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12-14-2012

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Library Philosophy and Practice
http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/
ISSN 1522-0222

Impact of the Internet on Research Effort of Academics at Abia State University, Uturu, (ABSU)

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Abstract

This paper is on the impact of the Internet on the research effort of academics at Abia State University Uturu. The Internet has become an invaluable tool for teaching, learning and research. The benefits are so enormous that there is no sphere of life without the Internet application. This is certainly true for tertiary institutions. Premised on this consciousness, the descriptive survey research method was adopted in carrying out the study, with the questionnaire as the sole instrument for data collection. The study was guided by six objectives. The findings of the study revealed that there is no felt need for the use of the Internet in research, Internet laboratories exist within and around the campus, and the non-accessibility of Internet laboratories to lecturers. Other findings are that the lecturers rarely go to cyber-cafe in town to seek information, the Internet has no impact on the research effort of lecturers, and the use of the Internet is inhibited by a lot of problems. The study recommends that the lecturers should develop personal interest in the use of the Internet, Internet laboratories on campus should be scheduled and made accessible to lecturers and they should avail themselves of available Internet services and train themselves on computer and Internet literacy. The study further recommends that lecturers should regularly go to cybercafés for ICT services and refresh newly acquired ICT knowledge, and the integration of ICT in teaching, learning and research. Furthermore all other inhibitors to the use of the Internet should be eliminated. The study contends that the strategic and holistic implementation of the recommendations would bring about the desired impact and contributions of the Internet to the quality of research of ABSU lecturers studied and those of them in other institutions with similar problematic features.

Introduction

The exponential growth of mobile computing and wireless networks and protocols have tremendously contributed to the stay of educational institutions at the forefront of the changing and challenging global village of this 21st century. It is based on this consciousness that Unagha (2006) has observed that "the Internet empowers people by giving their economic and intellectual life meaning". The Internet is indeed the unavoidable means of civic improvement if it is advantageously and conspicuously placed in the service of public education. The Internet has unarguably become an essential information processing tool, moreso that everybody is becoming aware of its imperatives and process, (Onwubiko, 2004). For as long as this 21st century information age is concerned, every

individual, organization, government or nation that wants to be reckoned with in stated goals and standard achievement cannot do without the Internet. The academic is not here, relegated to the background.

Anyanwu, Amaeshi, and Oparaku (2006), are of the view that "for research to be reliable, it must be based on reliable information. Scholars need quick and easy access to this information. In this context, the Internet has been useful to higher education institutions in the developed nations of the world. Academics in the developing counties should therefore explore this avenue." The Internet has become an invaluable tool for teaching, learning, and research. The accruing benefits are so enormous that there is no sphere of life without the Internet application. This is obvious for higher education institutions in the advanced countries, Unagha (2006) corroborates.

This points to the fact that the world of information has tremendously changed and at the same time demands that Nigerian academics should change with it. Nigerian academics therefore, need to prove and publicize the fact that they are living, studying, and proactive academics who could bring the weight and wealth of their research or scholarly effort to bear positively on the society. There is no iota of doubt that the Internet technology when gainfully applied to this effort would provide the avenue for the achievement of this desire, thus proving their mettle in the field of academics and show that they are academics who have adapted to the new information environment.

It has been variously acknowledged that the Internet, today, is the apex of information and communication technology, offering limitless access to all kinds of information and records, facilitating information generation for educational research and global sharing of ideas. The Internet has reduced the world to a global village, linking cultures and peoples and creating new vistas of knowledge in favour of academics, (Mwatawala, 2005; Sawyer and Williams, 2003). These writers have instructively observed that the use of the Internet by academics in developing countries is not without its problems. In most cases, computer laboratories that are Internet compliant are not provided within the campus, coupled with the skill required, high cost for personal purchase and link-ups, maintenance and power problem.

In view of the foregoing, it is therefore the intent of this paper to present an empirical study on the impact of the Internet on research effort of academics at the Abia State University, Uturu. Solutions, based on the findings of the study would be proffered to the identified problems.

Literature Review and Concept Clarification

Though the Internet has been variously conceptualized, Ozoamaka (2001) writes; "the Internet is a global network of computers communicating and sharing the maze of information available in its database.... It is that monumental force which is bringing the vast population of the earth's inhabitants into a small global village resulting in the shrinking of the earth into a smaller sphere." By way of illustration, we can imagine a room filled with many spiders, each spinning its own web. The webs are so interconnected that the spiders can travel freely within this maze. This is just the simplified allegorical view of the Internet.

Just as a telephone enables one to talk to someone on the other side of the earth who has a phone, the Internet enables a person to sit at his computer and exchange information with other computers and computer users any place in the world. Some refer to the Internet as “the information superhighway,” (Nwosu 2000; Ajileye, 1996). This points to the fact that as a road allows travel through different areas of a country, so also the Internet allows information to flow through many different interconnected computer networks. AS messages travel, each network that is reached contains information that assists in connecting the adjacent network. Probably, this influenced the views of Ibegwam (2002) who says that the Internet is one of the constituencies of cyberspace; "the world of computers and the society that gathers round it... all information available over the Internet. There are several windows (information networks) through which one gets information. The Internet is one of such windows."

The Internet is an ocean of information that services all people for all purposes. Every other computer connected to it is the client and serves only as a pathway. Thus, the Internet is a "global network operating with the client-server arrangement," (Ozoamaka, 2001). The communication features of the Internet are simply stupendous and overwhelming when used in making telephone calls, it gives a better quality sound. It lends its advantages to the fax

and mailing services at an unimaginable efficiency and speed of information flow. A tool that academics in Nigerian universities should embrace to add new impetus and dynamism to their scholarly efforts in learning, teaching, and research. Libraries and information centres get hooked up to it because of the ocean of bibliographic information it offers their clients. Generally, people around the globe read the latest national and international news by means of its vast reporting and information services for all purposes/

Corroborating the views of Afemann (1997), Oketunyi (2001), Woherem (1993) and Onu (2004) maintain that Internet is used extensively to obtain a variety of information in all realms of human endeavours. They identified the potential areas the Internet and information technology generally could be used to include education, agriculture, office automation, security, entertainment, policies, banking, construction, health, commerce, environmental management and a host of other areas.

Unfortunately however, Unagha (2006) observes that government though aware of the awesome potentials of the Internet, has not made any holistic effort to popularize it in the tertiary institutions. He asserts that in the International Telecommunication Union, (ITU), "Nigeria occupies one of the most unenviable positions to the Internet services provision in Africa." According to him, "though the number may have increased in recent times, it is comparatively insignificant," when viewed from the records presented in 1996 that out of the 800,000 African Internet users, Nigeria has the lowest usage, accounting for only 5,000 sites, about 1-3% of Africa's total. Unagha (2006) further posits that, "even in our academic community, we seem not to be appreciating the prominent role of the Internet in teaching, learning, and research. He describes and laments over the ugly situation thus:

In spite of the hope the Internet has given to effective information sourcing and location, management, and transfer, many Nigerian academics still depend greatly on the manual and printed sources for their research activities. These sources are often not up-to-date and are misleading. Many a Nigerian academic has not availed himself of the wonderful opportunities offered by the Internet technology. The implication being plagiarism and duplication of research findings because the Internet has not been adequately and fully utilized to know current works that are already on the Net.

Amaeshi, et al., (2006) have attributed this lacklustre attitude of the people, especially the academics to the potentials of the Internet to the non-availability of the Internet and computer laboratories within our campuses, poor telecommunication network, high cost of obtaining one by individuals, lack of the required skills and skilled manpower. Other problems include high cost of maintenance, epileptic power supply, and the non-automation and computerization of the public and academic libraries that would have been providing Internet-based services at affordable rates.

All the above are generalized observations, hence, the imperatives of the study on the impact of the Internet on research effort of academics in Abia State University, Uturu.

Objectives of the Study

To effectively carry out this research, the following objectives are formulated to guide the study.

- To find out if there is the felt need for the use of the Internet for research by lecturers at ABSU.
- To ascertain the availability of Internet and computer laboratories within the campus;
- To determine the sources of Internet-services to lecturers of ABSU for their research;
- To determine whether lecturers of ABSU are satisfied with the services from other Internet service providers;
- To ascertain and highlight the impact of the Internet utilization on the research effort of lecturers at ABSU;
- To identify and highlight the problems associated with the use of the Internet for research by ABSU lecturers; and,
- To make recommendations on ways of improving the use of the Internet in carrying out research by ABSU lecturers based on identified problems.

Scope and Methodology of the Study

Abia State University, Uturu (ABSU), academic programme is administered under six Faculties and a college. These are the Faculties of Agriculture, Business Administration, Biological and Physical Sciences, and Education. Others are the Faculties of Engineering and Environmental Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences, and the College of Medicine and Health Sciences. The Faculty of Agriculture of ABSU is located at Umuahia while the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, after their preliminary studies operates mainly at ABSUTH in Aba.

So the population of study is focused on the 452 lectures registered with the main University Library at Uturu. This does not include those registered with either the Umuahia Campus or ABSUTH Libraries. The distribution of the population according faculties as shown by ABSU library records is Humanities and Social Science 104, Education 108, Biological and Physical Sciences 84, Business Administration 78, and Engineering and Environment Studies 78.

To select the sample size for the study, the researcher adopted a 65% sample of 452 which is 294. This selection was guided by the positions of Nwana (1981), Babbie (1986) and Winner and Dominick (1987) in which they maintain that if a target or accessible population is in a few hundreds; a- 40% or more sample will suffice, if in many hundreds, a-20% sample will do; if in a few thousands, a-10% sample should be chosen; and if in several thousands, a-5% or less sample size should be considered.

Though stratified population, the simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting from each of the categories of the population from the faculties. The researcher adopted the sample size of 65% or 294 to give a fair representation to all members of the categories of the population.

The data on which the study was based were collected using the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 14 structured closed questions. Some of the questions elicited information on the bio-data of respondents, such as gender, age, qualifications and rank. These are contained in Section A of the questionnaire. Section B, structured based on the objectives of the study, sought information on the general issues of lecturers use of the Internet for research, the problems and solutions to identified problems.

In presenting and analyzing the data collected, frequencies of occurrence were established from the response to the questions and converted to percentages and presented in tables. Graphical illustrations were also used to further highlight some of the presentations made in tables.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Distribution and Return of Questionnaire

Table 1: Distribution and Return Rate

Distribution	Frequency	Percentage
Not Distributed	294	100
Not Returned	294	100
Not Valid	288	97.96
Not Void	6	2.04
Total	294	100

In the course of collecting data for this study, the researcher distributed 294 copies of questionnaire to the respondents. The entire 294 copies were collected back, showing a return rate of 100% as shown in Table 1 above. But on a cursory look at the copies, the researcher observed that 6(2.04%) copies of the questionnaire would not help in data presentation and analysis. They were therefore declared void, while the valid ones stood at 288(97.96%). These 288(97.96%) valid copies were used for data presentation and analysis. It is however instructive to note that the 6 (2.04%) voided copies did not affect data presentation on bio-data or background information on respondents.

Background Information on Respondents

Gender Distribution of Respondents

Table 2: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	212	72
Female	82	28
Total	294	100

Table 2 above shows that among the sampled academics, 212 (72%) are male lecturers, while 82(28%) are female lecturers. This could be alluded to the fact that ABSU has more male lecturers than the females. This also implies that more male lecturers are registered with ABSU Library than female lecturers.

Table 3: Distribution by Faculties

Faculties	Frequency	Percentage
Biological & Phy. Scs.	54	18.37
Business Administration	51	17.35
Education	70	23.80
Engineering & Envtal	51	17.35
Humanities & Soc. Scs.	68	23.13
Total	294	100

Let us recall that the sample size for this study was stratified and randomly selected at 65% of the population of 452 to arrive at 294. Now the faculty distribution shows that 54 (18.37%) of the respondents are from the Faculty of Biological and Physical Sciences; 51 (17.35%) from Business Administration Faculty, while Faculty of Education contributed 70(23.80%) of the sampled respondents. The Faculties of Engineering and Environmental Studies and Humanities and Social Sciences have their respective sampled size as 51(17.35%) and 68(23.13%).

Table 4: Academic Qualifications of Lectures

Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
Ph.Ds	84	28.57
Masters degree	134	45.58
Bachelors degree	76	25.85
Total	294	100

Table 4 above shows that there are 84 (28.57%) Ph.D degree holders of the sampled respondents; while those with the masters and bachelors degrees respectively stood at 134(45.58%) and 76(25.85%). The bachelors degree holders are the graduate assistants.

Table 5: Rank of Lecturers

Rank	Frequency	Percentage
Professors	12	4.08
Ass. Professors	18	6.12
Snr. Lecturers	44	14.97
Lecturers I	50	17.0
Lecturers II	61	20.75
Asst. Lecturers	33	11.22
Graduate Assts	76	25.85
Total	294	100

Amongst the sampled population of 294 respondents, 12(4.08%) are Professors, while 18(6.12%) are Associate Professors or readers. Table 5 above also shows that 44(14.97%) of the respondents indicated that they are Senior Lecturers, while the number of Lecturers I stood at 50(17.01%) of the sampled respondents of 294. Sixty-one (61) or 20.75% of the respondents indicated that they are of the Lecturer II cadre, as Assistant Lecturers and Graduate Assistants respectively make up 33(11.22%) and 76(25.85%) of the sampled respondents of 294. The fewness of members of the most senior categories or cadres of the sample is understandable and could be attributed to the fact that most of them are no longer seriously engaged in academic researches and studies. This same reason accounts for the great number of the lower cadre of academics being in their great numbers. They are engaged in some serious academic programmes for both researches for publication and acquisition of higher degrees for promotion to the higher levels.

Felt Need for Internet in Research

Information and communication technologies, (ICTs), according to Gambari and Chike-Okoli (2007), "offer innumerable benefits in enhancing the quality and quantity of teaching, learning, and research in tertiary

institutions". They however, have lamented that, "despite the prevalent nature of ICT and its general acceptability in virtually every aspect of human endeavours, they have not been widely integrated into teaching, learning, and research processes by academics in our tertiary institutions."

It is predicated on this consciousness that the study would want to know if this applies to the lecturers at Abia State University with the first objective which sets out “to determine/ascertain if there is a felt need for Internet use in research by lecturers of ABSU."

Table 6: Need for Internet Use in Research

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Fairly strong urge/feeling	66	22.92
Strong urge/feeling	45	15.63
Very strong urge/feeling	33	11.46
Normal urge/feeling	68	23.61
No urge/feeling at all	76	26.38
Total	288	100

Table 6 above clearly shows the feelings espoused by the respondents. Only 33 (11.46%) of the respondents indicated that they have the very strong urge or feeling for use of the Internet in their research effort. This was followed by another abysmal response of 45(15.63%) of the respondents who indicated that they have the strong urge or need for Internet use in research. The other responses, when aggregated show that the other respondents do not have a special or comparative urge, need, or feeling for use of the Internet in conducting their research. Their feelings could just be described as normal, and nothing extra¬ordinary. To this effect therefore, the second highest number of respondents, 66(22.92%) opined that they have a fairly strong urge/feeling for Internet use for research. Sixty-eight (68) or 23.61%) of them revealed that they have no special feeling for Internet use in their research activities. The greatest number, 76(26.38%) of the respondents indicated that they do not have any urge or attachment at all for Internet use in research. This in all its ramifications implies that the aggregate majority of the respondents do not have special attachment for the use of Internet in research. By implication therefore, where there is a felt need, there would be the strong desire for Internet use in research. This is further illustrated with the bar chart.

These respondents tend to forget that the era of the use of journals and other serials only for research is fast fading. Internet today supplies the most timely current; relevant and functional information for academic research globally.

Internet Laboratories within the Campus

Electronic communication systems, (ECSs) according to Olalude (2007) are believed to be "one of the most important aspects of modern societies that bring development, enhance academic activities and resource sharing among libraries and information centres. They should be provided within the reach of all, especially to enhance the process of teaching, learning, and research in tertiary institutions." But the proviso is, "where provided, are they utilized? It is this situation that has necessitated the intent of the study to ascertain whether Internet laboratories are established or found within the campus of ABSU and its environs."

Responding to this, the 288(100%) of the respondents opined that indeed there are Internet laboratories (communication centres and cyber cafes) within and outside the campus of ABSU. Majority of these centres are

owned by individuals. But today, the ABSU administration has commissioned the virtual library project, though not fully functional, Information Technology Centre, Institute for Computer Studies, Internet-complaint Media Resource Centres for Library and Information Science, French and Linguistics Departments.

Table 7. Ownership of Internet/Computer Laboratories

Ownership	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
ABSU	**110**	**38.19**
Private Individuals	**178**	**61.81**
Corporate Bodies	**-**	**-**
Federal & State Govts.		
Total	**288**	**100**

In all its true reflection, the data collected and presented in Table 7 revealed that 110 (38.19%) of the respondents indicated that ABSU administration has established some Internet laboratories and media resource centres as enumerated earlier. In the same token, majority, 178 (61,81%) of the respondents opined that there are communication centres and cybercafés within the environs of ABSU owned by private individuals. None was ever established, by corporate bodies like Zinox, British Council, NDDC, etc, nor the Federal and State governments. The indication here is that as the majority of the centres are privately owned, they are there for profit maximization which does not cater for the research interest of academics. They are mainly for processing rather than for research. On the other hand, the centres established and owned by ABSU are not fully functional and have limited hours of use. This also will not accommodate the most convenient time for academics to conduct their research as the university is non-residential for staff.

Accessibility to the Internet and Computer Laboratories

In the words of Unagha (2006), "the availability of Internet service and easy accessibility to it enhances the quality of research work and results of academics. It introduces new ideas and thought, and widens the horizon of lecturers as well as reduces the tendency for blind copying and plagiarism." It is predicated on this consciousness that the third objective of this study sought "to ascertain accessibility of Internet Laboratories to ABSU lectures.

Table 8: Access to Internet and Computer Laboratories.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Inaccessible	112	38.89
Fairly Inaccessible	98	34.03
Highly inaccessible	-	-
Fairly accessible	78	27.08
Accessible	-	-
Easily accessible	-	
Total	288	100

Here accessibility is made to be having access to Internet and Computer Laboratories exclusively for the purpose for which the information seeker wants to utilize the resources without hindrance. Unfortunately, the data collected and presented in Table 8 show that 112(38.89%) of the respondents indicated that the available Internet and Computer Laboratories are inaccessible, while 98(34.03%) opined that they are fairly inaccessible. In the opinion of 78(27.08%) of the respondents, these information centres are fairly accessible. The general situation of inaccessibility of these laboratories to lecturers of ABSU is understandable. "They are privately owned and basically for quick money making. Again, the ones established and owned by ABSU are not functioning at full capacity and as such are not fully utilized by lecturers. Going by Unagha's line of thought, the devastating effect of Internet inaccessibility to the lecturers would among others include poorly researched papers, being circumscribed to the use of obsolete information materials in the library, at times plagiarism as well as the publishing of research findings that would not be generally acceptable and acclaimed.

On availing themselves of the services of the privately owned Internet services and computer laboratories in the main town of Okigwe, 97(33.68%) of the respondents indicated that they avail themselves of the services of Internet Services Providers (ISPs) in town, while 191(66.32%) opined that they do not avail themselves of the services of ISPs. On their reasons for having the services of ISPs, these 97(33.68%) revealed that it was as a result of "emergency needs."

Table 9: Reasons for Non-use of Available ISPs.

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Inconvenient	36	18.85
Poor quality service	38	19.90
Poor facilities	42	21.99
Incompetent personnel	40	20.94
Inefficiency	35	18.32
Total	191 (66.32%)	100

To the other 191(66.32% = 100%) respondents, they have a lot of reasons for the non-use of ISPs. These include inconvenience, poor quality service, poor facilities, incompetent personnel, and inefficiency on the part of both the personnel and facilities. See Table 9 as presented..

It is instructive to note from Table 9 above and Fig 2. that the lecturers did not complain of high cost of service. The implication being that they would always go for the best service no matter whatever may be the cost. The other implication is that these lecturers value information and its price, but unfortunately no existing centres to provide this valued quality information service

Use of Cybercafés

Both Gambari and Chike-Okoli (2007) believe that the use of ICTs make academics to accomplish their everyday task; as Yusuf and Onasanya (2004) have earlier acknowledged that the Internet provides a wealth of learning resources, however access to it, at present; is very limited for many African educational institutions, and where they are available, academics rarely use them because of lack of computer literacy among them." To get to the root of this, objective four of the study sought to determine the rate of use of cybercafés in town by ABSU lecturers.

The data collected show that 165(57.14%) of the respondents indicated that they use or visit cybercafés on rare occasions. This implies that they are not used to going to cybercafés. Eighty-seven (87 = 30.36%) revealed that they use cybercafés occasionally. This equally means that they are not enthusiastic in gathering information for their research through the use of cybercafés. It is only 36(12.50%) of the respondents that indicated that they regularly use cybercafés in their scholarly works. Could this be attributed to Yusuf and Onasanya's (2004) "lack of computer and Internet literacy", or time factor; or the availability of other sources of information; or the provision of non-satisfactory service as those around the campus? Let us see Table 11.

Table 11. Rating of Cybercafé Services.

Rating of Services.	Frequency	Percentage
Satisfactory	41	14.28
Fairly satisfactory	77	26.79
Highly satisfactory	-	-
Not satisfactory	170	58.93
Total	288	100

Academics, through whatever source have always been in need of current, relevant, timely and up-to-date information for their teaching and research activities. Anything short of this, cannot be made do with. The fact is that cybercafés that are privately owned in town are for profit maximization. So any client or patron that needs quality educational-related service is often faced or met with disappointment. One should therefore not be surprised when the whooping number of respondents, 170 (58.93%) bluntly indicated that they are in no way satisfied with the services of cybercafés in town. Seventy-seven (77 = 26.79%) managed to reveal that they are fairly satisfied with the services. Being fairly satisfied equally means not satisfied. It is only 41(14.28%) of the respondents that stated categorically that they are satisfied with the services provided by cybercafés in town. All told, it is unfortunate that cybercafés around the campus are not easily accessible to lecturers because of their main business of word

processing and inconvenient time to the lectures. Those in town are equally not being helpful because of high profit maximization and not programmed for academic and research purpose. Under this unappealing situation, what then do you think would be the impact of the Internet on the research effort of scholars in ABSU?

Impact of the Internet on Research

It has been acknowledged, Gbenga (2006) that "information and communication technologies, (ICTs) offer innumerable benefits in enhancing the quality and quantity of learning, teaching, and research.... But they have not been integrated into the teaching and learning process in schools because they have not been given the desired priority. Lecturers too have not been provided with Internet-compliant notebooks and laptops for their personal study, research and teaching."

It is premised on this consciousness that objective five of this study sought to determine the impact of the Internet on the research effort of ABSU lecturers. Responding to the question on the sole use of the Internet for research, the respondents, 288(100%) of them opined that they have newer depended solely on the use of the Internet while conducting their researches. On the use of the other sources of information, 120(41.66%) revealed that they make use of print information sources in the library; why print, because the library is neither digital not virtual. Still undergoing the process, not fully functional. Ninety-eight (98 = 34.03%) opined that they make use of their personal collection. This implies that this category of respondents do subscribe to journals and purchase current information materials in their areas of research interest. Seventy (70 = 24.31%) indicated that they do augment their collection and information from the library by borrowing from colleagues. The important fact here is that the role and importance of the library in the research effort of ABSU lectures is not relegated to the background. .

Table 12. Other Sources Used for Research

Other sources	Frequency	Percentage
The library	120	41.66
Personal collection	98	34.03
Borrowing from colleagues	70	24.31
Total	288	100

Responding to the question on the felt impact of the Internet on the research effort of ABSU lecturers, the data presented in Table 13 show that the impact is very minimal as far as 103(35.72%) of the respondents are concerned. In the response of 82(28.57%) of the respondents, the impact is minimal; while for 61(21.43%) of these respondents, the impact is just normal like that from any other source. In the response of 21(7.14%) the impact could be described as comparative with other sources and at the same time superlative because of the maze of information that comes from the Internet, which as well is current, relevant and functional.

Table 13. Impact of the Internet on Research Effort

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Very minimal	103	35.72
Minimal	82	28.57
Just Normal	61	21.43
Comparative	21	7.14
Superlative	21	7.14
Total	288	100

In spite of the views expressed by the last group of respondents, 21(7.14%), the data presented in Table 13 clearly show that Internet usage by ABSU lecturers has no appreciable impact on their research effort. See Fig 3. for further illustration.

Problems of Internet Usage for Research

The future of the "production" of quality research by lecturers of ABSU, and indeed academics of ail tertiary institutions in Nigeria would be tremendously dependent on the use and application of the Internet. Through the Internet, researchers can have access to a variety of information available on computer networks and on-line services across the globe. Dulle (2002) posits that globalization is designed to build global infrastructure that are capable of linking people together into global communities where knowledge, experience, talents, ideas, inspirations, among others, can be shared for the edification of one another. Therefore Internet facilities should be provided and used freely by all, especially academics in their teaching and research, Onwubiko (2006) admonishes. This is the crux of objective six of this study; identification of the problems that have hindered the free usage of the Internet in the research effort of ABSU scholars.

Table 14. Identified Problems of Internet Usage for Research

Problems	Frequency	Percentage
Poor facilities	41	14.27
Erratic power supply	31	10.72
Cost for personal ownership	36	12.50
Incompetent operators	31	10.72
Maintenance problem	31	10.72
Inadequate training	36	12.50
Non-integration in teaching	36	12.50
Non-provision of laptops	46	16.07
Total	288	100

From the data presented above in Table 14, the identified problems to free Internet usage by ABSU lecturers have almost the same weight. One of such problems, according to 41(14.27%) of the respondents is poor facilities of ISPs available that do not help to satisfy the information needs of the lecturers. There are also the problems of erratic and epileptic power supply, incompetent operators, and the low level maintenance of the few available facilities identified by 31(10.72%) of the respondents. It is equally instructive to note that it is the thinking of 36(12.50%) of the respondents that high cost for personal ownership, inadequate or even complete lack of training of lecturers, and the non-integration of Internet usage in the teaching and learning process have adversely affected the free and effective use of Internet facilities by ABSU lecturers in conducting their researchers probably due to the high cost for personal ownership, the greatest number of the respondents. Forty-six 46(16.07%) opined that the non-provision of laptops by ABSU administration to lectures on subsidized basis and installment payment is hampering their perfection and utilization of the Internet in their research effort. Let me acknowledge here that the university is now about fulfilling this obligation in conjunction with Zinox Computers. It is worthy to bear in mind that the handling of these problems should not be in isolation of the other, but as a holistic issue that should be handled head-long. To the respondents, they have almost the same weight and demand a strategic holistic approach while handling them.

Findings and Implications

Inasmuch as the data have been presented and analyzed, it is pertinent at this juncture to single out and highlight each of the findings of the study and their implications to the provision, use, and application of the Internet by lecturers in their general academic activities and programmes.

The first objective of the study which dealt on the "determination of the lectures' felt need for Internet use in research/' has been achieved. This is so because, the study has unequivocally revealed that there is no felt need among the lecturers studied for the use of the Internet in their research. This revelation, in fact, is not a good omen in the 21st century academic environment. The implication is that the outcome of their research activities would not be widely acclaimed as they do not have the relevant and modern research methods applied. This also spells doom to the 21st century process of teaching and learning in the tertiary institutions as those who impact knowledge to the students openly shun the modern techniques of the acquisition and impartation of knowledge. Above all, by implication, these lecturers are cut off from the global village of information collection, dissemination, and knowledge sharing. With the global village of today, it is imperative that academics should widen their academic

horizon by being flexible, dynamics, and accept the modern day changes and challenges occasioned by the use of ICT in teaching, learning, and research.

The study, according to the demands of the second objective which sought to ascertain the existence of Internet laboratories on campus, has achieved this. The findings revealed that, "yes, there are Internet laboratories within and even around the campus of ABSU There are indeed, three strong competing variables to this. The existence of Internet laboratories is one, ownership is another, and accessibility is the third; which is the objective three of the study. Unfortunately, majority of the Internet laboratories or cyber cafes are individually owned. The implication being that they are available but not for academic purpose. Therefore, they do not, and are not contributing to the enhancement of the processes of teaching, learning, and research. They maximize profit at the detriment of academicism. It is therefore a clarion call that the digital media resource centres at ABSU should be made to accommodate and provide intoto the academic needs and programmes of both the lecturers and students.

The findings on objective three of the study revealed that the Internet laboratories or Cybercafés within and around the campus of ABSU are not accessible. This is due to the fact that they are always flooded by students who are processing one paper or the other at the detriment of the academic information needs of the lecturers. Equally of note is not scheduling the use of the media resource centres in ABSU by lecturers from the various faculties. Inasmuch as the lecturers have indicated that they do not have a strongly felt need for Internet use in their research; they are also saying that the ones available are not accessible. The implication here is that had it been that these lecturers are easily and adequately exposed to the dynamics of the application of ICTs in their studies, they would definitely appreciate the worth of their effort. With this revelation all frantic and positive effort should be made to expose academics at ABSU and indeed other tertiary institutions to the global world of ICT.

The findings on objective four indeed tallied with that on objective one. This has been achieved because the study revealed that the respondents rarely use the cybercafés in town. As academics, the sole dependent on print information materials in this 21st century information age is antithetical to the production of world acclaimed research results. With the relegation of the use of ICT by ABSU lecturers in their academic activities and programmes, they will even feel reluctant to embrace the integration of ICT into the process of teaching, learning, and research. It is therefore imperative for the institution to evolve an in-house human capital development programme on ICT phonies in our daily lives to enable academics embrace the ‘fun fare' in the world of ICT.

A corollary to the above objective four is the fact that Internet use has got no impact on the research effort of the lecturers studied as revealed by the findings on objective five. With the Internet information is sourced without the hindrance of only physical barriers. It means that Net groups or discussion groups that would have helped them acquire some new ideas and knowledge are not being accessed, neither are some other information installed in the Internet surfed by these lecturers. If there had been a national policy on educational information technology (NPEIT) that would compel all academic to embrace ICT in teaching with institutional sponsored note books and power point projectors we would have today been talking about the multiplication of indigenous ICT gadgets.

Generally, objective six of the study did reveal that there are inhibitors to the use of the Internet by the lecturers studied. This implies that even if they embrace the use 'of ICT, some where along the line they would be frustrated. These problems include poor facilities, erratic power supply, high cost for personal ownership and incompetent operators or ISPs. The rest are inefficiency and cost of maintenance, lack of personal computers or laptops, inadequate training programme, and the non-integration of ICT into teaching and research. The amelioration of these problems needs the adoption of a holistic strategic approach if academics must be wholly made to discover and embrace the fun fare in the application of ICT in their daily academic programmes and activities. The adoption of this holistic strategic approach to Internet use in research in all its ramifications, is in line with the opinion of Oyedun (2003) "that in a world that has become more virtually-oriented, our education and information infrastructure must develop techniques to incorporate and embrace the challenges of these changes

Conclusion

The Internet is an essential ingredient for improving the research effort of academics and indeed their level of intellectual development in the global village of knowledge management. The application of the Internet in the academic programmes and activities of academics will tremendously widen their horizon in the new vista that ICT in general has introduced into all spheres of human endeavours. The findings of this study have revealed that the lecturers studied, unfortunately have a high concentration of use of print information materials while conducting their research. Unfortunately also, the media resource centres within the campus are not accessed by the lecturers. We should indeed, not relegate to the background the fact that the application of ICT in general, and the Internet in particular to the research effort of academics will bring increased access to a variety of information sources, widen their horizon in their various areas of study, and enhance effective exchange of ideas among academics. It is premised on this consciousness that the following recommendations are presented.

Recommendations

Guided by the objectives and findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

In line with the findings on objective one of the study, that there is no felt need among the lecturers studied in the use of the Internet in research, the study recommends that the lecturers themselves should develop personal interest and appreciation on the great contributions of the Internet to the advancement of education and knowledge management. By so doing, they would now take it upon themselves to acquire their personal notebooks or laptops and become computer and Internet literate.

On the findings on objective two, the study is of the view that the Internet laboratories within the campus that is those established by the Institution should be made accessible to lecturers. This could be achieved by the managers of these laboratories through the scheduling of their programmes and activities for each School (Faculty) of the Institution. The managers should also go a step further by organizing seminars, lectures, and workshops on ICTs for lecturers. This will create room for personal contact between the managers and lectures on one hand, and on the other, with the gadgets. This contact will make the lectures appreciate closely the phonies and rich fares in the application of ICTs in their academic programmes and activities.

With the above achieved, the issue of accessibility as revealed by the findings on the third objective would be a foregone conclusion. The lecturers themselves would now be itching to avail themselves of any available Internet service and even train themselves further to achieve perfection.

On the usage of cybercafés in town as sought by the fourth objective, ABSU lecturers studied, having embraced the fineness of ICTs in their studies should on their own also be regular at cybercafés for services, enquiries, and even refreshing on their newly acquired ICT knowledge. There is happiness in new accomplishment. These lecturers will have that sense of satisfaction and fulfillment for the new knowledge acquired on ICT and the Internet.

For the application of the Internet in their research effort to now achieve the desired impact as demanded by objective five, the ABSU authorities should integrate ICT use in the teaching and learning process. This could be achieved through the Institution's sponsorship on the purchase of laptops and power point projectors and monitors for the lecturers to use in demonstrating their lectures before the students. And at their leisure, with the new ICT literacy acquired, they could be browsing or surfing the Net to enrich their lecture notes for students. By so doing, they have started improving their teaching methods and increase their prowess in electronic information search techniques for information that would enhance the quality of their research work.

It is indeed, the contention of this study that if the afore-made recommendations are considered and implemented in quite a strategic holistic manner that the desired contributions of the Internet to the quality of the research of the studied lecturers at ABSU and else-where would be a forgone achievement. The implementation of these recommendations is imperative because the world has gone computer, and the Internet is the in-thing in today's

teaching, learning, and research. With it academics in Nigerian tertiary institutions can be sure of accessing information resources in Nigeria from all over the world without entering any physical library.

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