

Effect of the Internet on the Reading Habit and Academic Performance of Undergraduate Students: A Case Study of Bowen University, Iwo.

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Abstract

This study was conducted in Bowen University, Nigeria, to determine the effect of Internet use on the reading habit and performance of undergraduate students of the university. The specific objectives of the study were to: identify the relationship between using the Internet and reading habit of students in Bowen University, examine the influence of reading habit of students on academic performance; and determine if the use of the Internet has any significant influence on academic performance of students in the university. 200 students were randomly selected from the students of the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences of the institution as the sample utilized. A well-structured questionnaire was administered to the respondents to elicit relevant information from them. Of the 200 questionnaire administered, 142 were found valid for analysis. It was found out that there was positive correlation between time spent on the Internet and time spent in the library. Furthermore, it was found out that usage of the library through reading of study materials had a positive impact on the academic performance of the students while addiction to the Internet lowered their academic performance.

Keywords: *Reading habit, Internet use, academic performance, positive correlation, significant influence.*

Background to the Study

The Internet began as an invention in 1969 by the U.S. Department of Defense to establish a reliable communications' network (Barry et al., 1997). The result was an effort to link the military establishment, universities and defense contractors by computer into a network known as the ARPANET. The ARPANET was based on a common set of communication protocols known as TCP/IP. In the mid-1980s the National Science Foundation began to provide funding for the establishment of research and academic networks throughout the U.S., and began to link these networks into a high speed network known as the NSFNet, which eventually replaced the ARPANET and which was built using the same TCP/IP protocols as originally established in ARPANET. As the NSFNet evolved in the U.S., the national research and academic networks, Net North and CDNNet emerged in Canada. Although not based on Internet protocols, these two networks provided a starting point for the establishment of a Canadian Internet network, which eventually emerged as CA net in 1989. Eventually, networks from each country were linked into each other, primarily through the NSFNet (Barry et al., 1997). The arrival of commercial Internet provider in Canada and elsewhere resulted into explosion of Internet traffic in the early 1990s and a rapid shift in the type of traffic on the global Internet. Commercial networks were linked to academic networks such as NSFNet and CANet, often in round about ways, further expanding the range and scope of the network. The Internet has therefore revolutionized education in the world by providing assurance to students that knowledge comes not only from books, libraries and

teachers, but that it also comes from millions of people and thousands of knowledge resources throughout the world (Gabby & Catane, 2015). The Internet is exciting because it has helped and still helping students and many others to realize that there is an entire world of knowledge base out there that several people can access for information on different issues (Fidzani, 1998; Kerins, Madden & Fulton, 2004; & Orhan & Nadir, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

It has been found out that most of the Internet users nowadays are the youth most of whom are students in both secondary and tertiary institutions (Leung, 2015). These youths make use of the Internet for various reasons and purposes which include searching for information, communicating with friends via chatting and instant messaging, buying and selling products, accessing movies or songs, sending e-mails, gathering information from news, playing on-line games and making business contacts (Gabby & Catane, 2015). In a similar vein, Leung (2015) and Shahibi & Khafidhah (2017) also noted that the purposes for which students use the Internet include: social networking with people, academic research, global communication, entertainment, and sourcing for study materials. In an earlier study, it was found out that most Internet users used it for social networking with people (Mishra et al., 2014) and the social media most frequently utilized now include: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Blackberry Messenger (BBM), WhatsApp, You tube, LinkedIn, and Instant Messaging (IM) (Leung, 2015). The several advantages of the Internet over the traditional library are expected to be of immense benefits to undergraduates and postgraduate students especially in sourcing for study materials and literature review relevant to their research projects. However, studies have shown conflicting findings as to the effect of the Internet on academic performance of students in tertiary institutions (Sachitra, 2015; Orhan & Nadir, 2017; Leung, 2015). While some studies found positive relationship between the Internet and students' academic performance, some found negative relationship (Sushma, Suman, & Ulysses, 2014). It therefore became apparent and necessary to investigate further especially in Nigeria, what effect the Internet is having on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions. This study is necessary to curb the excesses of tertiary institutions' students in Internet usage to pave way for better utilization that can add value to their studies.

Review of Literature

Several studies have shown that the Internet is one of the greatest recent achievements in the world of information technology and has become a vital instrument that has fostered the process of making the world a global village (Akhter, 2013; Young, 2006; Ezemenaka, 2013; & Asdaque *et al.*, 2010). The Internet has broken down known barriers to communication and information access globally (Gheung & Huang, 2005). Mishra, Draus, Goreva, Leone, and Caputo (2014) says the Internet and the Web are revolutionizing the entire communication process and changing the way researchers, students and the communities now exchange information. It is a universal fact that students all over the world now have access to mobile phones that are Internet-enabled both at home and in school (Korkofingas, & Macri, 2013). As a result, much time is now devoted to the use of these mobile phones other than to make and receive calls and send and receive short messages (Shahibi & Khafidhah, 2017). These other uses include taking pictures, searching for online information on several matters including academic resources, searching for new friends and maintaining relationship with old and current friends and relations through the various social media technologies, and entertainment and playing games, just to mention only a few (Leung, 2015; Gabby & Catane, 2015). One would have thought that with the widespread use of the android- powered and Internet-enabled mobile phones, academic performance of students in higher institutions would be greatly enhanced. However, the growing use of the Internet by students is causing

some concerns as a result of conflicting findings in some recent researches conducted in this area (Sushma, Suman, & Ulysses, 2014). While some empirical studies concluded that the Internet had a great impact on students' academic achievements and social life, several others came to the conclusion that there was no significant impact of the Internet on students' academic performance (Sachitra, 2015; Orhan & Nadir, 2017; Leung, 2015). Sushma, Suman, and Ulysses (2014), in their studies recommended that students who want to make good grades in school, should reduce the time they spend on Facebook and other social networking sites such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter and Instagram, as they take most of the students' time on non-academic pursuits. At the Open University of Netherland, Psychologists found that students who used Facebook performed 20 per cent lower than non-users (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). According to Kirschner and Karpinski (2010), in a study carried out on 219 American students who were between ages 19 and 24, it was discovered that users of Facebook score was in the region of 3.06 GPA while non-users had GPA of 3.82. Besides, they found out that non-users devoted their time more to study; they spent an average of 88 per cent more time concentrating on their studies than using the Facebook. Indeed, devoting more time to social networking activities instead of academic pursuits portends danger to the quality of education in the world generally, and in Nigeria in particular. Hence, a study like this cannot be over emphasized. Internet has been found to have both positive and negative impacts on users. According to the studies carried out by Suhail and Bargees (2006) and Khalid (2017) on university students from Pakistan, this claim was confirmed. It was discovered that majority of the respondents noted that positive usage of Internet improved students' grades; expanded reading habits as well as information processing skills. To these students, Internet has proved a helpful tool in their studies (Ojedokun, 2001). Indeed, a proper use of Internet by students can be of tremendous benefit to them. According to Iwighreghweta and Igare (2014), the Internet has become the latest source of learning materials as it has a wealth of current study materials which no single library can claim to have. In an earlier study, (Ojedokun, 2001; & Osunde, 2003), it was observed that the Internet had become a valuable source of information for students searching for ideas on their assignments or more literature to make their projects more robust. Thus, the Internet has transformed higher education into student-centered rather than institution-centered as there are enough free academic learning resources on the Internet to fill many academic gaps (Osunde, 2003; Steinerova & Susol, 2005). With the proliferation of social media platforms, a good number of students now spend more time on non-academic related activities such as chatting, sharing photographs, playing games thereby leaving them with little or no time for their academic studies (Suhail & Bargees, 2006; Orhan & Nadir, 2017).

Advantages of the Internet

Several advantages have been identified in connection with the advent of the Internet. It is now an unequivocal statement of fact that the Internet fundamentally, is the world's largest computer network linking together several millions of people. It has thus become the information highway for many people with business opportunities and other innovations. Even though the Internet means different things to many people, it has uniquely revolutionized and shaped global information landscape. It is the world's largest information base resource. The Internet is used around the world daily by millions of people who enjoy simple interactions with other citizens and organizations for several reasons through various computer networks. The Internet is bringing cultures together around the world, and providing greater understanding between different peoples than any other human invention. It is a massive global information service which is rapidly becoming the store house of all human knowledge. The Internet is also a market place without physical boundaries and this development has taken it to another level which can be called Global Area Network (GAN),

which platform is responsible for interconnecting millions of computers, individuals, companies and organizations around the world (Ugwulebo & Okoro, 2016). The Internet is therefore a very dynamic and massive source of information which is growing by the day.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to examine the effect of the Internet on the reading habit of students in Bowen University with a view to assessing its impact on academic performance.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Identify the relationship between the use of the Internet and reading habit of students in Bowen university;
- ii. Determine the influence of reading habit of students on academic performance; and
- iii. Determine if the use of the Internet has any significant influence on academic performance of students in the university.

Methodology

The study focused on students in higher institutions of learning who made use of Internet with specific reference to 200 - 400 level students of Bowen University, Iwo.

The study used primary data to get the necessary information. This led to the use of questionnaire served on students of the chosen levels of the university.

A randomly selected number of 200 students from 200 – 400 level students were given questionnaires to complete. The questionnaires were constructed to get vital information from them. This information includes personal data such as age, sex, family background as well as course of study and time spent on Internet and the library.

The data obtained from the respondents were subjected to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. However, only 142 respondents completed the questionnaire satisfactorily.

Data Analysis and Results

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the student respondents. Majority of the respondents were males (67.7%) while females were just 32.4%. This implies that those that were willing to participate in the survey were mainly males. From the table, the basic entry qualification of majority of the respondents (89.4%) was the Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSSC). Other qualifications (Teachers Grade II, OND and HND) accounted for just 10.6%. Table 1 also shows that most of the respondents (90.8%) came from monogamous homes while (9.2%) were from polygamous families. Majority of the respondents (97.9%) were in the age bracket 16-25 years, while only (2.1%) were above 25 years old. Most of the parents of the respondents (89.4%) were still living together at the time of the survey while (10.6%) had divorced, separated or not married at all. Table 1 further shows that most of the parents of the respondents (97.9%) either belongs to the middle or high class in the society while only (2.1%) could be classified as of low status. Most of the respondents were also from enlightened homes as can be observed from the table, with (95.1%) being literates while only (4.9%) were illiterates. Finally, most of the student respondents (84.5%) were being cared for by both parents while (15.5%) were being cared for by either single parents or others.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Students

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	96	67.6
Female	46	32.4
Total	142	100.0
Entry educational qualification		
School Certificate	127	89.4
Grade II	7	4.9
OND	5	3.5
HND	3	2.1
Total	142	100.0
Family Structure		
Monogamy	129	90.8
Polygamy	13	9.2
Total	142	100.0
Age in years		
16-20	85	59.9
21-25	54	38.0
Above 25	3	2.1
Total	142	100.0
Current Parent Status		
Together	127	89.4
Divorced	3	2.1
Never Married	5	3.5
Separated	7	5.0
Total	142	100.0
Social Status of Parents		
High	67	47.2
Middle	72	50.7
Low	3	2.1
Total	142	100.0
Educational Background of Parents		
Literate	135	95.1
Illiterate	7	4.9
Total	142	100.0
General Parental Care		
Single	20	14.1
Both	120	84.5
None	2	1.4
Total	142	100.0

Table 2 shows the rate of computer literacy of respondents. 92.7% of the respondents were computer literate while 2.8% were not computer literate. This implies that majority of the students could use the computer very effectively.

Table 2: Rating of Computer Literacy among the Students

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	138	97.2
No	4	2.8
Total	142	100.0

Table 3 shows the mix of students that participated in the survey. It is evident from the table that majority of the respondents came from faculties of humanities (HMS), science and science education (SSE), and social and management sciences (SMS). These three faculties accounted for 93.7% of the respondents while the remaining 6.3% came from the other faculties. This implies that majority of Internet users are students from humanities, social and management sciences and science and science education.

Table 3: Faculty to which Students belong

	Frequency	Percent
Agric	6	4.2
BMS	1	.7
HMS	15	10.6
LAW	2	1.4
SMS	88	62.0
SSE	30	21.1
Total	142	100.0

Table 4 shows the various social media platforms that some students were addicted to. While several students were using several platforms interchangeably, the four social media platforms that some students were addicted to were BBM (22.5%), Whatsapp (33.8%), e-mail (6.3%) and Youtube (2.8%).

Table 4: Social Media Frequently Utilized by Students

	Frequency	Percent
All	2	1.4
BBM	32	22.5
BBM, Facebook, Twitter	1	.7
BBM, Twitter	1	.7
BBM, Whatsapp	5	3.5
BBM, Whatsapp, Facebook	2	1.4
BBM, Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter	3	2.1
BBM, Whatsapp, Facebook, You tube	1	.7
e-mail	9	6.3
e-mail, BBM	2	1.4
e-mail, BBM, Whatsapp, Facebook	5	3.5
e-mail, BBM, Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter	2	1.4
e-mail, BBM, Whatsapp, Facebook, You tube	1	.7
e-mail, BBM, Whatsapp, Facebook, You tube, Twitter	2	1.4
e-mail, BBM, Whatsapp, You tube	1	.7
e-mail, Facebook	1	.7
e-mail, Whatsapp	1	.7

e-mail, Whatsapp, Facebook	3	2.1
e-mail, Whatsapp, Facebook, You tube	1	.7
e-mail, Whatsapp, Twitter	1	.7
e-mail, Whatsapp, You tube	3	2.1
Facebook	4	2.8
Twitter	5	3.5
Whatsapp	48	33.8
Whatsapp, Facebook	1	.7
Whatsapp, Twitter	1	.7
You tube	4	2.8
Total	142	100.0

Table 5 shows the several purposes for which students of the institution utilized the Internet which were mainly for social networking with people, academic research, global communication, entertainment purposes and complementary to study materials. From the table, 37.3% of the respondents utilized the Internet for three or more purposes, 64.7% utilized it for social networking and with people and others, 54.2% for academic research and others while 26% utilized it to complement study materials.

Table 5: Usage combinations of the Internet by Students

Types of Internet Usage	Usage Combination	Frequency	Percent
1 - Social networking with people	1	27	19.0
2 - Academic Research	1, 2	8	5.6
3 - Global Communication	1, 2, 3	2	1.4
4 - Entertainment	1, 2, 3, 4	4	2.8
5 - Complement Study Material	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	24	16.9
	1, 2, 4	13	9.2
	1, 2, 4, 5	4	2.8
	1, 2, 5	2	1.4
	1, 3, 4	2	1.4
	1, 3, 4, 5	1	.7
	1, 3, 5	1	.7
	1, 4	4	2.8
	2	14	9.9
	2, 3	2	1.4
	2, 3, 4	1	.7
	2, 4	2	1.4
	2, 4, 5	1	.7
	3	13	9.2
	4	13	9.2
5	4	2.8	
Total		142	100.0

Table 6 shows the respondents facility use preference. While only 10.6% of the students

preferred the E-library for their study, 89.4% were willing to have direct access to the Internet for their study materials. This outcome is in agreement with the frequency with which they obtained information from the Internet which was 85.2% as shown in Table 6. Furthermore, 98.6% of the students rated the Internet as a good source of information while only 1.4% rated it otherwise. From Table 6, the frequency of using the Internet by the students was 'monthly' 1.4%, 'weekly' 9.9%, while 'daily' 88.7% which is the highest. It can also be observed from the Table that majority of the students were not having problems with using the Internet (84.5%). The students also indicated that they preferred using the Internet during the night (76.1%) and they equally expressed having greater advantage of using the Internet (97.2%) over the library (2.8%). This was also in tandem with the students' conclusion that they favored the Internet as their preferred source of academic information (97.2%) over the library (2.7%).

Table 6

	Frequency	Percent
Students' study facility preference		
E-Library	15	10.6
The Internet	127	89.4
Total	142	100.0
Frequency of obtaining information from the Internet		
Always	121	85.2
None	20	14.1
sometimes	1	.7
Total	142	100.0
Rating of the Internet as a good source of information		
Yes	140	98.6
No	2	1.4
Total	142	100.0
Frequency of using the Internet		
Daily	126	88.7
Weekly	14	9.9
Monthly	2	1.4
Total	142	100.0
Students having problem with using the Internet		
Yes	22	15.5
No	120	84.5
Total	142	100.0
Convenient time to use the Internet		
Morning	20	14.1
Afternoon	14	9.9
Night	108	76.1
Total	142	100.0
Internet advantages over the Library		
Yes	138	97.2
No	4	2.8
Total	142	100.0
Preference for academic information through the Internet than the Library		
Yes	138	97.2
No	4	2.8
Total	142	100.0

Table 7 shows the Spearman's correlation among the variables current CGPA, time spent on

the Internet and time spent in the library. Time spent on the Internet had negative but significant correlation (- 0.178* p < .05) with current CGPA of the students while time spent in the library had positive but insignificant correlation (0.137 p > .05). This implies that time spent on the Internet can adversely affect the performance of the students in their academic work, while the use of the library will have positive influence on their academic performance.

Table 7: Correlations

	Current CGPA	Time spent on the Internet	Time spent in the library
Spearman's rho	1.000		
Correlation Coefficient			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.		
Time spent on the Internet	-0.178*	1.000	
Correlation Coefficient			
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.034	.	
Time spent in the library	0.137	0.098	1.000
Correlation Coefficient			
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.104	0.248	.
N	142	142	142

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Tables 8, 9, and 10 show model summary, analysis of variance and regression coefficients of the regression equation between the dependent variable (current CGPA) and the independent variables (time spent on the Internet, and time spent in the library). From Table 8, the coefficient of determination of the regression equation R^2 was 0.049. This implies that only 4.9% of the variation in academic performance could be explained by the two independent variables. From Table 9, it could be observed that the regression model was adequate for the variables as the significant error level was 0.03 which is less than 0.05 the acceptable error level. It further shows that the two independent variables jointly have a significant effect on the dependent variable, current CGPA. Table 10 shows the coefficients of the two independent variables. While the coefficient of time spent on the Internet was negative (-0.115), that of time spent in the library was positive (0.090). Their corresponding t-values and p-values were time spent on the Internet (- 2.03, 0.039) and (1.860, 0.065) respectively. The regression equation can therefore be written as:

$CGPA = - 0.115 \text{time spent on the Internet} + 0.090 \text{time spent in the library}$. This implies that time spent on the Internet will reduce CGPA while time spent in the library will increase CGPA.

Table 8: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	RStd. Error of the Estimate	of Durbin-Watson
1	0.222 ^a	0.049	0.036	0.76240	1.583

a. Predictors: (Constant), Time spent in the library, Time spent on the Internet

b. Dependent Variable: Current CGPA

Table 9: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA^a)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.193	2	2.097	3.607	0.030 ^b
	Residual	80.794	139	0.581		
	Total	84.987	141			

a. Dependent Variable: Current CGPA

b. Predictors: (Constant), Time spent in the library, Time spent on the Internet

Table 10: Regression Coefficients^a and Collinearity Statistics

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.755	0.228		16.487	0.000		
	Time spent on the Internet	-0.115	0.055	-0.173	-2.083	0.039	0.993	1.007
	Time spent in the library	0.090	0.049	0.154	1.860	0.065	0.993	1.007

a. Dependent Variable: Current CGPA

Summary, Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, the effect of the Internet on the reading habits of students in Bowen University was examined. Respondents were randomly selected among all the levels (100 to 400 levels). The research instrument was questionnaire which was administered to the students. An analysis of their responses showed that there was positive correlation between time spent on the Internet and time spent in the library but with no possibility of multi-collinearity as the variance inflation factors of the two independent variables were both 1.007, which is within the acceptable limit. Furthermore, when academic performance, proxied by CGPA, was regressed with time spent on the Internet and time spent in the library, it was discovered that time spent on the Internet had negative influence on academic performance (CGPA) while time spent in the library had positive influence. It was also discovered that when time on the Internet increased by one unit, academic performance would be lowered by 0.115, while if time spent in the library was increased by one unit, the effect on academic performance would be an increase of 0.090. This implies that usage of the library through reading of study materials will have a positive impact on their academic performance while addiction to the Internet will lower their academic performance. It is therefore recommended that students should be encouraged to spend much of their time in the library on study materials rather than stay on the Internet for several hours if they want their academic performance to be improved upon.

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