

The Challenges of Internet Usage for Academic Activities Among Students of Delta State University, Abraka

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined the challenges of Internet usage for academic activities among Delta State University, Abraka students. Despite the numerous benefits students derived from internet usage, they are still faced with challenges which stakeholders need to address for an effective educational system. Three research questions were raised to achieve the objectives of the study. The study adopted a descriptive research design with a sample size of 120 students randomly selected from 100 to 400 levels. The data collected from respondents through structured questionnaire were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study revealed that the effect of Internet access affordability on academic activities among students of Delta State University Abraka included the cost of accessing the internet, high cost of internet devices and services, lack of access points and devices with limited capacity; lack of personal internet device and reliance on friends and families for internet access. It was also established that most of the students lack internet browsing skills and required skills to use digital devices and language barriers. The study concludes that the effects of safety and privacy concerns on students' academic activities derived from fear of scams, stealing passwords, fake news and information, fraudster and distraction. It was therefore recommended among others that internet service providers should endeavour to eliminate or reduce internet challenges such as network problems and connection breaks.*

KEYWORDS: *Internet, Usage, Student, Challenges, Academic Activities*

INTRODUCTION

One of the basic human rights and a core element of sustainable individual and national development is education. Education gives a successful living, economic and social achievement. It promotes lifelong learning opportunities (World Bank, 2016). The Internet

helps students to achieve this vision for the future which can improve the quality of education by giving room to access information and educational resources, and increasing opportunities for learning in and beyond the classroom (Audu, 2015).

The internet means different things to different users, but the common factor between all is that it makes work easier (Bush and Dawson, 2017). Students use the internet to do their school or college assignments, and academic activities and for researching vital information just by clicking to navigate, to access a whole plethora of information on almost any topic under the sun. In this way, students also get to enhance their skills which can earn them a side income while pursuing their education (Asianet, 2018). Aside from this, since not all institutions can afford to send their students to far-flung locations for onsite field education, the Internet provides the opportunity for students to engage in virtual field education. This approach makes it possible for the students to enjoy both on-campus and field education benefits without disruption to normal academic activities on campus. This is because there are web seminars available that the student can attend over the Internet and still gather relevant information (Chen and Peng, 2018).

The best part is that examinations are now written online. According to Kirschner and Karpinski (2010), the internet is used as a source of information for students in their quest for knowledge. Thus, E-mail, instant messages and posting of messages on websites are also sources of information. Hazelhurst et al. (2011) maintain that Internet users perform better academically than those that do not often use the Internet. According to Ogedebe (2010), 79% of students reported a positive influence of the Internet on their academic grades.

Despite the achievements students made in using the internet for academic purposes, they are still faced with challenges. Most of these challenges include internet-related network problems while accessing the internet across locations, quality and reliability issues like connection breaks, lack of skills in internet browsing, high internet challenges, irrelevant information, spam mail popouts, advertisement popouts, inconsistent speed, commuting take a long time to refresh, failure to load, auto downloads, session failures and so on (Dogruer, Eyyam Menevis, 2011). The foregoing background offers the necessary motivation for this study to examine the challenges of internet usage for academic activities among students of Delta State University, Abraka

The Internet is the most useful technology of modern times which helps students in their daily lives and academic activities. Today, it has become more important as well as a powerful tool in the academic world which is preferred by students and Delta State University students are not left out. Students need the internet for assignments, research work, for information related to exams, curriculum, results, and so on; thus, the reason for this study.

The internet makes it easier for students to research things, and relearn the content taught in the school. Students use it according to their needs and interests. Still, students face a lot of challenges using the Internet for academic activities. The problem here is, “the challenge of

internet usage for academic activities among students of Delta State University, Abraka". The major responsibility here at this point is to establish what to do in the process of conducting this study. The objective of this study is:

- i. Examine the effect of internet access affordability on academic activities among students of Delta State University Abraka.
- ii. determine the effect of required digital skills on academic activities among students of Delta State University Abraka.
- iii. reveal the effect of safety and privacy concerns on academic activities among students of Delta State University Abraka.

Research Questions

In the course of interrogating the challenge of internet usage, certain probing questions became highly imperative. They are:

- i. What is the effect of internet access affordability on academic activities among students of Delta State University Abraka?
- ii. Is there any effect of required digital skills on academic activities among students of Delta State University Abraka?
- iii. What is the effect of safety and privacy concerns on academic activities among students of Delta State University Abraka?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Internet is an international connection of computers and other hardware (Hilbert and López, 2011). It is possible to access almost any information on the internet, communicate with friends and loved ones, and do educational activities. The Internet is an increasingly important part of everyday life for people around the world. But if you've never used the Internet before, all of this new information might initially feel a bit confusing (Lawal, 2015).

The Internet is an immediate dissemination platform for information. Search tools are available to help track down information. Academic communities join the internet, and they organise or provide gateways to the information that's relevant to them. Students choose the Internet as their source of information (Corbett, 2016). Internet access is the ability of individuals and organizations to connect to the Internet using computer terminals, computers, and other devices; and to access services such as email and the World Wide Web. Before now, the device students use to access the internet was Personal Computers (PCs), today this category is much more diverse and runs the gamut from mobile phones, to tablets and desktops. Some of the devices students use to access the internet are modem, fibre, Wi-Fi, satellite, and cellular phone technology (e.g. 3G, 4G) (Ron, 2016). These devices are web-enabled once equipped with appropriate connectivity (WiFi, 3G, 4G).

The Challenge of Internet Usage for Academic Activities

The internet is not only one network, but there are many considerations like cell towers, connectivity, firewalls, and proxy servers that can cause problems with connectivity. The potential positive impact of the internet only goes as far as what one uses it for and the extent to which the challenges faced require an ICT-related intervention. Students face a lot of challenges using the Internet for their academic activities. Some of these challenges are internet access affordability, required digital skills, missing local content, restricted access and use, safety and privacy concerns and internet utility limitations (Pasternak, 2016)

Internet Access Affordability

The cost of accessing the Internet is one of the challenges students face. Most of the students are unable to afford the cost of devices and services and lack access points. Most of the internet access lacks the desired quality and network speed. Some of the devices have limited capacity, that limits the scope of access and use. Some students have no personal access device to the Internet, rather they borrow and had to rely on friends and family members to access the Internet (Lawal, 2015).

Required Digital Skill

Having access to the internet via devices is not enough, the required skills to use and browse the internet are needed. In this regard, the challenges students face include digital skills, language barriers and information overload. The digital skills-related challenges range from not knowing what the Internet is, to lacking the knowledge of how to use the Internet (Sushma et al., 2016).

Missing Local Content

Students face the challenge of local content when using the internet. Most of the resources online are in foreign languages which might not be familiar to some students.

Restricted Access and Use

Students especially those under the age of 18 years are faced with restriction on the use of some websites by their parents. Even when one can buy a smartphone, parents do not trust them because of fear of being spoilt.

Safety and Privacy Concerns

Safety and privacy concerns are also a challenge student face. Students are aware of scamming and theft of passwords as a security issue one needs to be aware of when using the Internet (Pasternak, 2016).

Internet Utility Limitations

There was also the perception that the internet would not be able to address fundamental infrastructure issues, such as not having electricity or ill-treatment, for instance.

Internet Academic Activities among Student

Students depend on internet services to do academic activities and acquisition of information. The click of a button is enough to access a whole plethora of information on almost any topic under the sun. This provides opportunities for students to enhance their skills which can earn them side income while pursuing their education (Barks, 2006). The internet makes it possible for students to complete courses from remote locations. This implies distance education and means attending virtual classes and e-tutorials online. This offers a more realistic and interactive mode of distance education which grabs the student's interest (Ellison, 2007). Students' education does not suffer from any form of disruption as there are web seminars available that the student can attend over the internet and still gather relevant information. The best part is that many exams have now become online. This saves the student vital time and stress wasted on travelling, thus enabling them to sit for the exam from the comfort of their homes (Dogruer et al., 2011).

Registration for courses or exams is being done online these days, making the internet an indispensable part of the student's educational endeavours (Dogruer et al., 2011; Audu, 2006). In addition, students use the Internet to locate a publication and find arbitrary information, use the Internet for data collection, use the Internet for data analysis, for disseminating information on the Internet, for distance education, and assignments and research work (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Ron (2016) argues that the Internet has also made it possible for students to complete courses online. Ron maintained that examination has now become online, which saves the student vital time and stress wasted on travelling, which provides them with the opportunity to sit for the exam from their comfort zone. Even registration for courses or exams is being done online these days, making the internet an indispensable part of the student's educational endeavours

The Effects of Internet Usage on Students' Academy Performance

There are many advantages gained academically when the internet become a source of information for students. Students have continued to rely on the internet to do academic activities, especially for researching vital information which in turn increases students' academic performance and consequently enriched the labour market and society (Ron (2016).

Some of the positive effects of internet usage include (1) Access to a large volume of information in the shortest possible time. (2) Utilization of distance education which suggests that any students can learn from anywhere. (3) Internet allows the students to learn at their pace and revisit learning tools, align with the lesson plans; save time and student engagement, and provides for career readiness and students' self-monitoring of their academic progress using tools that they are familiar with (Sushma, Peter, Natalya, Gregory, & Donald, 2016).

However, according to Amaoge and Ejike, (2016), there are some negative effects associated with the use of Internet on students. They argue that these negative effects are large expenditures, reliance on technology, misguided information, elimination of the need for handwriting and distraction.

Taking a closer look at the points raised above, it was established that (1) *large expenditures* involving high costs for training teachers, implementation of new devices, and replacement for new devices are part of the negative effects of internet usage. (2) On the question of *Reliance on Technology*, students have increasingly relied on the internet by merely looking up information on the internet. During class, students have the opportunity to play on different tabs due to the feeling of being entitled to technology. Consequently, this attitude has made them inefficient learners this way. (3) *Misguided/False Information* - without being taught how to navigate the Internet and how to discern where to find accurate information for research. Students at the elementary school age are not taught citations through the Common Core curriculum, either. This can lead to the spread of false or inaccurate information among younger generations. (4) *Eliminating the need for handwriting* - handwriting notes is statistically proven to improve memorization and understanding. A common practice for studying is to handwrite typed notes. However, with the dawn of educational technology in the classroom, typing and handwriting are now equally if not disparagingly used in the classroom, with partiality to typing. Internet Technology induces addiction in students. Internet Technology reduces the accountability of teachers and schools on the student's learning and (5) *Distraction* - a study published in the Child Development journal demonstrates "heavy parent digital technology use has been associated with suboptimal parent-child interactions.

According to Jones (2012), approximately 79% of students are positively affected by the Internet. Chen and Peng (2008) ascertained that the primary reasons students use the Internet are for making friends or chat, followed by searching for academic information, then playing online games and finally checking emails. Hazelhurst et al. (2011) argue that the number of passes and fails among heavy Internet users are 70.6% and 29.4% respectively while among light users they are 83.4% and 17.6% respectively. According to Ogedebe (2010) 79% of its students are positively influenced by the Internet on their academic grades. Kubey, Lavin and Bamous (2013) reported that internet addiction is a basic problem which affects the academic performance of students. Lenhart (2015) explained that more than 21 million adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 had access to and routinely used the Internet.

Hazelhurst et al. (2011) conducted research on students' internet usage and their academic performance among second-year university students at a single university. The study reveals that 50.2% of the 'good' students fall in the bottom 40% of Internet users and 27.1% of them are heavy users. The authors also found that the number of passes and fails among heavy Internet users are 70.6% and 29.4% respectively while among light users they are 83.4% and 17.6% respectively. This study shows that 'good' students use the Internet less than 'bad' students furthermore, it shows that 'light' Internet users perform better academically than heavy Internet users.

According to Ogedebe (2010), who researched the relationship between academic performance and Internet services among university students, 79% of its participants reported a positive influence of the Internet on their academic grades. Barks (2006) surveyed the

undergraduates to examine internet usage patterns. He reported that female students mainly use the internet for e-mail messages while male students search for information which is not related to academics.

Several theories seek to explain how people use the Internet and how it affects their behaviour. Some of these theories include the following: Uses and Gratifications Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Diffusion of Innovation Theory and Technology Acceptance Model.

Uses and Gratifications Theory: Uses and gratifications theory suggests that people use the Internet to fulfil specific needs or goals, such as seeking information, socializing, or entertaining themselves. According to this theory, people actively seek online content that satisfies their needs and desires.

Social Cognitive Theory: The social cognitive theory posits that Internet user is influenced by their beliefs, attitudes, and past experiences. It suggests that people's online behaviour is shaped by their perceptions of the Internet and their expectations about how it will help them achieve their goals.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory: The diffusion of innovations theory explains how new technologies and ideas spread through a population. It suggests that people adopt new technologies based on their perceived usefulness, ease of use, and social influence.

Technology Acceptance Model: The technology acceptance model explains how people decide whether to adopt new technologies. It suggests that people's decisions are based on their perceived usefulness and ease of use of the technology. Overall, these theories provide insight into how students use the internet and how it affects their behaviour and activities. It helps students understand why and how to use the internet in certain ways and how they can adopt new technologies.

The study adopted a descriptive survey design and a survey technique used as a quantitative tool to gather data from respondents. The target population of this study comprised all Delta State University Students, in Abraka. Specifically, focus was on Students from 100 level to 400 level in the Department of Mass Communication. The sample size made up of 100 students randomly selected from the levels. 25 students were chosen based on availability from each level to make up the 100 sample size. The questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was developed using a 4-point scale. 100 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 100 were collected, which shows a 100% retrieval rate. Data collected was summarized into frequency tables. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Simple percentage and mean (\bar{x}) were used to answer the research questions while multiple regression was used to test the hypotheses in SPSS 25 at a significant level of 0.05.

The model for multiple regression is as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 \dots \dots \dots + \beta_n X_n$$

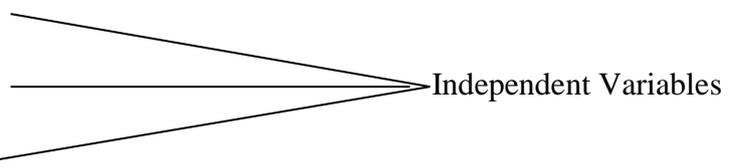
$$AA = \beta_0 + \beta_1IA + \beta_2RS + \beta_3SP$$

AA = Academic Activities - Dependent/Response Variable

IA = Internet Access Affordability

RS = Required Digital Skills

SP = Safety and Privacy Concern



β_0 = the value of AA when all the independent variables are equal to zero.

$\beta_1\beta_2\beta_3$ = the estimated regression coefficients. Each regression coefficient represents the change in AA relative to a one-unit change in the respective independent variables. For items that require strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree, the decision point was 2.50. Therefore, items with a mean response score of 2.50 or above would be regarded as Agree, while items with a mean score below 2.50 would be regarded as Disagree by the researcher.

Table 1: Internet Access Affordability and Students' Academic Activities

S/N	Statement/Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	DECISION
1	Cost of accessing the internet is one of my challenges as a student.	38 (38%)	43 (43%)	17 (17%)	2 (2%)	3.17	Agree
2	I am challenged by high cost of internet devices and services	32 (32%)	45 (45%)	18 (18%)	5 (5%)	3.04	Agree
3	The lack of access points and devices with limited capacity.	36 (36%)	34 (34%)	22 (22%)	8 (8%)	2.98	Agree
4	I have no personal access device to the internet	26 (26%)	33 (33%)	34 (34%)	7 (7%)	2.78	Agree
5	I borrow and rely on friends and family members to access the Internet	28 (28%)	30 (30%)	32 (32%)	10 (10%)	2.76	Agree

The mean scores of students' responses to items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are 3.17, 3.04, 2.98, 2.78 and 2.76 respectively. All the mean scores are above the decision rule of 2.50 for an item to be acceptable. This implies that the effect of internet access affordability on academic activities among student of Delta State University Abraka include: the cost of accessing the internet, high cost of internet devices and services, lack of access points and devices with limited capacity; lack of personal internet device and relying on friends and families for internet access

Table 2: Required Digital Skills and Students' Academic Activities

S/N	Statement/Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	DECISION
11	I lack internet browsing skills						
12	I don't have the required skills to use digital devices	38 (38%)	43 (43%)	17 (17%)	2 (2%)	3.17	Agree
13	Language barriers and information overload are one of my challenges	32 (32%)	45 (45%)	18 (18%)	5 (5%)	3.04	Agree
14	I do not know how to use the internet	36 (36%)	34 (34%)	22 (22%)	8 (8%)	2.98	Agree
15	I lack the knowledge of how to use the Internet	26 (26%)	33 (33%)	34 (34%)	7 (7%)	2.78	Agree

From Table 2, the mean scores of students' responses to the items on required digital skills are 3.01, 2.58, 2.57, 2.58 and 2.92 for items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 respectively. Again, all the mean scores are above the decision rule of 2.50 for an item to be classified as generally agreed. This implies that the effect of required digital skills on students' academic activities are: lack of internet browsing skills, lack of required skills to use digital devices, language barriers and lack of knowledge of how to use the internet.

Table 3: Safety and Privacy Concerns and Academic Activities

S/N	Statement/Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	DECISION
1.	Fear of being scammed is one of my internet challenges	15 (15%)	29 (29%)	38 (38%)	18 (18%)	2.41	Agree
2.	Stealing password is one of my security issues	30 (30%)	26 (26%)	24 (24%)	30 (30%)	2.66	Agree
3.	Fake news and information are a challenge when accessing the internet	32 (32%)	32 (32%)	18 (18%)	18 (18%)	2.78	Agree
4.	Fraudster are my challenge	27 (27%)	29 (29%)	30 (30%)	14 (14%)	2.69	Agree
5.	Distraction and advertisement popouts are a challenge	38 (38%)	43 (43%)	17 (17%)	2 (2%)	3.17	Agree

Mean scores from Table 3 for items 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 are 2.41, 2.66, 2.78, 2.69 and 3.17 respectively. Also, all the mean scores are above the decision rule of 2.50 for an item to be classified as generally agreed. This implies that the effects of safety and privacy concerns on students' academic activities are: fear of being scammed, stealing of passwords, fake news and information, fraudster and distraction.

FINDINGS

Part of the findings in response to research question one, as indicated in Table 1, the effects of internet access affordability on academic activities of students of Delta State University Abraka, were cost of accessing the internet, high cost of internet devices and services, lack of access points and devices with limited capacity, lack of personal internet devices and reliance on friends and families for internet access. These findings are in agreement with Lawal (2015) who established that some students have no personal access device to the Internet, rather they borrow and had to rely on friends and family members to access the Internet.

Also, according to the answer to research question 2 (Table 2), the findings of the study revealed that the effect of required digital skills on students' academic activities were in the form of lack of Internet browsing skills, lack of required skills to use digital devices, language barriers and lack of knowledge of how to use the internet. This finding is in line with the finding of Sushma et al. (2016) who said that digital skills challenges range from not knowing what the Internet is, to lacking the knowledge of how to use the Internet.

Furthermore, the finding of the study according to the answer to research question 3 (Table 3) revealed that the effects of safety and privacy concerns on students' academic activities were fear of being scammed, stealing of passwords, fake news and information, fraudster and distraction. This finding is in agreement with Pasternak (2016) who argued that safety and privacy concern is one of the internet challenges students face in recent times.

CONCLUSION

Students use Internet to do their school assignments, academic activities and research on vital information. They also use it to enhance their skills which can earn them a side income while pursuing their education. Despite the numerous benefit of the internet, students are still faced with challenges like internet access affordability, required digital skills, missing local content, restricted access and use, safety and privacy concerns and internet utility limitations. These challenges have various effects on students' academic activities which in turn affect their academic performance.

Recommendations

1. Government, parents and school authorities should endeavour to provide internet access to students at affordable price to enhance their educational activities.
2. Internet service provider should endeavour to eliminate or reduce internet challenges such as network problems and connection breaks.
3. Stakeholders should endeavour to reduce internet fraud and scams.
4. Advertisements pop-outs or the problem of distraction during internet usage should be reduced.

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