203	41.76	99	20.37	27	5.55	157	32.30
15	Electronic reference materials	26	5.34	113	23.25	100	20.57	64	13.16

S/N		SA Freq.	%	A Freq.	%	D Freq.	%	SD Freq.	%
16	Electronic serials publications such as magazines, newspapers, journals	209	43.01	113	23.25	100	20.57	75	13.16
17	Online books	78	16.05	90	18.51	296	60.90	105	21.60
18	Online databases	68	13.99	90	18.51	208	42.79	120	24.69
19	Online academic Journals Database	204	41.97	107	22.02	101	20.98	75	15.43

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 3 show students' satisfaction with internet resources. It revealed that 79 (16.25%) accepted they are very highly satisfied with online books, 189 (38.88%) accepted they are highly satisfied, 97 (19.95%) accepted they are satisfied while 121 (24.89%) are not satisfied. 63 (12.96%) accepted they are very highly satisfied with online databases, 93 (19.13%) agreed they are highly satisfied, 201 (41.45%) agreed they are satisfied while 129 (26.54%) said they are not satisfied. Also, 23 (4.73%) agreed they are highly satisfied with online databases, 59 (12.13%) agreed they are highly satisfied, 301 (61.93%) agreed they are satisfied and 103 (21.19%) said they are not satisfied. Similarly, 14 (2.88%) agreed they are very highly satisfied with search engines, 101 (29.78%) agreed they highly satisfied, 209 (43.01%) said they satisfied while 162 (33.33%). 29 respondents represented by (5.96%) accepted they are very highly satisfied with electronic thesis/projects, 99 (20.37%) accepted they are highly satisfied, 296 (60.93%) said they are satisfied while 162 (33.33%) said they are not satisfied. Furthermore, 203 (41.76%) agreed are very highly satisfied with electronic textbooks, 99 (20.37%) are highly satisfied, 27 (5.55%) are satisfied while 157 (32.30%) are not satisfied. On electronic reference materials, 26 (5.34%) agreed they are very high satisfied, 113 (23.35%) are highly satisfied, 100 (20.57) are satisfied while 64(13.16%) are not satisfied. 209 (43.01%) are very highly satisfied with electronic serials publications such as magazines, newspapers, journals etc, 113 (23.25%) are highly satisfied, 100 (20.57%) are satisfied while 75 (13.6%) are not satisfied. 78 respondents represented by (16.05%) are very high satisfied with online books, 90 (18.51%) are highly satisfied, 296 (60.90%) and 105 (21.60%) are not satisfied. Finally, 68 (13.99%) are very highly satisfied with online databases, 90 (18.51%) are highly satisfied, 296 (60.90%) and 105 (21.60%) are not satisfied.

Table 4: Problems Encountered with Internet Usage by the Students.

S/N	Problems	SA Freq.	%	A Freq.	%	D Freq	%	SD Freq.	%
20	Poor internet connectivity making it difficult for students to maximize the full potentials of internet resources	367	63.16	99	20.37	80	16.46		-
21	Epileptic power supply	486	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-
22	Lack of knowledge about the existence of internet resources	296	60.90	109	22.42	40	8.64	41	4.43
23	Inadequate computer systems in the virtual library	307	63.16	179	36.83	-	-	-	-
24	Lack of skills to use the internet and its resources	115	23.66	287	59.08	84	17.28	-	-
25	High level poverty among parents leading to their inability to purchase laptops for their wards to get acquainted with internet skills	299	61.62	109	22.42	78	16.05	-	-
26	High cost of subscription to online databases	480	98.76	6	1.23	-	-	-	-
27	Lack of awareness on the availability of internet resources	96	19.75	298	61.31	92	10.87	-	-
28	Unconducieve reading environment	20	4.41	30	6.17	436	89.71	-	-

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 4 above show the problems encountered with the use of internet resources by students. It revealed 367 (63.68%) strongly agreed to poor internet connectivity making it difficult for students to maximize the full potentials of internet resources, 20 (37%) agreed while 80 (16.46%). All the 486 (100%) strongly agreed to epileptic power supply. Also, 296 (60.90%) strongly agreed to lack of knowledge about the existence of the internet resources, 109 (22.42%) agreed, 40 (8.64%) disagreed while 41 (4.43%) strongly disagreed. 307 respondents represented by (63.16%) strongly agreed to inadequate computer systems in the virtual library whereas 179 (36.83%) agreed. 115 (23.66%) strongly agreed to lack of skills to use the internet and its resources, 287 (59.08) agreed while 84 (17.28%) disagreed. On high level of poverty among parents leading to their inability to purchase laptops for their wards to get acquainted with internet skills, 299 (61.62%) strongly agreed, 109 (22.42%) agreed while 78 (16.05%) disagreed. More so, 480 (98.75%) strongly agreed to high cost of subscription to online databases, 6 (1.23%) agreed and finally, 96 (19.75%) strongly agreed to lack of awareness on the availability of internet resources, 298 (61.31%) agreed. Finally, 20 (4.41%) strongly agreed to unconducieve reading environment, 30 (6.17%) agreed, 436 (89.71%) strongly disagreed.

Table 5: Strategies for Overcoming the Problems Militating Against Internet Usage by Students

S/N	Strategies	SA Freq.	%	A Freq.	%	D Freq	%	SD Freq.	%
29	The school's management should urgently improve the bandwidth for full internet connectivity	242	49.79	243	50	-	-	-	-
30	The school's management should make provision for a standby generator to complement PHCN	485	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-
31.	User education programmes should be carried out to create awareness on the existence of the internet resources	297	64.11	189	38.88	-	-	-	-
32	The school's management should procure more computer systems in the virtual library to accommodate more students	480	98.76	6	1.23	-	-	-	-
33	The school's management should organise ICT training programmes for students to expose them to the available facilities and enable them have easy use at their own convenience and time	480	98.76	6	1.23				
34	Parents should encourage their wards by purchasing laptop for them to enable them meet the present educational trend	249	51.23	237	69.34				
35	The school should subscribe to current information resources that will meet the users demands	296	60.90	190	31.9				

36	Enough funds should be allotted to the library by the school's management for subscription on online databases	396 81.49	90	18.51
37	Air condition and fans should be installed in the library to make it conducive for reading	393 80.86	93	19.13

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 5 showed the strategies to overcome the problems encountered when using internet resources. It revealed that 242 (49.79%) strongly agreed the schools management should urgently improve the bandwidth for full internet connectivity while 243 (50%) agreed. All the 485 respondents represented by (100%) strongly agreed the management of the schools should make provision for a standby generator to complement PHCN. 297 (64.11%) strongly agreed the management should carry out user education programmes to create awareness on the existence of internet resources and and189 (38.88%) agreed. 480 respondents represented by (98.76%) strongly agreed the management of the schools should procure more computer systems in the virtual library to accommodate more students while 6 (1.26%) agreed. Similarly, 480 (98.76) strongly agreed the management should organise ICT training programmes for students to expose them to the available facilities and enable them have easy use at their own convenience and time while 6 (1.26%) agreed. Moreso, 249 (60.96%) suggested parents should encourage their wards by purchasing laptop for them to enable them meet the present educational trend.

Findings

1. Types of internet resources used by students include; online books, online databases, online academic journals, search engines, electronic textbooks and electronic serials publications such as magazines, newspapers and journals.

2. Moreso, on the level of satisfaction with the internet resources, the study found that users were satisfied with; online books, online databases, search engines, electronic textbooks, electronic serials publications such as magazines, newspapers.

3. Furthermore, the study found problems encountered by students using internet resources to include; poor internet connectivity making it difficult for students to maximize the full potentials of internet resources, epileptic power supply, lack of knowledge about the existence of the internet resources, inadequate computer systems in the virtual library, lack of skills to use the internet and its resources, high level of poverty among parents leading to their inability to purchase laptops for their wards to get acquainted with internet skills and high cost of subscription to online databases.

4. Strategies to overcome the problems of internet use included: management of the schools should urgently improve the bandwidth for full internet connectivity, the management should make provision for a standby generator to complement PHCN, user education programmes to create awareness on the existence of the internet resources and services, the management should procure more computer systems in the virtual library to accommodate more students among others.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that Heads of Institutions liaise with other stakeholders and supporting management to provide internet facilities. This is significant because internet facilities in schools are crucial in supporting academic performance.

2.   The School ICT Laboratories should be well equipped with internet facilities to assist student research and Study.

3.   Students should be taught how to search for academic information or materials online.

4.   There should be effective supervision of students on internet use by teachers and parents so that students do not solely concentrate on social media.

Conclusion

The widespread implementation of Internet in tertiary institutions in Nigeria necessitates a careful assessment of internet use among students vis-à-vis the impact on their life. Our investigation showed that the majority of the undergraduates in the university use the Internet for many purposes; and have realized the benefits the Internet has to offer students in tertiary institutions of learning. The study found the types of internet resources used by students and also submits that students are satisfied with the internet resources. The study also highlights the problems encountered by students when using internet resources and provides strategies to overcome the problems. From the foregoing, it can be concluded that tertiary institutions are not lagging behind in the provision of internet resources to their students despite the challenges they are faced with.

Further studies should investigate the use of internet resources and academic performance of students in tertiary institutions in Benue state

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