

## Impact of Internet Usage on Undergraduates' Academic Performance in South West, Nigeria.

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**Abstract.** The way and manner students generally, and undergraduates in particular use the internet at their disposal is highly worrisome. A cursory look at this issue revealed the fact that many of the students do not make judicious use of this expensive and all-encompassing facility at their disposal. This study therefore investigated the impact of internet usage on the academic performance of undergraduates. Three hundred (300) undergraduates, randomly selected from 100 to 400 levels were involved in the study. A structured questionnaire designed by the researcher, titled Questionnaire on Internet Usage and tagged (QIU) was used to collect pertinent data for the study. Data were analyzed, using mean scores, mean rating, frequency count, and simple percentages. Findings showed that the main purpose for which undergraduates use the internet was to watch pornography and that they spent between 6 – 10 hours per day surfing the internet to upload pictures, for recreational activities, to get up-to-date news and to make cool money. It was also found that internet usage by undergraduates had negatively impacted on their academic performance due excessive use of internet on other activities other than academics amongst others. It was recommended that uncensored sites should be blocked and that Internet surfing should be encouraged in open places amongst others.

**Keywords:** Internet usage, Academic performance, Recreational activities,

Pornography, Counseling Services, Uncensored Sites

### 1. Introduction

The advancement in science and technology, reducing the whole world to a global village is no doubt phenomenal. The impact of this development is felt virtually in all facets of our lives and human endeavors such as agriculture, medicine, banking, the judicial system, industries, religious, as well as institutions of learning.

However, there are always two sides to every issue in life- the good and the bad, merits and demerits, advantages and disadvantages. The development and the introduction of the internet into the global landscape is no exception. The Internet is described as global network of computers linked together over large distances. It is a global system of interconnected computer networks that use the standard Internet protocol suite to serve billions of users worldwide (Geoff, 2010). The internet can be conceived as a rich, multi-layered complex ever-changing text for information dissemination and a medium for collaborative interaction between individuals and computers without regards for geographical limitation of space. The internet today is a worldwide entity whose nature cannot be easily or simply defined. To many, the internet is a large computer network linking together millions of smaller computers at numerous sites

in various countries belonging to thousands of business, government, research, educational and other organizations.

Since the Internet is now available to a wider sector of the global population, many educational establishments including universities have taken advantage of its educational potential, as a valuable source of information for undergraduates looking for ideas for projects and assignments. World Internet Usage (2012) statistics showed that there are over 60 million web sites on the internet. The chances are that any information however obscured can be found by any individual, those in the university environment inclusive. The only tools required to find this information is patience, a decent search engine installed on a computer and internet connectivity. It also serves as a useful tool for university lecturers in helping to prepare lesson plans as there are a number of sites, dedicated to providing educational material (Ibegwam, 2014).

The Internet plays a crucial role in the field of education. The academic community has undergone profound transformation during these years, assuming new dimensions influenced by technology-driven applications. The Internet is a priceless source of information for undergraduates and a tool to enhance their productivity (Jones 2013; Metzger, Flanagan & Zwarun 2013; Kirschner & Karpinski 2015). This has made undergraduates to be heavy users of the Internet compared to the general public (Choi, et al., 2014; Ni, et al., 2014; Judd & Kennedy, 2010).

Contributing to the academic performance of undergraduate, Wagner (1998) saw internet as a forum that promotes group discussion which is time and distance independent. The worldwide web service provided by the internet with over 5 million web sites allows undergraduates of all disciplines to source for relevant information needed to build them up, as information rules the world. Busari (2001) sees the internet as a medium through which lecturers and students can meet without seeing each other. Undergraduates can also learn through teleconferencing, using small video camera and

microphone, members of the group can actually see and hear each other. Following the idea above, the Internet can transform undergraduate learning process to student-centered learning rather than institution and faculty centered instruction, contributing immensely to proper development of undergraduates.

With the Internet, undergraduates 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 undergraduates might explore to obtain information on their own. The Internet revolution is not limited to finding information but also fostering relationships that bring undergraduates together. Suhail & Bargees (2006) reported some benefits of the internet access for college students. They indicated that the internet usage impacts education in a positive way by increasing communication with classmates and professors, increasing access to libraries and educational databases, and improving study hours and study habits. The internet is one of the beneficial tools in this era of IT which is not only for business but also for academic purposes, as it enhances the skills and capabilities of undergraduates which assist them in their studies and professional life. Undergraduates use the internet as a hub for research in their various fields of study. This can be seen by the way the students consult the internet for assignments, presentations, research works and examinations

According to Dryli & Kinnaman (2014), the Internet enables undergraduates to find information and experts, as well as allowing users to think critically and creatively, become collaborative and cooperative in solving problems. Adeya & Oyelaran-Oyeyinka (2013) noted that the internet will increase undergraduates' access to education improve curriculum and quality of instruction and increase productivity of academic publications in universities. The internet enables most undergraduates to acquire the skills that are essential to succeed and support them in modern society. Exposure to computer technology permits undergraduates to become familiar with the necessary economic tools at an early age,

e.g. Forex, betting systems, and the easy selling and distribution of software for monetary reasons. By using the technology properly, they will also acquire better thinking skills to help them become informed citizens, active and productive community members.

In spite of the benefits of the Internet for academics and learning, the internet poses some problems generally, and in academics in particular. In other words, there is a growing concern as to whether the increasing number of hours spent by undergraduates browsing/surfing 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. According to Paul, Baker & Cochran (2012) the time spent on online social networks pose significant negativity on academic performance of the undergraduates. This view was further supported by Kirschner & Karpinski (2010) saying that excess involvement or obsession with social networking by students can have negatively impact on their academic performances. Although the merits of the Internet make it an ideal research tool, undergraduates tend to experience significant challenges as they surf irrelevant websites, engage in chat room gossip, converse with Internet pen-pals, and play interactive games at the cost of productive activity.

Despite the positive impact of the internet on academic performance, research findings have shown that excessive internet usage adversely affects an undergraduate's academic performance (Akhter, 2013). Academic related problems includes decline in study habits, drastic drop in grades, missing classes and poor integration in extracurricular activities. Undergraduates may have difficulty completing home-work and/or assignments, studying for examinations, or getting enough sleep to be alert for class the next morning due to Internet misuse. Often, undergraduates may be unable to control their Internet use which may eventually results in poor grades, bad academic standing, academic probation, and even expulsion from the university.

## 2. Statement of Problem

Undergraduates are among the very populous groups of people that access the internet most often showing a certain degree of internet addiction. It is evident that young people show a remarkable ease to become addicted to the use of the internet. However, a casual observation of how undergraduates use the internet on their smart phones and/or at designated places revealed a preponderance of negative, indecent and unproductive use of the internet. More often than not, if they are not using it to upload pictures they were busy taken all-around, they would be watching home videos from YouTube, or watching pornography from other sites on the internet. This development becomes seriously worrisome given the high degree of man-hour expended on surfing the internet on activities that do not add values to their lives. Most undergraduates go out of their ways in buying gadgets, phones and expensive equipment that will consistently keep them online and alert to the happenings on the internet especially when it revolves around social networking, gambling, cyber dating, modeling, football, movies, music and a whole lot of other vices. It is therefore generally believed that this ugly development will definitely impact the undergraduates' academic performance, which is why this study is conceptualized to provide empirical evidence to either validate or refute this wild speculation.

## 3. Purpose of Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine the influence of internet usage on the academic performance of undergraduates. Specific objectives include:

- To investigate the various purposes/activities for which undergraduates use the internet.
- To find out how much time is spent on the internet by undergraduates on each activity
- To examine the problems associated with the use of the internet on the academic performance of university undergraduates.
- To examine the influence internet usage on the academic performance of the undergraduates.

#### 4. Research Questions

Based on the forgoing purposes, the study sought answers to the following research questions:

- What are the purposes/activities for which undergraduates use the internet?
- How much time do undergraduates spend surfing the internet on each activity?
- What are the problems associated with the use of the internet by the undergraduates?
- What are the impacts of internet usage on the academic performance of the undergraduates?

#### 5. Research Design and Methods

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study, through which views and opinion were collected from undergraduates sampled. Descriptive survey are those studies concerned with collecting and describing in a systematic manner the characteristic features and facts about a given population. This design was considered suitable because it permits the collection of data from a large number of respondents, describes the present conditions as they exist in their natural settings and allows a representative of the population to be sampled. The quantitative research approach was adopted for its execution.

##### 5.1 Population

The population for the study consisted of all undergraduates in Southwest Universities, Nigeria.

##### 5.2 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample for this study was made up of three hundred (300) respondents in all. Seventy-five (75) students were selected from each level of 100 to 400 levels. While the random sampling technique was used to draw the sample for the study, the purposive sampling technique was used to select one of the populous universities

southwest, Nigeria, where internet facility is available all the time. This allowed the researcher to collect pertinent information without any form of impediment, as the phenomenon being investigated was practically manifested and evident.

##### 5.3 Research Instruments

A self-constructed, structured Likert scale questionnaire, consisting of 45 items divided into five sections was the main instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire items were arranged to reflect specific purposes and the research questions. Section A of the questionnaire contains items that were designed to obtain personal information from the respondents. Section B comprised 9 items designed to elicit information on the purposes or activities for which undergraduates use the internet. Section C comprises 9 items that were designed to obtain information on the time spent surfing the internet on various activities. Section D comprised 17 items that were designed to elicit information regarding the impacts of internet usage on the academic performance of undergraduates, while Section E has 10 items designed to elicit information about problems associated with the use of the internet by the undergraduates. However, in order to determine the validity of the instrument, the draft questionnaire was given to some of my senior colleagues and experts in test and measurement for comments, criticisms and corrections, in order to assure both face and content validity of the instrument. Their comments and corrections were thereafter used to produce the final copy of the questionnaire. The test re-test reliability method was employed to determine the consistency of the instruments. The questionnaire was administered on a different set of respondents who were not part of the sample for the study within an interval of two weeks. The test-retest method yielded 0.86 reliability index. Furthermore, the observational technique of data collection was used to complement and validate information collected through the questionnaire.

##### 5.4 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher visited the university involved in the study to seek permission to carry the study, where he was directed to Dean, student affairs who then introduced him to some departments where copies of the questionnaire were administered on the students. The administration of the questionnaire lasted a week due to students' tight academic schedule. However, the researcher together with the research assistants was able to achieve 100% return rate of the

questionnaires administered at the end of the exercise.

**5.5 Method of Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistical tools of mean scores and mean rating were used for the analysis of data collected for the study and to answer the research questions.

**6. Results**

**Research Question 1:** What are the activities for which undergraduates use the internet?

**Table 1:** Rank Order of Purposes/activities for which Undergraduates Use the Internet

S/N	Item	Mean	Ranking
8	I use the internet to watch pornography	2.73	1 <sup>st</sup>
7	I use the internet to make cool money	2.22	2 <sup>nd</sup>
5	I use the internet for recreation activities	1.84	3 <sup>rd</sup>
9	I use the internet for academic activities	1.84	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	I use the internet for buying and selling of materials	1.82	5 <sup>th</sup>
1	I make new friends through the internet	1.57	6 <sup>th</sup>
6	I use the internet to upload pictures	1.53	7 <sup>th</sup>
3	I use the internet to send and receive mails	1.52	8 <sup>th</sup>
2	I get up-to-date news from the internet	1.44	9 <sup>th</sup>

*Source:* Field Survey, 2018

Table 1 displayed the purposes/activities for which undergraduates use the internet. The main purpose for using the internet by undergraduates is to watch pornography which has a mean score of 2.73 and ranked first, while other purposes including academic activities had mean scores below 2.50 benchmark.

**Research Question 2:** How much time do undergraduates spend surfing the internet?

**Table 2:** Rank Order of how much time undergraduates spent surfing the internet

S/N	Items	Mean	Ranking
6	I use the internet to upload pictures	1.57	1 <sup>st</sup>
5	I use the internet for recreational activities	1.56	2 <sup>nd</sup>
2	I get up-to-date news from the internet	1.53	3 <sup>rd</sup>
7	I use the internet to make cool money	1.52	4 <sup>th</sup>
9	I use the internet for academic activities	1.44	5 <sup>th</sup>
3	I use the internet to send and receive mails	1.44	5 <sup>th</sup>
4	I use the internet for buying and selling of materials	1.42	7 <sup>th</sup>
8	I use the internet to watch pornography	1.42	7 <sup>th</sup>
1	I make new friends through the internet	1.29	9 <sup>th</sup>

*Source:* Field Survey, 2018

Table 2 revealed the amount of time spent surfing the internet by the undergraduates. Respondents indicated that they spent between 6 – 10 hours per day surfing the internet for uploading pictures, recreation activities, get up-to-date news and to make cool money with mean scores of 1.57, 1.56, 1.53 and 1.52; and ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> respectively, while other purposes or activities had mean scores below the benchmark of 1.50, including being used for academic activities.

**Research Question 3:** What are the problems associated with the use of the internet by the undergraduates?

**Table 3:** Rank Order of Problems Associated with the Use of the Internet by the Undergraduates

S/N	Item	Mean	Ranking
1	The Internet exposes students to gambling	1.85	10 <sup>th</sup>
2	The internet exposes students to theft/fraud	1.91	7 <sup>th</sup>
3	Students tend to get engaged with illicit economic activities through the internet	1.94	6 <sup>th</sup>
4	Students perception about making money tend to be clouded due to the information gotten from the internet	1.96	5 <sup>th</sup>
5	The internet gives room to sex abuse	2.12	3 <sup>rd</sup>
6	The internet reduces personal privacy	2.10	4 <sup>th</sup>
7	The internet exposes students to immoral associations	2.53	2 <sup>nd</sup>
8	Students spend too much time chatting on the internet and therefore risk improper time management	1.88	9 <sup>th</sup>
9	Students regularly make friends with wrong people as a result of internet use	1.89	8 <sup>th</sup>
10	Excessive use of the internet can lead to real life social isolation	2.56	1 <sup>st</sup>

*Source:* Field Survey, 2018

Table 3 indicated the risks or problems associated with use of internet. The main problems associated with the use of the internet by the undergraduates was the fact that excessive use led to real life social isolation which had a mean score of 2.56 (1<sup>st</sup>), the internet exposes students to immoral associations which had a mean score of 2.53 (2<sup>nd</sup>), while other perceived problems had mean scores below 2.50 benchmark.

**Research Question 4:** What are the impacts of the use of internet on the academic performance of the undergraduates?

**Table 4:** Rank Order of the Impacts of Internet Usage on Undergraduates' Academic Performance

S/N	Item	Mean	Ranking
1	It gives me quick access to academic materials	1.22	17 <sup>th</sup>
2	It saves time in doing my academic work	1.61	15 <sup>th</sup>
3	I don't have enough time for academic work due to excessive engagement in online music	2.55	1 <sup>st</sup>
4	The internet increases my curiosity	1.93	7 <sup>th</sup>
5	I have been delayed for classes because of my engagement on social networks	2.49	2 <sup>nd</sup>
6	I use the internet for my seminar presentation	1.72	10 <sup>th</sup>
7	I use the internet for my project write up	1.73	9 <sup>th</sup>
8	The internet helps students to work at their own pace	1.62	14 <sup>th</sup>
9	I have less time for academic works due to excessive engagement in online games	2.48	3 <sup>rd</sup>
10	The internet helps my research works faster	1.50	16 <sup>th</sup>
11	It helps to collaborate with students and lecturers in other school	1.70	12 <sup>th</sup>
12	I get less time for academic task due to excessive engagement in social networking sites	2.28	4 <sup>th</sup>
13	The internet improves my collaboration with students and lecturers in the other schools	1.82	8 <sup>th</sup>
14	The internet has provided new methods of cheating in examination to students	2.18	5 <sup>th</sup>
15	The internet made me develop interest in the learning content	1.69	13 <sup>th</sup>
16	I usually spend more time on social networking sites than academic sites	2.11	6 <sup>th</sup>
17	The internet is a reliable source for academic materials	1.71	11 <sup>th</sup>

*Source:* Field Survey, 2018

Table 4 showed the impacts of internet usage on respondents' academic performance. The main impact of internet usage on the academic performance of the undergraduates was that it does not give them enough time for academic work due to excessive engagement in online music with a mean score of 2.55, ranking first (1<sup>st</sup>), while other seemingly effects had mean scores below 2.50 benchmark.

## 7. Discussion

The study in Table 1 revealed that the main purpose for which undergraduates use the internet, was to watch pornography. This finding negates that of Toprakç (2007) who reported that students mostly use the Internet for correspondence via e-mail, 60 % log on to the

Internet out of the campus, and only less than 50% use it for educational purposes. Also, Baker, et al. (1999) found that accounting education students use internet for the purpose of academic.

Table 2 showed that the undergraduate spent between 6 – 10 hours per day surfing the internet to upload pictures, for recreational activities, get up-to-date news and to make cool money. This result like others, is a confirmation of the speculation that gave birth to this study in the first instance. The finding is however, incongruent with that of Kumah (2015) who reported that undergraduates in the University of Ghana spent between 5 to 10 hours everyday surfing the internet to search for academic materials and upload academic information.

Table 3 revealed that the problem associated with the use of the internet by the undergraduates was that excessive use can lead to real life social isolation. This finding corroborates that of Jali, et. al. (2014) who reported that the main problem associated with the use of internet is improper time management, immoral associations and real life social isolation in Western Rajasthan, India. In addition, Al Hariri and Al Hattami (2017) reported that problem associated with the use of internet is that it may lead to risk of improper time management among health colleges students at the University of Dammam.

It was also found that undergraduates do not have enough time for academic works due to excessive engagement in online music and other non-academic activities, thereby leading to their poor academic performance. This result is not surprising though, as academic work that is supposed to be the main engagement of the undergraduates on the internet ranked low with a mean score of 1.84 (Table 1), which was below the 2.50 benchmark, coupled with an average mean score of 1.44 and ranking 5th in terms of how much time the students spent on different activities they engaged in on the internet as shown in table 2. The mean score of 1.44 is below the benchmark of 1.50, which implies that surfing the internet for academic purposes or activities was never the students' priority. This

result lends credence to Akhter's (2013) who found that excessive internet usage adversely affects undergraduates' academic performance. The finding however, contradicts that of Markwei (2001) who reported that the use of internet has positive impact on academic activities of both staff and students of University of Ghana.

## 8. Conclusion

Arising from the results and subsequent discussion of the findings of this study, it may be concluded that internet usage by the undergraduates has impacted negatively on their academic performance due to various other purposes or activities for which they used internet other than their academic purpose, coupled with a high degree of man-hour they spent on other purposes like watching pornographic films, uploading of pictures, making illegal money and the like, all of which cannot add value to their lives. All these have taken a larger chunk of their time, leaving no room or time-space for their academic activities.

## 9. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made sequel to the data analysis, findings, and discussions of the study presented above:

- With internet access currently available on mobile devices owned by almost every student in universities, it is recommended that a similar study be conducted focusing on how students use current advancement in technology available to them to satisfy their information needs.
- Educational psychology and counseling centers may offer different types of services, including individual and group therapy options on a variety of issues ranging from using internet for pornography.
- Centres should be established in and around tertiary institutions of learning especially for educational psychologists and counselors where students could

- visit and find solutions to problems they are facing in using internet.
- Nigerian government and educational agencies should encourage and sponsor the publication of books relevant to internet use for undergraduates.
  - Contents of internet surfing need to be monitored by parents, internet service provider and telecommunication regulators.
  - Duration of the internet surfing should be predefined by the university authorities.
  - Internet surfing should be encouraged in open places to prevent immoral and indecent use of the facility.
  - Telecommunication regulators should be empowered by Government to block uncensored sites.

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