

INTERNET USAGE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN CROSS RIVER STATE-NIGERIA AND THE NEED FOR GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed on the investigation of internet usability and academic performance of university students in Cross River State, Nigeria two (2) research hypotheses were framed that guided the study. Both empirical and conceptual literatures were reviewed according to the sub-variables raised for the study. Ex-post facto research design was adopted in the study with simple and stratified sampling technique to collect a sample size of five hundred and thirty two (532) respondents from two public universities; university of Calabar, Calabar and Cross River University of Technology Calabar. Two research instrument titled internet use questionnaire (IUQ) was developed by the researchers while Achievement Test in English (ATE) was adopted from the University of Calabarcentre for General Studies were used for data collection. Data collected were subjected to analysis using simple percentages and pearson product moment correlations. The result of the study revealed that; there is significant relationship between facebook usage and academic performance of students (2), there is significant relationship between whatsapp usage and academic performance of students. It was recommended that government, university authorities, and the network service provider should work together to improve on broadband internet infrastructures to help students performance in their academic activities considering the modern method of learning in education. Also on effective counselling and human capacity development centre should be created in every university to help in educating undergraduate students on how to moderate their internet usage to avoid it negative impacts.

Keywords: Internet, usage, academic, performance, university, students

INTRODUCTION

The academic performance of tertiary institution students has been a source of concern. As everyday reports of deteriorating performance is wide spread, even in the face of a well-equipped century called the 21st century that is blessed with the internet and other social media platforms that students irrespective of gender, tribe, location and school can use to enhance their academic performance. As it may seem, today, a large number of students in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria and the world at large have the internet in their disposal. Students of University of Calabar and Cross River University of Technology are not exempted as they are equally privileged to have the internet in their laptops, desktops, phones, among other devices. That means, in the comfort of their homes, students can access unlimited amount of information in any discipline of their interest.

Having the internet is not just the matter, but making a better use of this facility and the various accompanying information platforms have key concern. Students must be disciplined about the use of this internet. Disciplined in relation to the sites you visit, the amount of time spent online, the information consumed, and above all how to regulate self from not allowing the use of the internet to hamper study time and other academic related activities. These issues when put properly will go a long way helping tertiary institutions students in a good number of ways.

But the academic performances of this set of students have been very discouraging especially when compared with the nature of devices (internet surfing components) available today. Having secured admission into the tertiary institution, observed also is that, many students still make very poor grade in key courses. A course like use of English, one would have expected the best in terms of performance among students because; students use the English Language in the internet and other social media surfing that is the foundation for the mastery of all field of disciplines. Meaning, if any students is serious he can do better rather, a devastating situation of poor academic performance is recently observed. The most pathetic is the poor performance recorded by students in Use of English Language from the centre for General Studies (GSS) of University of Calabar and Cross River University of Technology from 2014/2015-2018/2019 academic sessions. It becomes worrisome that their performance in Use of English has not shown a steady path indicating that the use of internet and the various social media platforms have significant effect. The table 1 and 2 below will explain better.

TABLE 1

Performance of university of Calabar undergraduate students in Use of English GSS 1101 from 2014/2015 – 2018/2019

Session	No of Students	Pass	%	Fail	%	Remark
2014/2015	11480	6187	53.90	5293	46.1	Good
2015/2016	12172	6009	49.40	6163	50.60	Fair
2016/2017	11978	5718	47.74	6260	52.26	Fair
2017/2018	12204	4006	32.83	8198	67.17	Poor
2018/2019	11338	4384	38.67	6954	61.33	Poor

TABLE 2

Performance of Cross River University of Technology undergraduate students in Use of English GSS 1101 from 2014/2015 – 2018/2019

Session	No of Students	Pass	%	Fail	%	Remark
2014/2015	3140	2001	64	1139	36	Good
2015/2016	3227	1081	34	2140	66	Poor
2016/2017	3101	972	31	2129	69	Poor
2017/2018	4849	2005	41	2862	46	Fair
2018/2019	5009	2149	43	2862	57	Fair

A critical examination of the performance of these students in Use of English from 2014-2019 indicates that, a lot of work has to be done to remedy this situation. One of the ways to show that learning has taken place in a student is in the evidence of the academic performance of the individual learner. This evidence which comes in the form of scores depicts academic performance. Academic performance being a proof of what a student is in the school, make a major statement not just about the learner, but also about the teachers, and the system of education. This academic performance which has a common name result has all it takes to report at a glance all the student have done in the cognitive, affective and the psychomotor domains of learning. As the performance of this set of students speaks for itself, one now begins to ask; how well do the students in these tertiary institutions make use of the internet in their disposal?

The internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks used with the standard internet protocol suit (Tcp/IP) to serve many users worldwide. It is an international network of computers that are willing to

share their resources one to another. The internet operates along with other recently developed platforms like Facebooks, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Skype, among others, and students have the internet and the various social media platforms in either laptops or phones. Charting on these platforms in English Language is enough to aid students' performance better in English Language and other areas of academic activities. A situation experience is the opposite.

Facebook is a social networking developed by Mark Zuckerberg in 2008. It is a platform that enables people to interact with one another on a wider spectrum. Most often, Facebook usage is possible through the use of mobile phones. Although, other hardware like; the laptops computers, desktop computers, palmtop computers, tablets, android phones I pads, and other devices that make use of the internet can equally be used. Communication on this platform has no distance barrier and can accommodate more than one person at the same time. It enables the sharing of files in the form of picture, textual and videos messages from one person (student) to the other. Many of these files can contain academic materials which can be of help to students. According to Okereke, (2018) opined that young people prefer to use Facebook as a source of information dissemination rather than listening to the radio or watching television. Facebook has interface with the internet which aids its operations on a daily basis. Without the internet, Facebook cannot be functional.

However, in spite of the relevance of the internet in the 21st century of which Facebook is one of the channels that aids easy communication among students, the perceived effect it has on academic performance of university students appears negative. This is because, today, many students devote their academic study time and commitments in sending friends request to people they never met in real life, chatting, reading unnecessary posts from friends, family members, watching videos, uploading and posting personal pictures and videos, viewing, and reacting to other unnecessary information in their timelines that could serve as a distraction to them. By these activities, many students end up forgetting easily of their basic academic study time table and others undermine their academic daily activities that holds the success of an average university student believed has a negatively effect on their academic performance.

Furthermore, WhatsApp is another social media resource which enhances communication amongst individuals from different locations within the globe. It was founded in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum, former employees of Yahoo. It uses the phones cellular or wi-fi connection to facilitate messaging and voice calling to nearly everyone on the planet. It could be used to receive and send messages such as textual, documents, photos, audio, videos and others. It can also be used in sharing academic materials among students. For instance, in the higher institutions, many students in the different departments create WhatsApp groups for dissemination of information among themselves. Sometimes, certain assignments can be placed on the platform for all students to access and work on.

In a contrary view, in spite of how the internet has localized the globe and globalized the locality through the introduction of WhatsApp media tool, its contrary application is perceived to have a negative effect on academic performance of university students that might lead to regret in our educational system and society. Today, students have introduced a new form of wrong stenographic form of writing and colloquial languages which is believed could result to non-mastery of wrong spellings and short tenses formation in chat rooms with their friends, course mates and other chat groups they belong to. Today, students consider words like: for as 4, before as b4, great as g8t, see as si, come as com, when as wen, why as y, and so on. This form of writing is believed could affect negatively on student writing proficiency leading to poor academic performance.

Also, the long hours students spend online using the internet for different reasons are often times not academically related which could impact on their academic performance negatively. Reports and observations among students have given so much information on why many university students perform poorly in their academic. The long hours spent by students attending to different chat group messages, and other fun related medias such as chatting with friends, course mates, family relatives in sending and receiving both audio and video messages, pictures, streaming of movies, audio and video songs, surfing of animated pictures, playing of online games, playing of betting games and other activities are energy sapping and time consuming that could lead to being tired and result to procrastination of academic commitments and other relevant activities. In contrast to why they are in school, many of these activities lead students to come to classes late, late in doing and submitting assignments to course lecturers as well as attending to other academic commitment that may be needed from an average student. Better academic performance among university is never possible without consistency of students in every bit of academic activity and commitment.

Furthermore, it is also observed that many students who perform below the university standard are withdrawn from the institutions while, others resort to change course of study in contrast to what they originally were admitted. Today, many students express unnecessary phobia at the close and beginning of every examination, feeling dependent on their course mates to write examination because of incompetence to face or attempt

examination test items (questions) on themselves. This problem among students result to them staying longer than the stipulated years of study. Though some students who can maneuver their way, resort to involve in examination malpractice while others who could not, choose the option of buying grades.

Base on this poor situation, the researcher interest was moved to find out whether internet usability actually impact negatively on university students academic performance in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Related literature

Facebook is one of the technological product of the 21st century which enable users all over the world to relate through sharing of multimedia files in the form of text, pictures, videos, audios and others. It is also a unique invention that has bridge the gap of time, distance and geographical location implying that, one can reach out to the others anytime, irrespective of the distance and the location.

Judd, Kennedy, T.J. &Gregor, K. (2010). Investigated the use of internet among undergraduates in two universities, Lagos state university and Babcock University, Nigeria. A total of one hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires were administered to final year students in four faculties common to both universities. Ninety-seven (97) questionnaires were completed and restored. Simple percentages and independent t-test were used to analyze data generated from the five (5) research questions and hypotheses raised. The study revealed that internet usage has negative significantly influence on students academic performance.

In another study made by Gharab and Sharif (2015) examination on facebook usage influences the academic performance of students in Sulaimani university of Iraq. Three (3) research hypotheses were raised to guide the study. A sample size of 110 students were randomly selected for the study. A quantitative research approach was used for the study. Simple percentages and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the research hypotheses which study findings revealed that 75% of students who spend long hours on facebook had a decrease in their grades while, 10% who do not spend long hours on facebook grades increase. The findings of the study also revealed that the number of hours used on facebook has negative significant impact on academic performance of students.

Ifeanyi-Obi, Olatunji and Akpala (2014) conducted a study to survey the perceived effects of facebook usage on academic activities of agricultural science students in the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Survey design was employed in the study. Data were collected with the use of structured questionnaire from 80 students offering agricultural science and analyzed using simple percentages. The result of the study indicated that facebook had significant effect on students academic performance in agricultural science. The overall rating of the effect of facebook on academic performance of agricultural science students indicated a positive effect of 67% while a negative effect of facebook usage took 33% of users.

Aslo, in a study conducted by Bedassa (2014) on the impact of facebook usage on students' academic performance. The study assessed the impact of social networking sites i.e.facebook on students' academic performance. the study was carried out in Wollega university in Nekemte, Ethiopia with regular undergraduates students in focus. A questionnaire was designed to assess impact of fasebook usage on students and were administered to 384 students using stratified sampling technique. Variables identified are time spent on facebook, addiction on facebook and academic performance. The pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationship between addiction to facebook and time spent on facebook and students academic performance. furthermore, a multiple linear regression was carried out to determine the relative contribution of addiction to facebook and time spent on facebook to students' academic performance. Analysis of the results was carried out using the spss software package which findings revealed that time spent on facebook and addiction negatively and significantly affect students academic performance.

Whatsapp usability and students' academic performance

Whatsapp is one of the social media handle. As a means of sending and receiving messages. Whatsapp can perform a variety of functions, such as text messages, attached images, audio files, video files and links to web addresses. Everyday an average of 31 billion messages are sent (Tzuk, 2013). According to Igbofe and Anyanwu (2018), class whatsapp groups are used for four main purposes; communicating with students; nurturing the social atmosphere; creating dialogue and encouraging sharing among students; and as a learning platform. According to 99 firms.com(2019), whatsapp has over 1.5 billion active users in over 180 countries. The average user checks whatsapp more than 25 time per day. The number of users in the USA is predicted to have grown to 25.6 million by 2021. Whatsapp is the third most downloaded android app in the world. there are 3 million companies using Whatsapp business app (99 firms.com 2019). According to Yeboah and Ewor (2014), whatsapp takes much of students study time and results in procrastination, destroys students spelling and grammatical construction of sentences, leads to lack of concentration during lecture, results to difficulty in

balancing online activities and academic preparation, distracts students from completing their assignments and adhering to their studies time table.

Similarly, Ismaila (2018) conducted a study on the effect of social media on students' academic performance in higher institutions of learning in Ado Ekiti, Nigeria. Survey design was employed in the study using multistage sampling technique to derive the study population sample from five (5) higher institutions of learning in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria, to ascertain how the use of social media has effected the academic performance. Multistage sampling techniques was employed in the study to determine the study sample size. The result of the study indicated that 318 (86%) of the 368 students surveyed always stays online, 314 (85%) have smart phones (33.7%) 124 are on whatsapp. A great percentage agreed that their grades suffers anytime they spend long hours on chatting both at night and in the morning while classes are on going.

Statement of the problem

In Nigeria tertiary institutions, like those of most developing countries, are made up of students of different age bracket, who have varied internet application devices that aid them operate the internet and socio media platforms. With the internet, in these devices like laptops, palm tops, desktop, smart phones among others can enable students access materials of all kinds including academic materials, also from social media platform like facebook, whatsapp, twitter, Instagram wechat ,Badoo, Imo, Skype, zoom, youtube, snapchat, and a host of other internet platforms.

However, it has been observed that, instead of students in the tertiary institutions availed with the opportunity of getting academic materials in great quantum through the internet and these social media platforms, they have resolved to using them for fun fair, sports, recreation and other non-academic activities. Today, in various tertiary institutions, students give quality time to online activities like chatting of facebook, whatsApp, twitter, watch YouTube videos and play online games among others. There is even an outcry among parents and lecturers that many students with internet access and chat group could not write constructively using English Language. One begins to wonder, with the use of English Language in almost all the chat groups, why many students are unable to write articulately and as well, get access to unlimited academic materials to improve on themselves. Apart from complains such as students not being able to write articulately, it was also noticed that most of them unintentionally write with the colloquial language they use in the various chat groups. The most pathetic of all is the poor performance recorded by students in use of English from the centre for General studies (GSS) of University of Calabar and Cross River University of Technology from 2014/2015 – 2018/2019 academic sessions.

It becomes worrisome that their performance in use of English language has not shown a steady path indicating that the use of internet and the various social media platforms have significant impact.

To remedy this unhealthy situation, schools even at the secondary school levels have made it mandatory for all students to have a credit in English language before they are admitted into the tertiary institutions, various institutions have also established many strategies like sending only academic materials on the various social media platforms they create. Parents and some teachers have equally warned against unguarded usage of the internet and social media platforms yet, daily unquantifiable number of students still patronize these sites. Therefore, the researchers feel concerned to ask questions like; whether facebook, whatsapp usage relates with academic performance of university students in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between facebook usage and academic performance of university students in Use of English.
2. There is no significant relationship between whatsapp usage and academic performance of university students in Use of English.

Methodology

The design adopted for this study was the ex- post facto research design. According to Isangedighi (2011), ex post facto research design allows the researcher to investigate the possibility of a causal relationship among variables that cannot be manipulated. This study investigated internet usage and how it relates with the academic performance university students in use of English in Cross River State. ex-post facto design is the most suitable when collecting data the researcher does not have direct control of independent variable(s) because their manifestations had already occurred.

Result

This section presents the result of data analysis in accordance with the hypotheses.

Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between facebook usage and academic performance of university students in use of English. The independent variable in this hypothesis facebook usage, and was measured continuously while the dependent variable is academic performance of University students and was measured continuously too. The items used in testing this hypothesis were derived from Section B of internet usage questionnaire sub-scale, items 1-5 and 1-20 of the English language achievement test instrument. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient statistics was used to test this hypothesis at .05 level of significance and the result is presented on table 3.

TABLE 3

Pearson product moment correlation for facebook usage and academic performance of students in use of English

Variable	N	X	SD	r-value	Sig.	R ²
Facebook usage	532	14.11	2.75			
				0.292	0.003*	0.852
Academic performance	532	17.08	2.08			

*significant at 0.05 level; df = 530; critical r-value = 0.079.

The information on Table 3 shows that there is a significant relationship between facebook usage and students' academic performance in English. This is because the calculated r-value of 0.292 at .05 levels of significance with 530 degrees of freedom is grater then the critical r-value of 0.079. This means that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between facebook usage and academic performance of university students in Cross River State is rejected.

To further probe into the level of relationship between facebook usage and students academic performance in English, a correlation coefficient which is a standardized measure of an observed effect was used to measure the size of relationship. R-value of - or + 0.1 represents a small effect, - or + 0.3 represents medium effect while –or + 0.5 above is a large effect.

The squared correlation coefficient (0.292)² which is a measure of the effect size indicated the proportion of explain variance on the dependent variable. Therefore, 85.2% of the variance in academic performance of university students in Cross River State is accounted for by facebook usage. The magnitude of the effect size is high, meaning facebook usage correlates positively with students' academic performance in use of English. Therefore, it is concluded that, facebook usage have statistically significant relationship with the academic performance of university students in Cross River State in use of English.

Hypothesis two

Hypothesis two states that there is no significant relationship between whatsapp usage academic performance of university students in Cross River State. the independent variable here is whatsapp usage and was measured continuously while the dependent variable is academic performance of university student in Cross River State and also measures continuously. The items used in testing this hypothesis were derived from section B of internet usage questionnaire sub-scale, items 6-10 and items 1-20 of the English achievement test instrument. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient statistics was used to test this hypothesis at .05 level of significance and the result is presented on table 4.

TABLE 4

Pearson product moment correlation for whatsapp use and academic performance of students in use of English

Variable	N	X	SD	r-value	Sig.	R ²
Whatsapp usage	532	14.43	2.64			
				0.521	0.000*	0.271
Academic performance	532	17.08	2.08			

*significant at 0.05 level; df = 530; critical r-value = 0.079.

From table 4 the information shows that there is a significant relationship between whatsapp usage and students' academic performance in English. This is because the calculated r-value of 0.521 at .05 level of significance with 530 degrees of freedom is greater than the critical r-value of 0.079. This means that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between whatsapp usage and academic performance of university students in Cross River State is rejected.

To further investigate the level of relationship between whatsapp usage and students' academic performance in use of English, a correlation coefficient which is a standardized measure of an observed effect was used to measure the size of relationship. R-value of + or - 0.1 represent a small effect, + or -0.3 represents medium effect while + or - 0.5 above is a large effect. The squared correlation coefficient (0.521)² which is a measure of effect size indicates the proportion of explained variable on the dependent variable. Therefore, 27.1% of the variance in academic performance of university students in Cross River State is accounted for by whatsapp usage. The magnitude of the effect size is high, meaning whatsapp usage correlates positively with students academic performance in use of English. It is therefore concluded that, whatsapp usage have statistically significant relationship with the academic performance of university students in Cross River State in use of English.

Discussion

Relative to hypothesis one, which states that there is no significant relationship between facebook and students academic performance of university students in use of English, it was found out that facebook usage significantly relates with the academic performance of students in Cross River State. This study agrees with that of Khan and Ahmed (2018) who investigated the impact of facebook usage on students' academic performance in Baluchistan university of information technology engineering and management science in Pakistan and found that a strong positive relationship exist between facebook usage and students cumulative grade point average (CGPA). The finding further agrees with Ghareb and Sharif (2015) who examined how facebook usage influences the academic performance of students in Sulaimani university of Iraq and found that facebook usage have significant positive impact on academic performance of students. In like manner, this study is in line with Ifeanyi-Obi, Olatunji and Akpala (2014) conducted a study to survey the perceived effects of facebook usage on academic activities of agricultural science students in the university of Port Harcourt and found that facebook usage had negative effect on students academic performance in agricultural science.

The second hypothesis stated that there is no significant relationship between whatsapp usage and academic performance of university students in use of English. From our findings, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings agree with that of Eberechukwu and Queendarline (2018) who in their studies found that whatsapp media integration into education has significant impact on students performance. Findings of Yeboah and Ewor (2014) also supported this study's position that whatsapp usage among students aid academic performance. the study finding also agrees with that of Igbore&Anyanwu (2018) who noted that, use of whatsapp groups aid in many ways such as: communicating with students, nurturing the social atmosphere, enhancing interaction among students without time, distance and location barrier.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that students' usage of the internet has significant relationship with their academic performance.

Recommendations/ Counselling

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. The government, university authorities and network service providers should work together to improve on broadband internet infrastructures to help students in their academic activities considering the modern method of learning in education.
2. Effective counselling and human capacity development centres should be created in every university to help in educating undergraduate students on how to moderate their internet usage to avoid its negative impacts.

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