Assessment of Internet Awareness and Use by the Undergraduate Students of College of Agricultural and Science Education in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike

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Abstract This study examined internet awareness and use by the undergraduate students in college of Agricultural and Science Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria. It sought to find out their level of internet awareness, frequency of internet use, purpose of internet use, impact derivable from the internet use and factors affecting their usage of internet. A descriptive survey design was used for the study with a population of 1800 undergraduate students. Sample size of 360 (20%) of the population was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaires. Percentages and frequency tables were used in analyzing the data. The findings revealed that all the undergraduate students are aware of the internet. It also discovered that majority make use of the internet often. The study also showed that the students make use of the internet for learning purpose, sending of e-mail, entertainment/recreation and chatting among others. It was also discovered that internet use has a very high impact on the academic excellence of the students. Unstable power supply, low bandwidth, low internet skills, high subscription prices, difficulty in finding relevant information among others were found to be the problems the students encounter in their use of internet. The study recommended that there should be improvement in power supply and the university authority should also make provision for alternative power supply in case of power outage, there should be training and retraining of students on the use of internet facilities, efforts should be made to increase the internet bandwidth in order to ensure speedy access and the subscription prices should also be made relatively cheap so that majority of the students can afford the services.

Keywords: *internet, internet awareness, internet use, undergraduate students*

1. Introduction

The emergency of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has shrunk the world into a global village that anyone or organization ignoring it is asking to be side-tracked and placed in the periphery in the international arena, get unredeemable outdated and grossly limited in acquiring information. This new technological age is a revolutionary period whose impact is far surpassing those of the agricultural and industrial revolutions. Information has now become the most strategic resources that has transformed the world economy, changed many facets of life, education being inclusive.

Internet which is one out of the many components of ICT has changed the way we work and interact with each other. Internet has been defined in many ways. According to Jibril, [6] means International Telecommunication Network. It is a network that connects thousands of other computer networks [4]. Corner [3] noted that internet is the mechanism to transmit information which can be in numeric, text and graphic form through the help of computers. Krol [8] wrote that the Internet evolved from a 1960s US Defense Department experiment in computer networking called ARPA net. Its purpose was to provide efficient communication between different types of computer over a large geographical area enabling large community of users to share resources that were available on these computers.

The internet has increasingly become an invariable asset in education in terms of learning, teaching and research. The use of internet in the higher institution is an exciting prospect especially when the rugged terrain is the significant impediment to obtain information for the vast majority of people. From literature, Olayiwola [10] believes that internet is an industry where students can learn the latest and the best and be on an equal footing with everyone else. Jimba [7] said that the internet has

enormous potentials to revolutionize education, dramatically transforming schools. The scope the internet transforms existing educational provision includes the globalization of education, adaptation of curricular, new teaching materials and the networking of schools. These ensure brighter future for the students as it helps to close the global information gap

The world today is information driven and internet has become a key player in education. The need for internet use in tertiary institutions in Nigeria has become very imperative in view of its roles in learning and research. The students cannot ignore the impact of automation and information processing system on their skill and discipline since almost everything within and around their environment are centred on technological innovations. Ajala [2] maintains that the internet has opened up numerous possibilities for doing resource sharing at local and global levels and that information on latest journals, books and discussion can be exchanged directly through the use of Internet services.

Access and use of internet could stimulate changes and create conducive learning environment more meaningful and responsive to the localized and specific needs of learners. Lecturers and students could obtain materials using new technologies, transforming education and enabling people to develop new skills. Okentuji [9] stressed that internet provides a global opportunity for the provision of Value Added Service by libraries. He mentioned the indexing, abstracting and publication of locally generated researches and their digitization as means of facilitating learning. Connectivity is a means of empowerment and development of students because of the need to study and conduct research, they have been able to keep themselves abreast with the latest information and improve their academic competence.

2. Objective of the Study

The broad aim of the study is to assess internet awareness and use by the undergraduate students of College of Agricultural and Science Education (CASE) in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike . The specific objectives are to:

i. Discover the level of Internet awareness among the undergraduate students of Agricultural and Science Education.

ii. Examine the frequency of Internet usage by the undergraduate students.

iii. Determine the purpose for Internet use among the undergraduate students

iv. Ascertain the impact derivable from the internet use.

v. Analyze the factors affecting the use of Internet among the Undergraduate students.

3. Scope and Limitations

The scope of the study encompasses internet awareness and use among the undergraduate students of College of Agricultural and Science Education. However the study has the following limitations:

(a) The study is limited to Micheal Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudke.

(b) The study includes only the undergraduate students of College of Agricultural and Science Education.

(c) The study is limited to Internet awareness and use.

4. Methodology

A descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population consist of 1800 undergraduate students in CASE. Sample size of 360 representing 20% of the population was used for the study. A simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the sample. This gives each student an equal chance of being chosen. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaires which was designed to reflect the research question. It was administered to the students personally by the researchers and with the help of research assistants, which after completion was collected. The reliability of the instrument was determined by administering the questionnaire in two occasions to the same respondents and paring the two questionnaires completed by each respondent. The responses were compared and found to be highly consistent. This showing that the instrument was reliable. To ensure validity of the instrument, it was given to three experts from the Department of Library and Information science, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike for face validation. They examined the items with respect to clarity of thought, language, scope and coverage etc. Their comments aided the researchers to effect correction which improved the quality of the instrument. Percentages and frequency tables were used in analyzing the data.

5. Analysis of Data

Table 1. Distribution and return rate of the questionnaire

Population	No of Respondents	No Distributed	No Returned	% Returned
Undergraduate Students in CASE	360	360	224	62%

From the population of 1800 undergraduate students in College of Agricultural and Science Education, a sample of 360 respondents which represent 20% of the population was chosen using probability sampling technique. From the Table 1 above, a total number of 224 (62%) out of 360 questionnaires distributed were returned and correctly filled. Percentage score of 50% was used as a bench mark.

For the first objective of the study which sought to determine the level of internet awareness among the undergraduate students as represented in Table 2, all the 224 respondents responded positively with regards to being aware of the internet.

Table 2. Undergraduate Students Awareness of Internet

S/N	Internet Awareness	Respondent	%
1.	Yes (I am aware of the Internet Services)	224	100%
2.	No (I am not aware of the Internet Services)	NIL	NIL
	Total	**224**	**100**

Table 3. Undergraduate Students Response on Frequency of Internet Use

S/N	Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
3.	Very Often	68	30.4%
4.	Often	104	46.4%
5.	Occasionally	52	23.2%
6.	Never	-	-
	TOTAL	**224**	**100**

From Table 3 above, it reveals that (30.4%) of the respondents make use of the internet Very Often, (46.4%) make use of it Often while (23.2%) of the respondents make use of the internet Occasionally. None of the respondents indicated not having made use of the internet. It could be clearly observed from the table that majority of the students make use of the internet Often.

Table 4. Undergraduate Students response on purpose for internet Usage

S/N	Purpose of Using the Internet	Respondents	Percentages
7.	Learning Purposes (study, assignment, term paper writing etc)	118	52.7%
8.	Sending e-mail	53	23.7%
9.	Entertainment and recreation	31	13.8%
10.	Chatting	22	9.8%
	Total	**224**	**100**

The data analyzed in Table 4 above shows the various purposes to which the undergraduate students use the internet services. Learning Purpose has the highest percentage as 118 respondents representing (52.7%) indicated that they use the internet mainly for learning purposes. Sending of e-mail has response rate of (23.7%), Entertainment and recreation has (13.8%) while Charting has (9.8%) respectively.

Table 5. Impact Derivable from the Internet Usage

S/N	Self-Assessment of Impact Derivable from the Use of Internet	Respondents	Percentages
11.	Very High	97	43.3%
12.	High	67	29.9%
13.	Low	33	14.7%
14.	Very Low	19	8.5%
15.	None	8	3.6%
	Total	**224**	**100**

Table 5 shows self-assessed impact of the internet on the students' academic performances. (43.3%) of the respondents claimed that the internet has exercised very high level of impact on them while (29.9%) of the respondents claimed that the impact is simply high. (14.7%) of the respondents agreed that the impact is low while (8.5%) of the respondents asserts the internet has very low level of impact on them. It is unfortunate that (3.6%) of the respondents indicated that the internet has no impact on them.

Table 6. Factors affecting the use of Internet Services

S/N	Factors	Respondents	Percentages
16.	Unstable power supply	76	33.9%
17.	Low bandwidth	58	25.9%
18.	Low internet skills	50	22.4%
19.	High subscription prices	29	12.9%
20.	Difficulty in finding relevant information	11	4.9%
	Total	**224**	**100**

Table 6 depicts in descending order a picture of the factors affecting the use of internet services. The revealed that unstable power supply (33.9%), Low bandwidth (25.9%), low internet skills (22.4%), high subscription prices (12.9) and difficulty in finding relevant information (4.9%) are among the factors affecting the use of internet services by the undergraduate students of College of Agricultural and Science Education.

6. Findings

In this work which was carried out to study the awareness of internet and its usage by the students in College of Agricultural and Science Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, the researcher discovered from the results that all the respondents under study are aware of internet and its facilities. This is in agreement with Ahmad and Panda [1] who posited that majority of the students and faculty members are aware and use internet. The finding also shows that greater percentage of the respondent make use of the internet frequently as "Very Often and Often" rated 30.4% and 46% respectively which constitute about 70% of the total respondents.

In response to the purpose of usage, it was discovered that the respondents use the internet for numerous reasons but they indicated that they use it mainly for academic purpose. This collaborates with findings in the work Islam and Habiba [5] which stated that the students use Internet and e-resources for learning purposes. In support of the above findings Shivraja [11] also revealed that the students use Internet for their teaching and study purposes respectively. The result also shows that the internet makes very high impact on the life of the students as it helps them to have access to avalanche information on net and also help them to collaborate with their colleagues thereby ensuring academic excellence.

Among the challenges affecting the use of internet services which ranges from unstable power supply, low

bandwidth, low internet skills, high subscription prices to difficulty in finding relevant information, it was envisaged that unstable power supply, low bandwidth and low internet skills are the major problems faced by the respondents as they rated higher. This is in line with findings of Thanuskodi [12] which reveals that respondents have high problems in accessing internet and e-resources in terms of virus, difficulty in using digital resources due to lack of Information Technology (IT) skills and limited access to computers.

7. Conclusion/Recommendations

The potentials of internet awareness and its use in education system and in the life of students can never be overemphasized as it gives quick access to numerous and varied information on net which is a vital ingredient needed by every student in all academic endavour. This is because it is mainly through gathering of information that the knowledge required for any educational pursuit are acquired. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that in order to ensure increased awareness and use of internet services the following should be looked into:

- There should be improvement in power supply and the university authority should also make provision for alternative power supply in case of power outage.
- There should be training and retraining of students on the use of internet facilities.
- Efforts should be made to increase the internet bandwidth in order to ensure speedy access.
- The subscription prices should also be made relatively cheap so that majority of the students can afford the services.

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