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AVAILABILITY OF INTERNET FACILITY AND UTILIZATION BY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF IGNATIUS AJURU UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigates the availability of internet facilities and utilization by undergraduate students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State, Nigeria. Three research questions and one hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. The study adopted survey research design. Population of the study was 1352, out of which a sample size of 338 was drawn. The questionnaire tagged, Availability of internet facility and utilization of by undergraduate students (AIFUUS) was the instrument for data collection. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions while independent t-test analysis was used to test the null hypothesis formulated at 0.05 alpha level. The study found that undergraduate students of IAUE library use the Internet facility daily, twice a week, weekly and occasionally. The reasons for usage were to complete their class assignment, research work, sending mail and acquiring new skills. Challenges encountered by undergraduates include unsteady power supply, high fee charged, poor search skills, poor quality service delivery, slow Internet connectivity, locating the right websites and limited bandwidth access. The study recommends that enabling environment should be created through the provision of robust Internet access to enable the undergraduate make maximum use of the internet facilities on regular bases. This way, library patronage will be enhanced.

Keywords: *Internet Access, Internet Utilization, University Library, Undergraduate Students, University of Education, Rivers State.*

Introduction

The Internet is considered one of the fastest-growing technological advancements of our time. It is an integral part of library resources in this age of information explosion. The Internet is a powerful tool of communication with diverse potentials that provide wider access to global information resources such as online databases, e-

journals, e-prints and other sources of digital information, used to support the various educational activities such as teaching, learning and research aimed at the dissemination and retrieval of information in academic institutions.

The availability of Internet facility in academic libraries play important role in assisting

undergraduates to access a large number of materials from different parts of the globe if optimally utilized (Anyanwu & Ossai-Onah, 2013). The Internet is rich and provides several opportunities for the academia in research, lecturing or teaching (Habib et al., 2015). For this to be achieved there is need for a 24 hour Internet access in such libraries more so when not all students and other members of the academic community can afford these facilities or technology individually. With the help of the Internet, students can connect, collaborate, communicate and share ideas, documents, videos, pictures and knowledge with their friends and peers globally even for leisure. The absence of this facility in academic libraries hinders the students from enjoying these benefits and invariable amounts to inadequate utilization of the library.

The library is a social institution charged with the responsibility of acquiring, gathering, organizing, storing, and preserving information for dissemination of scholarly output and ensuring effective service delivery to satisfy its patrons. Aina (2004) cited in Maina et al. (2017); Ikenwe and Adegbilero-Iwari (2014) states that libraries are concerned with the collection, processing, storage and dissemination of recorded information for reading, study and consultation. For academic libraries as information providers to fulfil its mandate of ensuring effective service delivery to the rising user population, the provision of Internet facility and access is imperative if the institutional repository and other library resources must be consulted and optimally utilized by students.

The Internet according to Matisse Enzer's glossary of internet terms (2000–2008) is a wide-area network connecting millions of computers globally to allow people to access information and contact each other and share information resources. The Internet offers a lot of opportunities for students and other users to partake in the information space by connecting, accessing and retrieving all kinds of relevant information stored especially on the World Wide Web. Others include Usenet, e-conferencing, remote login (telnet), file transfer protocol (FTP), e-mail and online chat. The large

volume of information added to the Internet on daily basis is amazingly on the increase. Students use the Internet to enhance their academic performance. In universities the world over, both the teaching and learning activities has migrated online. Present day library services across the globe are also IT driven. For any university library to continue to remain relevant, it must join the information super highway via the Internet. It is in the light of the foregoing, that this study sought to investigate the availability of Internet facility and utilization by undergraduate students of IAUE in Rivers State, Nigeria

Statement of the Problem

The adoption and application of ICTs in most academic libraries in Nigeria have opened up opportunities for libraries to support and enhance the objective of teaching, learning, research and communication. This is achieved through the provision of internet facilities to enhance the quality of services to satisfy the information needs of their students and other users within the institutions and increase the utilization of its resources. The internet enables students to communicate with other students globally and enhance their skills and knowledge but unfortunately, even when this facility is available, its functionality and optimal utilization are seen as questionable and can result in discouragement of the students using the facility. Unreliable power supply, students' lack of skill, lack of maintenance, slow connectivity, unskilled technical staff, and inadequate maintenance amongst others, tend to be a major challenge. However, several studies have been conducted in the area of ICT and internet provision and utilization in libraries but much remained to be reviewed as regards the availability of internet facilities and their use, especially in the institution studied. This is an identified gap that has raised the curiosity of this study. This study, therefore, seeks to address this gap by examining the correlation between the availability of internet facilities and utilization by undergraduate students' of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the frequency of utilization of the Internet facility by the undergraduate students in IAUE library?

2. What are the reasons for the utilization of the Internet facility by undergraduate students of IAUE??
3. What challenges do undergraduate encounter in the utilization of the Internet facility in IAUE?

Hypothesis

The research formulated one null hypothesis to guide the study:

4. **H₀₁:** There is no relationship between the availability of Internet facility and utilization by undergraduate students in IAUE.

Literature Review/Conceptual Background Internet Facility and Utilization

The internet is considered one of the most important innovations in the history of mankind. It is a vital tool of communication used to support the teaching, learning and research in the university. According to Singh (2014), the internet is essential for today's education and research in academic institutions. The library being the hub of academic activities in the university should facilitate this process through the provision of Internet access. According to Agba (2001), the Internet is a global communication infrastructure, which enables many computers connected to it to communicate with any other computer connected to the Internet at electronic speed regardless of geopolitical location. Adeyoyin et al. (2016) posits that just as a road allows travel through different areas of a country, the internet allows information to flow from many different interconnected computer networks. The Internet enables students to communicate with other students beyond their territory to share ideas, knowledge, and experiences with others. It enhances the skills and capabilities of students and assists them in their studies and professional lives.

The importance and relevance of the Internet to students cannot be underestimated. The Internet plays a pivotal role in meeting the information and communication needs of academic institutions thereby creating a platform where a wide range of up-to-date information can be widely accessed from or sent to anywhere or location in the world for educational and other purposes. Jackson et al. (2011) stated that the Internet will level the educational playing field due to its availability to everyone, everywhere, and at any time, irrespective of gender, race/ethnicity, income or

other socio-demographic characteristics. The Internet is therefore seen as a wide-area network connecting millions of computers globally to allow people to access information, contact each other and share information resources (Matisse Enzer Glossary of Internet Terms, 2000–2008). The internet is also considered a reservoir of information (Biwott, (2017). With the Internet, users can access e-resources freely or at a fee. Some of the material resources found or that can be accessed on the Internet are e-books, e-newspapers, e-databases, e-journals and online encyclopaedias. Hassan & Jacob (2012); Anyanwu and Ossai-Onah(2013) opine that the Internet is a platform that serves as a global reservoir of knowledge for researchers and students to share common knowledge diversely; they have often taken advantage of the virtual library to publish, interact and share findings. Oguike and Aji (2017) describe the Internet as a worldwide network of computers and people. Built upon state-of-the-art technology, the Internet makes it possible for thousands of dissimilar physical networks that are not connected and that use diverse hardware technologies to connect and operate as a single communication system (Emiri, 2015). Buhari (2013), notes that the internet provides many benefits to its users, including access to information from distant databases that can be studied to improve knowledge. Due to the endless nature of information resources on the Internet, most libraries are increasingly investing in the provision of Internet services and resources to enable their clients have better access to the information resources (Shehu et al., 2015). These resources are online databases, e-journals, e-prints and other sources of digital information. The Internet provides services such as e-mail, World Wide Web (www), Usenet, (newsgroups) file transfer protocol (FTP), Internet relay chat, list servers, and mailing lists. (Matisse Enzer Glossary of Internet Terms, 2000-2008). The internet provides the infrastructure for the publication and distribution of different types of information and information services particularly through the World Wide Web (WWW), (Ozonuwe et al., 2018).

Despite the benefits accrued to the use of the internet, it's also not without some challenges that have hindered its effective utilization by students. Sometimes, connecting to the server can be time-consuming and frustrating for the student who may

end up not achieving their aim. To this end, the study by Omotayo (2006) found that the major barriers to efficient Internet use by students include the slowness of the server. Similarly, Luambono and Nawe (2004) also observed that the slow Internet connections attributable to small bandwidth is a major factor hindering Internet access and use in Africa.

Another study conducted by Oyadonghan and Eke (2011) on factors affecting students ‘use of information technology in Nigeria listed the inhibitors of students’ use of the Internet as insufficient availability of IT resources, inadequate training on how to use the Internet, uncooperative attitude of staff, time constraints, cost of utilisation, obsolete equipment, space constraints, irregular power supply and systems failure.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey design. The population of the study comprised 1352 registered undergraduate students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The sample size was three hundred and thirty eight (338). Instrument for data collection was the questionnaire titled “Availability of Internet

facility and Utilization by Undergraduate Students Questionnaire (AIFUUSQ). The questionnaire was designed on a four-point rating scale of: Strongly Agree (SA = 4), Agree (A = 3), Disagree (D = 2) and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1) in line with the specific objectives. To test the reliability of the instrument, 20 copies of the questionnaire were given to respondents at the University of Port Harcourt. Data obtained were tested for the reliability index through the use of Cronbach’s Alpha formula showing reliability co-efficient of 0.83 which showed a high reliability rate of the instrument for data collection.

Three hundred and thirty-eight (338) copies of the questionnaire were distributed and two hundred and seventy-seven (277) were completed, returned and found to be in usable form. This showed an 81.9% return rate. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation for the research questions. The cut off for the mean scores was 2.50. The t-test was utilized to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Result of the data analysis was presented in tables below according to the research questions that guided the study.

Research Question 1:What is the frequency of utilization of the internet facility available in the library by undergraduate students of IAUE.

Table 1: Mean scores of respondents on frequency of utilization of the internet facility available in IAUE

S/N	Item statement	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	Mean	Decision
1.	I use the internet facility daily.	99(396)	61(183)	48(96)	69(69)	277(744)	2.68	Accepted
2.	I use the internet facility twice a week.	82(328)	77(231)	47(94)	71(71)	277(724)	2.61	Accepted
3.	I use the internet facility weekly.	96(384)	48(144)	63(189)	70(70)	277(787)	2.84	Accepted
4.	I use the internet facility monthly.	69(276)	56(168)	50(100)	102(102)	277(646)	2.33	Rejected
5.	I use the internet facility occasionally.	102(408)	64(192)	58(116)	53(53)	277(769)	2.77	Accepted
6	I use don’t use the internet facility at all.	75(300)	36(108)	63(126)	103(103)	277(637)	2.29	Rejected

Result in table 1 shows that four out of six of the question items such as, the use of internet facility daily, twice a week, weekly and occasionally were accepted while the use of internet facility monthly and not using at all were rejected.

Research Question 2: What are the reasons why you use the Internet facility in your library?

Table 2: Mean scores of respondents on reasons for using the Internet facility in IAUE library

S/N	Item statement	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	Mean	Decision
1.	For assignment.	111(444)	52(164)	33(66)	51(51)	277(725)	2.61	Accepted
2.	For research work.	125(500)	79(237)	30(60)	43(43)	277(840)	3.03	Accepted
3.	For sending e-mail.	100(400)	100(300)	26(52)	51(51)	277(803)	2.89	Accepted
4.	For entertainment	31(124)	54(162)	63(126)	129(129)	277(776)	1.94	Rejected
5.	For acquiring skill and knowledge.	90(360)	100(300)	29(58)	58(58)	277(776)	2.80	Accepted
6.	For communication and chatting.	57(228)	44(132)	58(116)	118(118)	277(594)	2.14	Rejected

Result in Table 2 shows that items 1, 2, 3 and 5 in the table received positive mean scores of 2.6 and above. Result of the analysis shows that items 4 and 6 received negative mean scores of 1.94 and 2.14 respectively. The grand mean of 2.56 for the items indicate that the respondents accepted that the reasons for the use of Internet facility were mainly for assignments, research work, sending of e-mail and for acquiring skills and knowledge.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges encountered in using the Internet facility available in the library?

Table 4: Mean scores of respondents on challenges encountered in using the internet facility in IAUE.

S/N	Selection	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	Mean	Decision
1.	Unsteady power supply (Electricity).	141(564)	71(213)	37(74)	28(28)	277(879)	3.17	Accepted
2.	High fee charged.	91(364)	74(222)	164	30(30)	277(780)	2.81	Accepted
3.	Inadequate search skills.	119(476)	58(174)	57(114)	43(43)	277(807)	2.91	Accepted
4.	Poor quality service delivery.	131(524)	82(246)	44(88)	20(20)	277(882)	3.18	Accepted
5.	Slow internet connectivity.	197(788)	30(90)	40(80)	10(10)	277(797)	3.49	Accepted

6	The problem of locating the right websites.	97(388)	87(261)	43(86)	50(50)	277(785)	2.83	Accepted
7	Limited bandwidth	63(252)	107(321)	60(120)	47(47)	277(740)	2.67	Accepted

The results in Table 3 shows that all the items received positive rating hence were all accepted. The grand mean of 2.05 for the items indicate that the respondents accepted that these were challenges undergraduates encountered in the use of Internet facilities in IAUE.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One:

There is no significant relationship between the availability of internet facilities and utilization by undergraduate students of IAUE.

Table 5: Standard deviation and t-value on the respondent's availability of internet facilities and utilization by undergraduate students.

Variables	Mean	N	SD	T-Cal	T-Crit
Planning	69.70	231	4.725	.314	1.96
Library automation	69.64	46	5.873		

Significant at P< 05; df = 277

From the result, it can be seen that the calculated T-value of .314 is greater than the critical T-value of 1.96 at a .05 level of significance with 277 degrees of freedom, so the null hypothesis was not rejected, since the calculated t-value is less than the critical value.

Discussion

The result of the study in table 1 shows that undergraduate students used the Internet facility daily, twice a week, weekly and occasionally. This result agrees with the findings of Chen and Fu (2009) which showed that internet searching helps university students to boost their intellectual development and job preparation, hence the need for its utilization.

The result in Table 2 shows that the reasons for use, range from; assignment, research work, sending e-mail and acquiring skills and knowledge. While the result of the analysis in Table 3 shows that all the items were accepted. As indicated, the undergraduate students accepted all the items listed in the tables as challenges they encounter while using the Internet facility. It agrees with Luambo and Nawe (2004) who

observed that the slow Internet connection attributable to small bandwidth is a major factor hindering Internet access and use in African universities. Omotayo (2006) affirmed that slow internet connectivity, server and payment for the access time (high fee charged) were among the challenges to efficient Internet use by students. In the same vein, Luambo and Nawe (2004) affirm that lack of skills is another challenge that hinders students in Internet usage. These items corroborate with those of Ogungbeni, Adehanye, Bamighose and Sulaiman (2016) in their findings where they assert that there were not enough policies to regulate the use of Internet in Nigerian universities, hence, the numerous challenges (power supply, Internet connectivity, amongst others) being faced in its utilization. Quadri (2011) found that unsteady power supply is a setback to Internet consumption.

Conclusion

This study investigated the availability of Internet facility and utilization by undergraduate students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State, Nigeria. The study reveals that internet facility is now seen as both a necessity and an

opportunity, hence the utilization by undergraduate students for diverse purposes. It is also noticeable that a large percentage of students make use of the internet from time to time. The internet facility enhances their academic performance. The challenges highlighted by the students would negate these benefits if not attended to.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made:

1. Enabling environment should be created for effective utilization of the Internet at all

times in the university. This will enhance library patronage.

2. All necessary facilities for effective utilization of Internet service delivery should be put in place for easy access and uninterrupted utilization by the undergraduate students of IAUE. This will enhance their various research and academic activities as well enhance their Internet skills and knowledge.
3. Challenges associated with Internet availability and utilization has been identified. Strategies to mitigate these challenges should be urgently addressed.

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