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Full Length Research

The Role of Internet Facilities for Research by Undergraduate Students of Home Science And Management Department of The University of Agriculture Makurdi

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This study assessed the role of internet facilities for research by undergraduate students of Home science and management Department, of the University of Agriculture Makurdi. It sought to examine the benefits of internet facilities to students, the level of internet usage for research by students, identify types of internet facilities utilized by students and examine the problems encountered by students of Home Science and Management Department in using internet facilities. A descriptive survey design was used for the study with a population of 200, 300 400 levels of students of Home Science department. Sample size of 200 respondents from the population was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaires. Mean scores and frequency tables were used in analyzing the data. The findings revealed that internet facilities provide increased access to current information (3.44). It also discovered that majority make use of the internet on monthly basis (2.79). The study also showed that chat facilities are the mostly use by students (2.86). Finally, the study revealed that the internet has slow access to speed (3.50). The study concluded that major source of Internet facilities are provided by business centers around the department. The cost in cure by the students hinders them from using internet for their research works. It was recommended that Home Science departmental library should be with internet facilities to enable the study carried out their research works effectively, subscription to higher bandwidth should be done to avoid the problem of slow connectivity x. Printing facility should be provided so that the users can get printouts of their needed materials and other and to overcome the problem of chat, sites providing only entertainment should be locked on the computers.

Keywords: Internet, Internet Resources, Students.

INTRODUCTION

Along with rapid technological advancement entered the "internet", which has today created a borderless surge for information. The internet is a complex network of networked computers that can convey all kinds of messages including sounds, images and data. Within the global communication networks provided by the Internet, the World Wide Web provides a flexible network of networks 'where institutions, businesses, associations and individuals create their own "sites" on the basis of which everybody with access can produce their own "home page" made of a variable collage of text and images' (Castells, 1996). Connectivism and networked learning emerged as new learning paradigms that reflect the ability of today's teacher and learner to access endless sources of information, build relationships with others, and collaborate and develop knowledge, all often done outside the formal education environment, on a scale not seen before (Siemens 2005).

The internet has revolutionized how information is being disseminated holistically and the universities are not exception. Within universities in Nigeria, there is evidence of changes brought by internet which has become a point of first resort for information on practically anything and has implication far beyond teaching learning and research. With the use of the internet, information could be accessed in any subject field of interest through the help of the World Wide Web, electronic mails, news groups, electronic journals, electronic databases, video conferences and lately Web 2.0, thereby bridging the communication lacuna and global divide. The internet is arguably one of the most significant technological developments of 20th century. It is a live, constantly moving, theoretically borderless, potentially infinite space for the production and circulation of information. In the words of

Singh (2002) 'while printed materials have a certain fixity and finitude, texts published via the internet have a much more fluid character'. Internet has an impact on the day-to-day life of education planners, yet knowing how to look for information, how to analyze it, how to represent it, how to evaluate it, and how to use it will certainly be competencies necessary for anybody who wants to compete in the new knowledge economy.

There is no doubt that internet has invaded all the strata of human endeavours and it has impacted on it greatly. Lending credit to this submission, Ukodie (2004) writes that it has been commonly accepted and proven that internet is the engine of the 21st century and beyond because it helps the individuals, institutions and societies to achieve greater access to information on countless topics and charts the educational, economic, political, religious, cultural and social life of nations. Kumar and Kaur (2006) posit that internet has come to play prominent role in the teaching, learning and research in

academic institutions. It is a mechanism for information dissemination and a medium for collaborative interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic limitation of space.

Collaborating with the above statements, Elaturoti (2007) writes that development of internet has revolutionized the concept of learning resources and the learning environment. The internet is now being used as a powerful supplement to the traditional ways that students study and learn in lecture halls, tutorials, laboratories and in preparation of assignments and examination. Content created on the internet ranges from simple e-mail messages to sophisticated documents sites, incorporating sounds, images and words (Evans, 1996).Writing on the importance of internet to a researcher, Jagboro (2003) described internet as a rich, multifaceted complex, ever-changing textual environment accessible 24 hours a day, 7days per week and 365 days per annum that provides several information and opportunities for the researcher.

Corbett and Williams (2002) state that the use of technology in teaching and learning is expected to improve educational outcomes, increase skills and decrease inequality among groups. The use of internet in universities has changed the instructor-student relationship. Students now feel freer to e-mail their professor to clarify assignment instruction. Instructors have also found it as an effective way to communicate course information and announcement (Kuswara and Cram, 2006). In line with the above statement, Adetimirin (2007) submits that internet facilitates communication between lecturers and students and that the adoption and use of internet facilitates access to unlimited and current information. Internet has been found to be very useful because of its ability to integrate text with charts, graphs, photographs and other forms of multimedia resources. Mac-Ikemenjima (2005) equally points to viability, flexibility and all round access as essential qualities of the internet that have to be harnessed for efficient teaching and learning. There is thus a general belief that in order to improve and globalize the educational sector, a high premium should be placed on improving quality and usage of internet in teaching and learning environment. Nazim (2008:7) sums up these points in the following way.

In addition to providing access to available information resources, the internet also enables individual users to reach other people and institutions all over the world and exchange or obtain information. Anyone who has access to the internet can make use of this network to search for information or to communicate via electronic mail (e-mail), mailing list serve, news groups, chat boxes, Wide Area Information Server (WAIS) and the World Wide Web (WWW). The amount of scientific information and the

number of electronic journals on the internet continues to increase and researchers are making their work available online. Thus access to large amount of information could stimulate changes in university learning environment and thus open a window of opportunities to researchers.

The University of Agriculture makurdi, Benue state, was established in January, 1988. Among the colleges approved for the University by the NUC is the College of Food Technology. Under the College of Food Science and Technology are two Departments. Viz:- Department of Food Science and Technology and Department of Home Economics. The erstwhile Home Economics nomenclature is now changed to "Home Science and Management", following Senate's approval at its 167th (Regular) meeting dated Thurday 27th January 2005. Accordingly, the former Departmental Code of HME is changed to HSM.

The then Department of Home Economics was established on 1st October, 1989. The Department of Home Science and Management runs a (4) year Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) degree programme which is Science-based and is structured into eight (8) semesters for UME/RE candidates, while qualified DE candidates run for six (6) semesters.

In the old curriculum which will be faced out after 2012/2013 academic session, students undertake basic science courses in the first four semesters (2years) or two semesters (1year) as the case may be, followed by professional courses in the 3rd and 4th year of the programme. In the old curriculum Students were made to undergo a compulsory six months Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) during the long vacatins of 200 and 300 levels respectively. In the reversed curriculum which came into effect in 2011/2012 academic session students undertake basic science courses fully in the first two semesters (100 level) and partly in next two semester (200level). They undertake professional courses alongside with basic science courses in their 200 level. The Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) programme now comes up in the whole of second semester of their 300 level.

The Home Science and Management programme include courses in the Basic Sciences, Social Sciences, Agriculture and Extension and in all the basic areas in Home Science and Management such as:- Foods and Nutrition, Clothing and Textiles, Family Life and Human Development and Household Resource Management.

The Department of Home Science and Management prepares students for the award of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) degree and Post-graduate Diploma in Home Science and Management. The Post-graduate Diploma was established in 2005 while, the Masters programme commenced in 2008/2009 session. All hands are on deck to create two additional departments viz:-
1. Department of Human Nutrition and Dietetic
2. Department of Family Institutional Management

Headship Profile

The Headship Profile of the Department since its inception in 1989 is as follows:

i. Dr. M. Caurie (Gananian) 1989-1992
ii. Dr. (Mrs.) H.J. Kaka, Ag HOD, 1992-1995
iii. Mrs. G.M. Adole (Jp), Ag. HOD, 1996-1998
iv. Dr. Mrs. H.J. Kaka, Ag. HOD, 1998-2002
v. Late Mrs. Joyce M. Akpoo, Ag. HOD, November, 2002-2006
vi. Dr. (Mrs) M.O. Ode, Ag. HOD, 2006-2007
vii. Dr. E.M. Kember, Ag. HOD, 2007-2010
viii. Mrs. P.D. Ivande Ag. HOD, 2010 - August 2011
ix. Dr. (Mrs.) E.J Umoh Ag. HOD Oct. 2011-2nd July 2012
x. Dr. (Mrs.) N.I Olaitan, Ag. HOD 16th July 2012 – Date

STAFFING

The current staff strength in the department is given as follows:-

Academic staff	-	17
Technologists	-	10
Laboratory Attendants	-	05
Secretarial Staff	-	03
Total	**=**	**35**

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The research work is centre on utilization of internet resources by Students of Home Science and Management of University of Agriculture Makurdi. The problems of internet utilization by students of Home Science and Management of University of Agriculture Makurdi have been one major problem confronting students for research. Students of department of Home Science and Management find it difficult in accessing internet for their research work.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this will be to assess the role of internet facilities to students of Home Science and Management of University of Agriculture Makurdi.

1. Identify the benefits of internet facilities to students of Home Science and Management Department
2. To examine the level of internet usage for research by students of Home Science and Management Department.

3.   To identify types of internet facilities utilized by students of Home Science and Management Department University of Agriculture Makurdi

4.   Examine the problems encountered by students of Home Science and Management Department in using internet facilities

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were posed to guide the study.

1.   What are the benefits of internet facilities to students of Home Science and Management Department

2.   What are the level of utilization of internet facilities in Home Science and Management?

3.   To what extent is the utilization of internet resources for research by students of Home Science and Management?

4.   To ascertain the benefit of internet usage for research by undergraduate students of Home Science and Management.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adapted for this study is the descriptive survey method. The choice of this method is because descriptive survey obtains data from a given population and describes it in a systematic manner. The population of the study comprised of all 300 students in the department of Home Science and Management, University of Agriculture Makurdi. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 200 respondents from the population of 400, 300 and 100 levels of the department of Home Science and Management.

A structured questionnaire titled 'utilization of internet resources (UIRQ)' was used for data collection. It was divided into 4 section with 238 items based on the research question. The instrument was found to have face and content validation by expert in the field of research networking from the Faculty of science, Benue State University Makurdi. The process led to slight modification of both the language and content of the items.

The data for this study was collected by the researcher and 3 research assistants. The researcher and the 3 assistants administered 200 copies of the questionnaire and collect the completed copies at the spot to ensure maximum return of questionnaire. Data collected were presented in tables and analyzed using statistical mean score. The respondent's opinions were assessed based on agree and disagree on each item contained in the questionnaire. The bench mark for these items was be 2.50 (4+3+2+1=10/4=2.50). Any item with a mean value of 2.50 or above was regarded as agree while any item with a mean value of less than 2.50 was regarded as not agree.

DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Result in table 1 shows that respondents agree with the items with the mean ratings ranging from 3.36 to 2.85. This is an indication that the 9 items are benefits of internet facilities to students of Home Science and Management Department. This finding affirms the study conducted Wright (2006) on Researching Internet-Based Populations: Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Survey Research, Online Questionnaire Authoring Software Packages, and Web Survey Services. The research revealed that one advantage of online survey research is that it takes advantage of the ability of the Internet to provide access to groups and individuals who would be difficult, if not impossible, to reach through other channels in many cases, communities and groups exist only in cyberspace.

A second advantage is that Internet-based survey research may save time for researchers. As already noted, online surveys allow a researcher to reach thousands of people with common characteristics in a short amount of time, despite possibly being separated by great geographic distances. A researcher interested in surveying hard-to-reach populations can quickly gain access to large numbers of such individuals by posting invitations to participate to newsgroups, chat rooms, and message board communities. In the face-to-face research environment, it would take considerably longer- if it were possible at all-to find an equivalent number of people with specific attributes, interests, and attitudes in one location.

Online survey researchers can also save money by moving to an electronic medium from a paper format. Paper surveys tend to be costly, even when using a relatively small sample, and the costs of a traditional large-scale survey using mailed questionnaires can be enormous. The use of online surveys circumvents this problem by eliminating the need for paper and other costs, such as those incurred through postage, printing, and data entry. Similarly, conducting online interviews, either by email, or in a synchronous "chat" format, offers cost savings advantages. Costs for recording equipment, travel, and the telephone can be eliminated. In addition, transcription costs can be avoided since online responses are automatically documented. Newer online survey creation software and web survey services costs can vary from very little to thousands of dollars

Table 1: Respondents mean ratings and standard deviation on the benefits of internet facilities to students of Home Science and Management Department

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
1	Provides ease in research process	91	99	2	8	200	2.92	1.09	Agree
2	It exposure to global events	140	22	24	14	200	3.07	0.82	Agree
3	Internet expose students to scholarships	66	69	40	25	200	3.37	0.70	Agree
4	It increased access to current information	53	85	57	5	200	3.44	0.95	Agree
5	Internet provides academic/research benefit	67	101	30	2	200	2.93	0.81	Agree
6	Internet provides leisure, Relaxation and Entertainment	86	31	59	24	200	2.85	1.01	Agree
7	Internet is the faster means of communicating with lecturers	69	99	7	25	200	3.17	0.71	Agree
8	I receive current news	61	97	40	2	200	3.06	0.94	Agree
9	Internet increased professional competence	11	75	71	43	200	3.09	0.74	Agree

Source: Field survey, 2016

Table 2: Respondents mean ratings and standard deviation on the the level of internet usage for research by students of Home Science and Management Department

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
1	I used internet everyday	9	43	65	83	200	2.41	1.01	Agree
2	I use internet weekly basis	7	44	72	77	200	2.27	0.86	Agree
3	I do use internet fortnightly	8	32	38	122	200	2.31	0.85	Agree
4	I use internet monthly	71	37	60	32	200	2.79	0.82	Agree

Source: Field survey, 2016

depending upon the types of features and services selected; however, this is relatively inexpensive compared to the cost of traditional paper-and-pencil surveys.

Result in table 2 shows the level of internet usage by the respondents. They rated the items with mean of 2.79 to 2.27. This is an indication that the level of usage of internet internet usage for research by students of Home Science and Management Department is very poor. The finding is also similar to study carried by Adekunmisi, Ajala and Iyoro (2013) on Internet access and usage by the undergraduate students of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria which findings revealed that majority of the cyber cafe around the university environment were privately owned thereby causing hinerance to usage of internet facilities by the student and despite this, students accessed the Internet from their pocket money. It also revealed that majority of the respondents were Internet literate with low percentage.

Result in table 3 respondents rated 5 items with mean

of less than 2.50. Only 1 item has a mean rating above 2.50. This implies that students of Home Science and Management Department use only chat facilities. The findings agree with a study conducted by Adekunmisi, Ajala and Iyoro (2013) on Internet access and usage by the undergraduate students of Olabisi Onabanjo University

The students do not browse daily for their research. It further revealed that the most used Internet facilities are the e-mails, webpage, search engines and chatting facilities for communication (with friends, families, lovers, colleagues and lecturers), academic activities (doing assignment, research and preparation for examination) and for sourcing of information and knowledge.

Result in table 4 shows that respondents rated all items with mean above 2.50. This is an indication that there are problems encountered by students of Home Science and Management Department in using internet facilities. The finding is similar to a survey study conducted by Chigbu and Dim (2012) on Connectivity and Accessibility in

Table 3: Respondents mean ratings and standard deviation on the types of internet facilities utilized by students of Home Science and Management Department

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
1	E-mail	9	61	122	27	200	2.36	2.01	Disagree
2	Web pages	15	5	148	32	200	2.01	0.69	Disagree
3	Search Engines	27	66	80	27	200	2.46	0.89	Disagree
4	Chat facilities	96	12	60	32	200	2.86	1.18	Agree
5	News group	21	8	138	33	200	2.08	0.79	Disagree
6	Discussion group	15	40	86	59	200	2.05	0.89	Disagree

Source: Field survey, 2016

Table 4: Respondents mean ratings and standard deviation on the problems encountered by students of Home Science and Management Department in using internet facilities

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
1	There is always delay in Internet connectivity	59	29	66	46	200	2.72	3.14	Agree
2	Finding relevant information on internet is difficult	89	50	40	21	200	2.01	1.05	Agree
3	High cost of access	95	50	12	43	200	3.30	0.46	Agree
4	I always experience irregular power supply	128	27	31	14	200	2.99	1.18	Agree
5	It takes too long to view/down load page	63	62	72	3	200	3.34	0.98	Agree
6	There is frequent loss of signal	20	123	41	16	200	2.92	0.85	Agree
7	I experience frequent black out/Power outage	19	73	76	32	200	2.73	0.69	Agree
8	There is high cost of browsing	104	44	18	34	200	2.73	0.74	Agree
9	The internet has slow access speed	100	71	20	9	200	2.39	0.86	Agree
10	Difficulty in judging relevant information	132	47	10	11	200	3.09	1.13	Agree
11	The internet has too long to download/view webpages	123	33	9	35	200	3.31	0.82	Agree
12	There is overload of information on the internet	27	129	41	3	200	3.50	0.82	Agree
13	My school has few cybercafe	105	70	19	6	200	3.22	1.14	Agree
14	I have inadequate browsing skill	71	84	3	42	200	2.90	0.62	Agree
15	The computers in my school has low access speed	71	77	47	5	200	3.37	0.77	Agree

Source: Field survey, 2016

Nigerian University Libraries: A Survey of Access, Usage, and Problems in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. This study found out that many problems still beset efficient performance of the Internet in the University. Major among the problems are: Unsteady power supply; literacy problems leading to inefficient Internet surfing; low bandwidth to sustain smooth Internet flow; virus contaminations; space constraints at laboratories/cyber cafes and insufficient hands to attend to users in the cafes.

CONCLUSION

This study found out that the level of internet by students of Home Science department in carrying out research is very low. This is because internet facilities in the department are grossly inadequate. The major source of Internet facilities are provided by business centers around the department. The cost in cure by the students hinders them from using internet for their research works.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Home Science departmental library should be with internet facilities to enable the study carried out their research works effectively
2. Competent staff should be employed and those available should be retrained on the usage of internet facilities for effective training of students
3.   More computers should be procured to carter for the teeming number of students in the department
4. Subscription to higher bandwidth should be done to avoid the problem of slow connectivity x. Printing facility should be provided so that the users can get printouts of their needed materials and other
5. To overcome the problem of chat, sites providing only entertainment should be locked on the computers.

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