

Assessment of Internet Usage among Academic Staff in University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State

Ogunbodede Kolawole Francis^{1*}, Odewusi O. Oladayo², Oniovosa, O. Nelson³, George Tamunoseimiebi Maxwell⁴

¹University Library, University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

²St. Albert, the Great Major Seminary School Library, Ogun State, Nigeria

³School Library, Greenoak International School, Portharcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

⁴Postgraduate Student, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Portharcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

***Corresponding author:** Francis OK, University Library, University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State, Nigeria, Tel: +2348067176147; E-mail: kolawole.ogunbodede@uat.edu.ng

Received: September 17, 2020; **Accepted:** October 27, 2020; **Published:** November 06, 2020



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Abstract

This article investigated internet usage among academic staff in University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. This research employed descriptive research method. The population of the study comprised of 100 academic staff in University of Africa out of which 75 were randomly selected. Three research questions guided the study and data were collected using structured questionnaire. It was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings shows that majority of the staff have access to internet services within the campus for teaching and research. It was also discovered that the use of the internet has had a positive impact on lecturer's academic activities. On the challenges of internet usage, the findings reveal that lack of constant electricity supply, inadequate computers and slow internet speed are the major challenges militating against effective internet usage. Based on the findings of this article, the researchers wish to recommend that the school management should improve on electricity supply, provide adequate computers, and internet facilities so that academic staff can enjoy more access to the internet while they are in school and especially in the comfort of their offices.

Keywords: Internet; Internet usage; Academic activities; Tertiary Institutions; Teaching and research.

Citation: Ogunbodede KF, Odewusi OO, Oniovosa ON, et al. Assessment of internet usage among academic staff in university of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State. Trans Eng Comput Sci. 2020;1(2):114.

1. Introduction

The internet technology revolution is sweeping through the world and has radically transformed every aspect of our existence and the education sectors can't be left out. So as to catch up with this trend, academic institutions around the globe are moving quickly to integrate this technology into all phases of their main occupation of teaching and research activities [8]. The internet is an essential tool for expediting academic activities in tertiary institutions [19], and has brought a major development needed in the teaching, research and learning process in our tertiary institutions. Internet is an indispensable instrument in tertiary institutions setting because it improves the quality of teaching and learning. The internet services have supported the mandates of teaching and research by academic staff in the various academic institutions and has also facilitates collective and cooperative research [16]. Okafor et al [18], stated that the internet is creating new prospects for academic's staff and researchers to associate and communicate with one another. The internet also provides a platform for academic staff to access current e-journals and online databases to carry out research and publish their results so as to remain pertinent and enjoy constant upgrade within the academic environment.

According to [3] the internet has progressively become a constant strength in the academic sector in relation to teaching, learning and research because it has become a good tool for getting the right information and solutions to problems. Preceding researches have revealed that the application of the internet in various tertiary institutions globally has resulted to massive gains to the economy of that country [6]. This is why so many higher institutions in Nigeria are investing heavily in providing internet services in their institutions for the advancement of education and research. This service offered by the World Wide Web have had a major effect in the university setting, organization and in the teaching, learning and research methods. However, in spite of these possible benefits of the internet for education, issues of access and usage in the teaching and research process have persistently posed a challenge to most academic staff. One of the major challenges in our various universities today is that students and lecturers don't have adequate access to internet [7]. Sharma et al [22], stated that the failure to use the internet services for teaching and research particularly at the tertiary institution level will adversely affect the quality of degree holders we graduate from Nigeria. This could be as a result of the following challenges which includes poor electricity supply, lack of appropriate internet facilities, inadequate information retrieval skills etc. In the light of this, this study therefore intends to investigate internet usage, its impacts and the challenges encountered by academic staff in using the internet for teaching and research in University of Africa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

2. Objective of the Study

The main objective of this article is to investigate internet usage, its impacts, and the challenges encountered by academic staff in using the internet for teaching and research purposes. The specific objectives are as follows:

- To ascertain if academic staff have access to internet services within the campus;
- To find out the purpose and the impacts of internet usage on lecturers' academic activities;
- To identify the challenges militating against effective internet usage by academic staff for teaching and research purposes.

3. Research Questions

The following questions will guide the study:

- Does academic staff have access to internet services within the campus?
- What are the purposes for using the internet and how has the internet impact on lecturers' academic activities?
- What are the challenges militating against effective internet usage by academic staff for teaching and research purposes?

4. Statement of the Problem

The academic institutions have accepted to make use of the internet as key in providing intellectual information for teaching and research. In Nigeria today, most tertiary institutions have also taken a bold step by providing internet facilities within their campuses for staff and students. However, access and utilization of the internet services are affected by so many constraints all of which impact in one way or the other on the value of teaching and research in our various institutions. This includes poor electricity supply, lack of appropriate internet facilities, inadequate information retrieval skills etc. To this end, this study intends to investigate internet usage, its impacts and the challenges encountered by academic staff in using the internet for teaching and research in University of Africa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

5. Literature Review

This age is witnessing a radical change in the utilization of internet services, this is so because of the enormous resources available on the internet for teaching and research. According to [2] internets are loose merger of computer systems interconnected globally through numerous mainstay networks. The internet is acknowledged as the biggest wide area network (WAN) in the world. It uses the standard internet protocol suite to serve lots of users globally. The application of the internet today in the educational sectors makes it easier to access large academic resources. Academic staff finds it easier to evaluate and track the growth of their students and also embark on extensive teaching and research via the internet. The internet enriches the educational activities and has become a valued tool for teaching and research because it enables easy access to vast resources and cooperative research [11].

Oghuvwu [14] did a study on "using pattern of internet and e-resources by students and faculty staff of a private University in Bangladesh." The findings indicated that students and faculty members are largely satisfied with the current state of internet services and e-resources. This article identified some challenges that are generally associated with unreliable internet services, restricted access to the internet and online resources. Amritpal and Kumar [4], examined the use internet among academic staff and undergraduate students in Shaheed Bhagat Singh Institute of Engineering and Technology, Ferozepur, India. This article established that 46% lecturers and 36% undergraduate students make use of the internet on daily basis. Only 31.7% respondents were fully satisfied and 36.7% were not pleased with the internet services. Biradar et al [9], carried out an investigation on internet utilization among lecturers and students in Kuvempu University, India. The findings reveal that 31.25% lecturers use it on daily basis for teaching while most of the students use it learning purposes. The most common place for gaining internet access is the library and majority of the users were completely satisfied with the internet online materials and facilities.

Ryan et al [21], in their research titled the utilization of internet services and its influence on academic activities of lecturers in private universities in South-western Nigeria. The findings shows that most of the lecturers mainly use the internet for their educational purposes and it use has really improved the standard of education, publication of research works and conference attendance. Nevertheless, the research further stated the factors affecting effective internet utilization such as poor electricity supply and lack of funds.

Radloff A [20], examined the usage of internet facility among lecturers in college of education libraries in Delta state. The findings revealed that the lecturers mostly use the internet for research objectives and to get materials to teach their courses. The major challenges to internet use are the high cost of access and difficulty in accessing the network. Buhari SR [10], studied internet usage between academic staff and undergraduate students of Kaduna Polytechnic and stated that both the staff and students use the internet primarily for conducting research, e-mail and obtaining course materials. Eze and Nwambam [11] carried out an investigation on the effect of internet on students and lecturers in Nigeria higher institutions. The findings reveal that the use of the internet has had a positive impact on lecturers' academic and research activities.

Islam and Habiba [13] did a study to find out the number of academic staff that uses the internet facilities for educating and carrying out research activities in Nigerian Universities. The research established that the only 20 out of 100 lecturers use the internet for lecturing and conducting research, which can best be described as low. They suggested that every all universities in Nigeria should organize computer/internet training workshops for all lecturers and must be given internet ready laptops at no cost to them so as to encourage internet usage. In a similar study, Adeshina et al [1], examined the application of internet services for teaching secretarial studies in colleges of education in Nigeria. The research observed that usage of the internet by lecturers was very poor. This article also shows that lack of appropriate training on the utilization internet was the main reason for this limited access and usage of online materials in teaching. Ani et al [5], carried out a research among lecturers in the University of Calabar, the results show that lecturers have very low access to the internet services within the campus while most of the lecturers use the cybercafés off campus. They concluded by saying that lecturers largely used the internet services for lecturing, conducting research and for communication.

6. Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprises of one hundred academic staff from University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State. Simple random sampling was used to select seventy-five (75) respondents for the study. The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The validity of the instrument was investigated by checking the content validity of the instrument and the instrument proved valid because the items in the instrument are appropriate in terms of subject contents. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument and an index of 0.87 was gotten. This shows that the internal consistency of the instrument is high and good. The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researchers and the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results are presented below.

7. Results

The findings of the study are presented in the following tables with explanations

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Gender	Freq.	Age Range	Freq.	Educational Qualification	Freq.
Male	54(72%)	35-40	8(11%)	B.Sc	6(8%)
Female	21(28%)	41-45	34(45%)	M.Sc	40(53%)
		45 and above	33(44%)	PhD	29(39%)
Total	75(100%)	Total	75(100%)	Total	75(100%)

According to Table 1, majority of the academic staff 54(72%) were male and 21(28%) were female. Most of the academics 34(45%) were within the age bracket of 41-45years, 33(44%) were 45years and above whereas 8(11%) were within the age bracket of 35-40years. Similarly, 6(8%) were B.Sc holders, 40(53%) were M.Sc holders while 29(39%) were PhD holders.

Research Question 1: Do you have access to internet services within the campus?

Table 2: Access to internet Services within the Campus.

Access to Internet Services	Frequency
Yes	70(93%)
No	5(7%)
Total	75(100%)

According to Table 2, most of the academic staff 70(93%) have access to internet services within the campus while 5(7%) don't have access to the internet services. This may be as a result of non-availability of internet enabled devices like phones and laptops. This implies that most of the lecturers have access to internet services within the campus.

Research Question 2: What are the purposes for using the internet and how has the internet impact on lecturers' academic activities?

Table 3: Purposes and Impact of Internet Usage.

Purpose of Internet Usage	Yes	No	Impact of Internet Services on Academic Activities of Lecturers	Yes	No
For teaching and research	72(96%)	3(4%)	Internet helps me to deliver lectures without necessarily	68(91%)	7(9%)

			being in class		
For conference and seminar information	59(79%)	16(21%)	Internet helps me to source for lecture/research materials	75(100%)	-
For self-development	64(85%)	11(15%)	Internet encourages qualitative research through collaboration among lecturers	73(97%)	2(3%)
For pleasure and entertainment	53(71%)	22(29%)	Internet enables lecturers to share their research works globally	75(100%)	-
			Internet provides information on how to access research funds	62(83%)	13(17%)
			Internet provides easier platform for lecturers to publish online	75(100%)	-

According to Table 3, majority of the lecturers 62(84%) make use of the internet on daily basis, 7(9%) make use of the internet weekly while 5(7%) don't make use of the internet services at all. This implies that most of the lecturers make use the internet facilities within the campus on daily basis. On the purpose of using the internet, it was discovered that majority of the academic staff 72(96%) make use of the internet mainly for teaching and research, 59(79%) use it for conference and seminar information, 64(85%) make use it for self-development and 53(71%) used the internet for pleasure and entertainment. This simply means that majority 72(96%) of the academic staff mainly use the internet for teaching and research functions. On the impacts of internet usage, most of the lecturers 68(91%) agrees that internet usage helps them to deliver lectures without necessarily being in class, 75(100%) indicated that the use of the internet enables them source for lecture/research materials, 73(97%) stated that the internet encourages qualitative research through collaboration among lecturers, 75(100%) agrees that the internet enables lecturers to share their research works globally while 73(97%) indicated that the internet provides information on how to access research funds and all the lecturers 75(100%) agreed that the internet provides easier platform to publish online. This proposed internet usage has had an affirmative impact on lecturer's academic activities.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges faced by lecturers in the use of the internet for teaching and research?

Table 4: Challenges faced by Lecturers in the use of Internet Services.

Challenges faced by Lecturers in the use of Internet Services	Yes	No
Lack of constant electricity supply	70(93%)	5(7%)
Slow internet speed (slow network)	60(80%)	15(20%)
Inadequate information retrieval skills	42(56%)	33(44%)
Inadequate computer systems in the e-library	62(83%)	13(17%)

According to Table 4, majority of the academic staff 70(93%) agreed that lack of constant electricity supply, inadequate computer systems in the e-library and slow internet speed 60(80%) are the major challenges militating against effective internet usage within the campus.

8. Discussion

- The research discovered that most of the lecturers used the internet services within the campus for teaching and research functions. This is in conformity with the results of [22], who found out most of the teaching staff use the internet mainly to get materials to teach and conduct research.
- This article also reveals that internet usage has had a positive impact on lecturer's academic activities. This is in agreement with the results of Eze and Nwambam [11].
- Lastly, the respondents agreed that irregular electricity supply, inadequate computers and slow internet speed are the major challenges affecting effective internet usage. This finding is in conformity with the results of Ivwighreghweta and Igere [16].

9. Conclusion and Recommendation

The utilization of internet services in academic institutions has opened the door to new ways to teach and carry out research and indeed increases their level of intellectual development. It was discovered that internet usage has had a positive impact on lecturer's academic activities. Therefore, to ensure effective use of the internet by academic staff, the researchers wish to recommend that the school management should improve on electricity supply, provide sufficient computer systems and internet facilities so that academic staff can enjoy more internet access while they are in school and especially within the confines of their offices.

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Kolawole Francis Ogunbodede is a librarian with the University of Africa, Bayelsa State Nigeria. He is currently a Postgraduate Student with the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Portharcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. He has published several research papers and his research interests is mainly about ICT, information seeking behavior, and literacy skills.



Oladayo Omowunmi Odewusi is a librarian at St. Albert the great major seminary library, Ogun State Nigeria, a special school for young men willing to become priests. She is an innovative and skilled librarian in all aspects of information and communication technology, organization, acquisition, preservation and dissemination of knowledge. She is an alumna at Delta State University Abraka, Nigeria.



Nelson Odilli Oniovosa received the B.Sc degree in Library and Information Science from Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. He is an astute librarian passionate with the development of library and Information services in all tiers of education across the country. He's happily married and is the School Librarian of Greenoak International School, Port Harcourt, one of the prestigious elite's private schools in Nigeria.



Tamunosemiebi Maxwell George received the B.Sc degree in history and diplomatic studies from the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, alongside other professional courses like project management, HSE, and skills in writing and public speaking. She is currently a Post Graduate Student with Ignatius Ajuru University of Education studying library information science.

Citation: Ogunbodede KF, Odewusi OO, Oniovosa ON, et al. Assessment of internet usage among academic staff in university of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State. Trans Eng Comput Sci. 2020;1(2):114.