Utilization of Internet-Enabled Technology for Research Purposes by Postgraduate Business Education Students in Universities in Southwest Nigeria

Dr. Rasheed Olawale Olawoyin[1*] and Oluwatobi Alex Adeniji[2]

[1]Department of Business Education, School of Secondary Education, (Vocational & Technical Programmes), Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate, Oyo State, Nigeria.
[2]Department Technology Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria.

E-mail: lawoyinoyo@gmail.com*
Telephone: 08057992263/08069776804

ABSTRACT

The study assessed utilization of Internet-enabled technology for research purposes by postgraduate business education students in universities in Southwest Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population for the study consisted of 207 postgraduate business education students of the universities in Southwest Nigeria. No sample was drawn since the population size was considered manageable by the researchers.

Three research questions guided the study while three null hypotheses were formulated at the 0.05 level of significance. The instrument for data collection for this study was a structured questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Utilization of Internet-enabled Technology" (QUIT). The instrument was validated by three experts. Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument, and an overall co-efficient of 0.87 was obtained. Mean was used to answer the three research questions while standard deviation was employed to measure the closeness or otherwise of the respondents' opinions.

The findings of the study amongst others revealed that PG business education students did not utilize Internet browsers for research purposes in universities in Southwest Nigeria. It was also revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. business education students on the extent they utilize Internet browsers for research purposes in universities in Southwest Nigeria. The study concluded that PG business education students did not utilize Internet browsers and search engines for research purposes while they utilized e-mail services for research purposes in universities in Southwest Nigeria.

(Keywords: Internet use, Internet research, technology research, business education, university education, postgraduate studies)

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, the use of the Internet has been recognized to favor the education sector. Education as an important means for promoting economic and social development is both at individual and national levels. The growth of the global economy and the information-based society has pressurized education systems around the world to use technology to teach students the knowledge and skills they need (UNESCO, 2019). Succinctly, many researchers have variously defined the Internet. Shitta (2018) expatiated that the Internet is a communication super-highway that links, hooks and focuses the entire world into a global village, where people of all races can easily get in touch, see, or speak to one another and exchange information from one point of the globe to another.

In the view of Encarta (2020), the Internet refers to a computer-based global information system comprising many interconnected computer networks. According to Mohammad and Parvez (2016), the Internet is a "network of networks" that consists of millions of smaller domestic, academic, business and government networks. The author further stated that the Internet is the transport vehicle for the information stored in files or documents on another computer.

In the context of this study, the Internet is defined as an interconnected global network of computers which provides easy and instant

communication to users through its numerous resources without geographical limitation. The Internet, according to Shitta (2016) is beneficial to the users in information sourcing, information exchange, and information dissemination.

Among the benefits of the Internet is its unrivalled source of knowledge for its users. As a powerful tool for searching, retrieving, and disseminating information, with significant impacts on almost all professions, the Internet can be consulted as a reference resource (Ilo and Ifijeh, 2017). The authors further added that the internet is a means of scholarly communication and offers an immense repository of knowledge/information that can be applied in teaching, learning, and research. This is supported by Bamigboye and Ojo (2015) who stated that the major rationale for school Internet access is the support it provides in teaching and learning of school curriculum. In other words, information is sourced from the Internet by utilizing its technology.

Technology is defined as electronic tools and resources for learning (Seels and Richey, 2018). Technologies are instructional tools and equipment used in order to attain learning objectives. Seels and Richey further stressed that technology is a network device used to achieve certain defined set of learning objectives. In furtherance, Internet-based technology in the view of this study is referred to as the intangible/tangible activities/facilities/tools or equipment, software that can aid or help the users of the Internet to achieve benefits. These technologies are, therefore, the means through which the Internet is accessed. The Internet has many technologies that can be utilized for research by individuals. For the purpose of this study, such technologies include Internet browsers, Internet search engines, and electronic mail (e-mail) services (Bradley, 2014; Metz, 2016; Paul, 2018).

A browser is one of the Internet technologies that enable the Internet to provide varied information to researchers such as Postgraduate (PG) business education students who have access to it. According to Paul (2018), Internet browsers are software for viewing web pages and can also be referred to as web browsers. A web browser is used to access the Internet which allows the users (researchers) to visit websites to retrieve information needed and as well perform activities within them like login, view multimedia, link from one site to another, visit one page from another,

receive email, among many other activities. In other words, web browsers provide gateways to information from the net. Examples of web browsers are Google Chrome®, Internet Explorer®, Opera®, and Mozilla Firefox®, among others.

Another group of Internet technologies that can be utilized for research are Internet search engines. A search engine is an Internet tool that locates web pages and sorts them according to specific key words (Purdue, 2016). In his view, Voorhees (2015) stated that an Internet search engine is an information retrieval system designed to help find information stored on a computer system. Search engines are numerous and they include Google® search, Yahoo® search, Internet Archive® search engine, and Bing®.

Electronic mail (e-mail) service is another type of Internet resource that is useful for research purposes. E-mail is a method of exchanging digital messages from an author to one or more recipients (Wood, 2018). In the same vein, Heinz (2014) described e-mail as the transmission of messages over electronic networks like the Internet. Electronic mail can be in the form of notes entered from the keyboard or electronic files stored on disk, images, or other attachments sent through a network to a specified individual or group of individuals. The delivery of electronic messages to a specified recipient is made possible with the services of a unique electronic address (e-mail address) of the user. Research work and materials can be sent to academic mentors and clients in distant locations for correction and thereafter sent back to the researcher. Thus, electronic library resources provide scholarly and professional articles for research.

Research is the application of the scientific method in the study of a problem in order to discover information to fill identified gaps in knowledge. Research is the process of arriving at dependable solution that solves a specific problem through planned and systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data (Akanbi, 2019). According to Aliyu (2016), research is the manner in which knotty problems are solved in attempt to push back the frontiers of human ignorance. In other words, research is ultimately a way of thinking, a way of looking at accumulated facts so that the data collected speaks to the mind of the researcher.

Research is aimed at finding a solution to a problem, providing additional knowledge or information and finding the conditions under which a certain phenomenon occurs. Irrespective of the particular type/class of research, the main reason for any research is to discover, reinforce or refine knowledge and ultimately develop new knowledge. The new knowledge obtained from research is valuable because it will eventually lead to the improvement of society at large, the educational system as a whole and in particular for academic purposes at the university level.

In Nigeria, any student who is pursuing a Masters' or Doctorate degree in any field of specialization is called a postgraduate student. There are, therefore, three categories of Post Graduate students; Post Graduate Diploma (PGD) students, Masters Degree students, and Doctoral (Ph.D.) students. Irrespective of the category of PG students studying in the university, the production of research report before graduation is a prerequisite. It is therefore important to note that the use of Internet-based technology may differ based on program type (M.Sc. and Ph.D.). The author adduced that this is based on the fact that masters' students need to meet up with a minimum grade point to qualify for Ph.D. on the other hand, other studies reveal that Ph.D. students utilizes Internet resources in writing their dissertation as compared to masters' students. This inconclusive finding prompted this study to examine masters' and doctorate students on their utilization of Internet-based technology. However, this study covered Masters and Doctoral (Ph.D.) degrees for regular or full-time business education students.

Business Education runs programs up to postgraduate level. Business education is an aspect of education which prepares students for the world of work at the pre-vocational, vocational, and professional levels. Business Education in view of Anao (2018) is the total knowledge, skills and attitudes that are required for successfully promoting and administering a business enterprise. Business Education is part of the total education program which provides skills, knowledge and understanding for one's participation in the business world either as a consumer or producer. Business education could be operationally referred to as an aspect of utility education, which will equip students with the skills to utilize the Internet and produce a quality research work for gainful employment and effective academic activities such as teaching and learning as well as research report writing.

Sequel to this, Kiptalam and Rodrigues (2015) opine that many universities in Nigeria have adopted Internet technology to provide fast and better services to their students. Whether the Postgraduate students in Southern Nigeria, who are supposed to be one of the significant beneficiaries of the Internet, do utilize Internet resources for their research seems to be doubtful. A look at the references of many PG business education students' project/theses research works which shows only few citations of the Internet also suggest this doubt.

In addition, Adeyemi, Ayodele, Adeyemi, Awelewa and Oluyemi (2016) worry over the long time spent by PG students in writing research report before graduation which they attributed to prevalent lack of quality and updated literature in students' research report. This observation is supported by the researcher's experience during PG (Masters/Ph.D.) degrees thesis/dissertation defense which often reveal the manner at which lecturers frown or complain over the quality of PG students' research work and the consequent corrections they (supervisors) often make on students' manuscripts, all leading to students' prolonged stay in the program. It was upon this background that this study sought to assess the utilization of Internet-enabled technology for research purposes by PG business education students in universities in Southwest Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to assess the utilization of Internet-enabled technology for research purposes by PG business education students in universities in Southwest Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. The extent of utilization of Internet browsers for research purposes by PG business education students in universities in Southwest Nigeria

2. The extent of utilization of Internet search engines for research purposes by PG business education students in universities in Southwest Nigeria

3. The extent of utilization of e-mail services for research purposes by PG business

education students in universities in Southwest Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent of utilization of Internet browsers for research purposes by PG business education students in universities in Southwest Nigeria?

2. What is the extent of utilization of Internet search engines for research purposes by PG business education students in universities in Southwest Nigeria?

3. What is the extent of utilization of e-mail services for research purposes by PG business education students in universities in Southwest Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. business education students on the extent they utilize Internet browsers for research purposes in universities in Southwest, Nigeria.

2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. business education students on the extent they utilize Internet search engines for research purposes in universities in Southwest, Nigeria.

3. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. business education students on the extent they utilize e-mail services for research purposes in universities in Southwest, Nigeria.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Communities of Practice Theory

The Community of Practice Theory as a social learning was propounded by Lave and Wenger in 1998. Communities of Practice theory postulates

that a group of people, who share a concern or a passion for something they do, learn how to do it better as they interact regularly through social learning. Their coming together to learn and share ideas results in a Community of Practice (CoP). Three components are required in order to be in a CoP: (1) the domain, (2) the community, and (3) the practice.

In 1998, the theorists extended that CoP means ways of promoting innovation, developing social capital, facilitating, and spreading knowledge within a group, spreading existing tacit knowledge, etc. According to Lave, Communities of Practice can be defined, in part, as a process of social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest in a subject or area collaborate over an extended period of time, sharing ideas and strategies, determine solutions, and build innovations. Wenger gives a simple definition: "Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly."

Communities develop their practice through a variety of methods, including problem solving, requests for information, seeking the experiences of others, reusing assets, coordination and synergy, discussing developments, visiting other members, mapping knowledge, and identifying gaps. For the theorists, learning is central to human identity. A primary focus is learning as social participation – that is, an individual as an active participant in the practices of social communities, and in the construction of his or her identity through these communities. People continuously create their shared identity through engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities. The motivation to become a more central participant in a community of practice can provide a powerful incentive for learning. Students will have a desire to develop skills (e.g., literacy skills) if the people they admire have the same skills. That is, they want to join the "literacy club" and will work towards becoming a member.

This theory relates to this study as the Internet is a social community with available information and consultation of more knowledgeable persons for research guidance. The theory promotes the idea of researchers consulting knowledgeable educational professionals and sourcing information from a broader (electronic) community resulting in social interaction and

possible link to solving the researched problem. The PG business education students would learn more and write better research reports when they engage in Cop through the Internet resources especially, the social network technologies.

METHODS

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in all the Universities offering business education at postgraduate level in Southwestern Nigeria. These universities include University of Lagos, Akoka, Olabisi Onabanjo University, and Tai Solarin University of Education.

The population of this study consisted of 207 postgraduate students offering business education programs in these three public universities. No sample was drawn since the population size was considered manageable by the researcher. The instrument for data collection for this study was a structured questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Utilization of Internet-enabled Technology" (QUIT).

The instrument consisted of two sections- section A and B. Section A contained one item on demographic data of the respondents based on program type. Section B contained 35 items built in three clusters of B1 – B3. Each of the clusters was according to the specific purpose of the study. All items in cluster B1 – B3 are structured on a five- point scale of Always Utilized (AU, 5); Frequently Utilized (FU, 4); Occasionally Utilized (OU, 3); Rarely Utilized (RU, 2) and Not Utilized (NU, 1). The face validation was carried out to establish if the instrument measured what it was supposed to measure.

Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument, and an overall co-efficient of 0.87 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-Test of independence was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. The criterion mean score of 3.00 was used to adjudge the level of utilisation; any mean score below the criterion mean score of 3.00 means that such item was not utilized while mean scores between 3.00 benchmark and above means that such item was utilized.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the extent of utilization of Internet browsers for research purposes by PG business education students in universities in Southwest Nigeria?

Table 1: Respondents' Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings on the Utilization of Internet Browsers for Research Purposes by PG Business Education Students.

S/N	To what extent do you utilize the following Internet browsers for research	X	SD	Remark
1	Mozilla Firefox	4.25	1.18	Utilized
2	Opera web browser	3.54	1.14	Utilized
3	Internet Explorer	4.32	0.95	Utilized
4	Google Chrome	4.05	1.17	Utilized
5	Safari as a gateway	2.31	1.13	Not utilized
6	Crazy browser	2.28	1.11	Not utilized
7	Planet Web	2.40	1.16	Not utilized
8	Netscape	2.15	1.12	Not utilized
9	Konqueror	1.47	0.70	Not utilized
10	Lynx	2.29	1.17	Not utilized
11	AOL Explorer	2.29	1.16	Not utilized
12	Green Browser	1.49	0.75	Not utilized
13	Swiftfox	1.42	0.77	Not utilized
14	Lunascape	2.12	0.69	Not utilized
Cluster Mean		**2.59**		**Not utilized**

Data in Table 1 revealed that items 1, 2, 3, and 4 with their corresponding means of 4.25, 3.54, 4.32, and 4.05 were utilized because their mean scores were above 3.00 criterion mean. The remaining items had mean scores below 3.00 criterion mean benchmark, thus, they are not utilized. The cluster mean of 2.59 summarized that PG business education students did not utilize Internet browsers for research purposes. The standard deviation scores ranging from 0.69 – 1.18 means that the respondents' mean ratings were closely related.

Research Question 2: What is the extent of use of Internet search engines for research purposes by PG business education students in universities in Southwest Nigeria?

Table 2: Respondents' Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings on the Utilization of Internet Search Engines for Research Purposes by PG Business Education Students.

S/N	Item statements on Internet search engines	X	SD	Remark
15	Google search	4.57	0.85	Utilized
16	Yahoo search	3.26	1.02	Utilized
17	Bing search	3.11	1.08	Utilized
18	AOL search	2.87	0.87	Not utilized
19	Google maps	2.43	1.18	Not utilized
20	eHow	2.59	1.23	Not utilized
21	Skoolz org	2.42	1.22	Not utilized
22	Ask.com	3.06	1.05	Utilized
23	Webopedia	2.53	0.99	Not utilized
24	Lycos	1.90	1.12	Not utilized
Cluster Mean		**2.87**		**Not utilized**

Data in Table 2 revealed that items 15, 16, 17 and 22 with their corresponding means of 4.57, 3.26, 3.11 and 3.06 were utilized because their mean scores were above 3.00 criterion mean. The remaining items had mean scores below 3.00 criterion mean benchmark, thus, they are not utilized. The cluster mean of 2.87 summarized that PG business education students did not utilize Internet search engines for research purposes. The standard deviation scores ranging from 0.85 – 1.23 means that the respondents' mean ratings were closely related.

Research Question 3: What is the extent of utilization of e-mail services for research purposes by PG business education students in universities in Southwest Nigeria?

Data in Table 3 revealed that items 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33 and 34 with their corresponding mean scores of 3.62, 3.65, 3.60, 3.44, 3.10, 3.56, 3.74 and 3.33 were utilized because their mean scores were above 3.00 criterion mean. The remaining items had mean scores below 3.00 criterion mean benchmark, thus, they are not utilized. The cluster mean of 3.31 summarized that PG business education students utilize e-mail for research purposes. The standard deviation scores ranging from 0.83 – 1.47 means that the respondents' mean ratings were closely related.

Table 3: Respondents' Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings on the Utilization of e-mail Services for Research Purposes by PG Business Education Students.

S/N	Items statements on utilization of e-mail services	X	SD	Remark
25	Forward research topics to supervisor for approval	3.62	1.39	Utilized
26	Communicate to academic mentor or supervisor for modification of research topic	3.65	1.30	Utilized
27	Submit stages of research work to supervisor for periodic scrutiny and possible advise	3.60	1.35	Utilized
28	Obtain research information (e.g population of the study) from appropriate authority	2.55	0.83	Not utilized
29	Request for research information and receive feedback from other students for research	3.44	1.32	Utilized
30	Retrieve research information or corrected research work from supervisor through mail	3.10	1.47	Utilized
31	Send research instrument/questionnaire to supervisor	3.56	1.28	Utilized
32	Receive research instrument from experts for validation	3.74	1.31	Utilized
33	Administer/receive research instrument or questionnaire on/from respondents	3.33	1.30	Utilized
34	Communicate to friends through mail on issues that bother on research work	2.47	1.17	Not utilized
Cluster Mean		**3.31**		**Utilized**

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. business education students on the extent they utilize Internet browsers for research purposes in universities in Southwest Nigeria

Table 4: Independent Sample t-Test on the Significant Difference in the Mean Responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. Business Education Students on the Extent they Utilize Internet Browsers for Research Purposes.

Variables	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	p-value	α-value	Remark
Master	176	82.08	23.49	205	2.657	0.08	0.05	Not Significant
Ph.D.	31	77.76	24.17					

Table 5: Independent Sample t-Test on the Significant Difference in the Mean Responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. Business Education Students on the Extent they Utilize Search Engines for Research Purposes.

Variables	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	p-value	α-value	Remark
Master	176	82.62	24.57	205	2.034	0.063	0.05	Not Significant
Ph.D.	31	78.65	25.92					

Table 6: Independent Sample t-Test on the Significant Difference in the Mean Responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. Business Education Students on the Extent they Utilize E-mail Services for Research Purposes.

Variables	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	p-value	α-value	Remark
Master	176	82.89	26.73	205	0.795	0.02	0.05	Significant
Ph.D.	31	80.73	28.08					

The data in Table 4 that at 0.05 alpha level and 205 df, the p-value of 0.08 is greater than alpha level of 0.05 (df= 885; p>0.05), the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. business education students on the extent they utilize Internet browsers for research purposes in universities in Southwest Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. business education students on the extent they utilize Internet search engines for research purposes in universities in Southwest, Nigeria.

The data in Table 5 that at 0.05 alpha level and 205 df, the p-value of 0.063 is greater than alpha level of 0.05 (df= 205; p>0.05), the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. business education students on the extent they utilize Internet search engines for research purposes in universities in Southwest Nigeria

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. business education students on the extent they utilize e-mail services for research purposes in universities in Southwest, Nigeria

The data in Table 6 that at 0.05 alpha level and 205 df, the p-value of 0.02 is less than alpha level of 0.05 (df= 205; p>0.05), the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is significant difference in the mean responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. business education students on the extent they utilize e-mail services for research purposes in universities in Southwest Nigeria

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The finding revealed that PG business education students did not utilize Internet browsers for research purposes in universities in Southwest Nigeria. Amongst all Internet browsers, it was found that Mozilla Firefox®, Chrome®, Opera® mini browser, and Internet Explorer® are the most commonly utilized. Additionally, these applications may exist in mobile phones but the inability to apply them or get familiar with them might have served as a source of limitation toward the extent the students utilize the Internet browsers. This finding is contrary to the view of Dawson (2017) who stated that "No longer are we limited to surfing the 'net' on a 28.8kbps dial-

up modem but the ability in the application of varieties makes a better user.

The corresponding hypothesis revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. business education students on the extent they utilize Internet browsers for research purposes in universities in Southwest Nigeria. This is so because both categories of students may possess similar ability in the use of the browsers, or they may not differ in their familiarity to the available Internet browsers. The findings of the study are in consensus with Web Wise (2013) which stated that Browser availability depends on the operating system the computer or Internet-enabled device is using.

The finding revealed that PG business education students did not utilize Internet search engines for research purposes in universities in Southwest Nigeria. This implies that there was less utilization of the different varieties of available search engines for research by the students. This may be traced to the fact that these applications are not so much at the disposal of the students, hence the familiarity with the many available search engines are limited. This finding supports that of Gil (2016) who asserted that there are over 300 Internet search engines available for use, but it is not possible or necessary for students to know or utilize all of them.

The corresponding hypothesis revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. business education students on the extent they utilize Internet search engines for research purposes in universities in Southwest Nigeria. This can equally be likened to the fact that the few search engines utilized and the many not utilized between the students are because of availability and familiarity.

The finding revealed that PG business education students utilize e-mail services for research purposes in universities in Southwest Nigeria. This may imply that supervisors create time to access students' information via their e-mails because they possess ICT knowledge. This finding opposed the finding of Bamigboye and Ojo (2015) that e-mail services have always not been an effective way of communication between supervisors and their subordinates. This could be that most of these supervisors do not create enough time to go through research works sent to their e-mails.

The corresponding hypothesis revealed that there is significant difference in the mean responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. business education students on the extent they utilize e-mail services for research purposes in universities in Southwest Nigeria. This implies that the category of respondents does not think the same in terms of supervisors utilizing e-mail services for research purposes.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that PG business education students did not utilize Internet browsers and Internet search engines for research purposes while they utilized e-mail services for research purposes in universities in Southwest Nigeria. It was also concluded that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of M.Sc. and Ph.D. business education students on the extent they utilize Internet browsers and Internet search engines for research purposes in universities in Southwest Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Internet resources should be made adequately available in Universities in Nigeria, through collaborative efforts of the University authorities, government, and nongovernmental organizations.

2. Universities that offer business education programs should through collaborative effort with Network providers regularly organize seminar, workshops and training of business education students as regards the utilization of Internet resources for research.

3. Project supervisors should be admonished to apply the use of e-mail services for research purposes so as to facilitate students' project work.

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