Internet Use by Academic Staff of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

With the evolution of media, Information and Communication Technology globally, Internet has been a major tool in academic activities. To this end, this study was carried out to evaluate the Internet use by academic staff of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria. A total number of 100 copies of structured questionnaire were administered out of which 81 were retrieved. Data generated from the respondents were analyzed using frequency count and percentile. The analysis of the data revealed a positive indication on the usage of Internet by the academic staff of the Institution. It was however, observed that most of the lecturers do not have access to Internet facilities in their respective offices as well as inadequate training on Internet search knowledge. The paper recommends among other things, the installation of Internet services in the Institution to connect offices of academic staff, improve the connectivity power of Internet services within the perimeter of the Polytechnic and Management should improve on the training of staff on Internet search knowledge.

Introduction

The evolution of network information has boosted the overall access to information worldwide. Internet network therefore has become the powerful instrument for an instant access to information. Justifying the foregoing, Kumar and Kaur (2005) admit that as a result of emergence of internet network, information is now just at a finger touch and it has become the most extensively used information source that adequately empowers the scholars and researchers to successfully carryout their academic and social services.

The emergence of internet as a veritable instrument in educational development has equally compelled the stakeholders in education to incorporate internet as a major source of information. This has greatly assisted academics in modernizing the process of teaching, learning and research.

This idea motivated Kumar and Kaur (2005) to opine that the advent of internet has increased the following phenomena in higher educational systems: Learner is not dependent on teacher for interaction; Teachers can give lectures virtually to unknown learners and the effect of his work has no bound.

Similarly, academic staff of faculties use internet in different ways for educational purposes, such as web-based education, smart classroom application and opportunity to participate academically in cooperative learning, which actually is the major focus of internet facility that is currently in vogue. Individual learner can learn at the same pace globally. Internet is used for different purposes ranging from e-trade to e-learning etc. The internet finds its usage in almost every field of human endeavour, which includes higher institutions of learning such as universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. The use of internet and web technology is now a direct medium of enhancing academic activities in Nigerian higher Institutions and business fora.

Rufus Giwa Polytechnic is an institution located in the South-West of Nigeria, it has a good capacity of academic staff in various fields such as engineering, sciences, environmental, business, communications and applied Sciences. Presently, the Institution is giving entrepreneurial skill acquisition programmes a premier concern.

The establishment of e-library and ICT Centre has made it a driven force for the school populace to get acquainted with the internet. Previous studies have explored the use of internet in different areas, little was known about the use of internet by academic staff of Rufus Giwa Polytechnics, Owo. This study therefore seeks to investigate the use of internet by the academic staff of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study generally aims to survey the internet use by the academic staff of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria, and while doing this, it will go further to:

(a) Find out the purpose of using the internet by academic staff of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo;
(b) Investigate the methods used in acquiring internet search skills;
(c) Determine how frequent the academic staff access the internet;
(d) Determine the experience of respondents in the use of internet resources;
(e) Identify the channels used in surfing the internet;
(f) Investigate the benefits derived by the academic staff from the use of internet; and
(g) Find out the challenges encountered in their use of internet.

Literature Review

A review of literature on the use of internet reveals that a lot have been written on the subject. Unfortunately, studies on the use of internet by academic staff (lecturers) of the Polytechnic generally appear to be scanty. Jagboro (2004) observed that internet appearance in higher education was used as a tool for researchers to communicate and share project data.

Fasae and Aladeniyi (2010) admit that internet emerged as educational tool by being a good source of getting the right information and solution to problems in an academic environment. Akporido (2005) acknowledged that the effect of Internet pervades every aspect of life, stating further that it has enabled information to be available in all areas of human endeavour. Bavakutty and Salih (1999) noted that students, research scholars and teachers use the internet for the purpose of study, research and teaching activities. A study conducted by Ogunrewo and Odusina (2010) reveals that ease of downloading of related information/ materials for teaching and research was given the highest priority as the reason for surfing the internet with an index of 3.88% by the academic staff members.

On the methods used in acquiring information, internet search knowledge and skills, Igun (2005) reported in her study that most of the respondents surveyed, acquired their internet use skills either online or through colleagues and friends. The researcher also went ahead to affirm that only 4 (9%) learned their internet skills through university courses.

Laite (2000) surveyed 406 graduates and undergraduates students from Shippensburg University, the result shows that the most used internet service was e-mail. This corroborates Kumar and Kaur (2005) where e-mail is the most popular internet services used by the respondents in their study.

Ogunrewo and Odusina (2010) identified the use of Personal Computer as the mostly used means through which the academic staff of university surf the net. The same work revealed that internet had contributed immensely to high level of performance of academic staff members of Joseph Ayo Babalola University. Lund (1998) acknowledge that academic researchers and students can obtain information which previously would have required trips to specialist libraries or await for several hours or days, whilst materials were brought up.

However, Ugah and Okafor (2008) identified some problems in their studies. Some of the problems are: access speed, difficulty in finding information and trouble loading information pages. Among these problems, slow access speed recorded the highest number of respondents. Ajuwon (2006) also observed some problems respondents encountered while using the internet. According to the researcher, about two-thirds (62%) of the respondents encountered problems searching the internet, while 38.4% did not. Of all the problems listed in the study, slow internet connection was a problem faced by 44% of the respondents, followed by lack of information searching skills (26%). Other challenges are information over-load and lack of skills to efficiently obtain needed information.

On a natural setting, majority of the academic staff in the Polytechnic have begun to familiarize with the current trend and have as a result incorporate the ideology of internet surfing into their daily routine. More importantly, appointment to some positions of authority are hinged on the level of ICT compliance of the applicants.

Research Methodology

The academic staff of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria, are the target population for this study. They numbered up to four hundred (400). The study employs a descriptive survey research design. A total of one hundred (100) structured questionnaires were administered, which represent 25% of the total population. Eighty-one (81) adequately attended to were retrieved from the respondents. The information gathered from the respondents were analyzed using frequency count and percentile.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Table I: Gender of the Respondents

ITEM	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Male	58	71.6
Female	16	19.8
Unspecified	7	8.6
Total	81	100

Table I reveals that male academic staff are in the majority number of surveyed respondents, with 58 (71.6%) respondents while female recorded a total of 16 which represents 19.8% and 7 (8.6%) respondents are undecided.

Table II: Distribution of Respondents on the basis of Department

ITEM	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Business Administration & Management	4	4.9
Accountancy	2	2.5
Marketing	3	3.7
Banking & Finance	2	2.5
Agricultural Technology	7	8.6
Electrical & Electronics Engineering Technology	2	2.5
Civil Engineering Technology	1	1.2
Mechanical Engineering Technology	2	2.5
Maths & Statistics	2	2.5
Computer Science	1	1.2
Mass Communication	1	1.2
General Studies	5	6.2
Food Science Technology	4	4.9
Nutrition &Dietetics	3	3.7
Science Laboratory Technology	7	8.6
Hotel Management Technology	5	6.2
Urban & Regional Planning	1	1.2
Quantity Surveying	2	2.5
Surveying & Geo-Informatics	3	3.7
Estate Management	2	2.5
UNSPECIFIED	18	22.2
Total	81	100

Table II shows that academic staff in the departments of Agricultural Science and Science Laboratory Technology are of the majority number of respondents with (8.6%) each, while the departments of Civil Engineering Technology, Computer Science and Urban and Regional Planning have the lowest 1 (1.2%) each.

Table III: Academic Status of the Respondents

ITEM	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Chief Lecturer	6	7.4
Principal Lecturer	6	7.4
Senior Lecturer	10	12.3
Lecturer I	5	6.2
Lecturer II	14	17.3
Lecturer III	19	23.5
Asst Lecturer	6	7.4
Technical Instructor	10	12.3
Unspecified	5	6.2
Total	81	100

Table III indicates that academic status in the category of Lecturer III constituted the highest number of respondents with 19 (23.5%). The table also reveals that Lecturer I has the lowest number of respondents with 5 (6.2%). The number of unspecified respondents was 5 (6.2%).

Table IV: Accessibility of the Respondents to Internet Facilities

ITEM	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
No	7	8.6
Yes	71	87.7
Unspecified	3	3.7
Total	81	100

Table IV shows that 71 (87.7%) respondents indicated that they have access to internet facilities, while 7 (8.6%) respondents did not have access to internet. It can be inferred that majority of the respondents are familiar with internet facilities.

Table V: Proficiency of the Respondents on the Use of Internet

ITEM	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
No	1	1.2
Yes	77	95.1
Unspecified	3	3.7
Total	81	100

Table V reveals that majority of the respondents 77 (95.1%) can search for information in the internet on their own, while only 1 (1.2%) respondents do not know how to search for information through internet. This affirmed the accessibility of respondents to internet facilities.

Table VI: Internet Use Experience

ITEM	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
1 – 2 years	15	18.5
3 – 5 years	45	55.6
6 – 10 years	11	13.6
Above 10 years	7	3.7
Unspecified	3	3.7
Total	81	100

Table VI indicated that majority of the respondents 60 (74.1%) started using internet between 1 – 5 years, while few 7 (8.6%) respondents have been using internet within 10 years and above.

Table VII: Purposes for which Respondents use Internet

S/N	ITEM	Strongly agreed		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly disagreed		unspecified	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
i.	To download related information materials for teaching and research	42	51.9	32	39.5	3	3.7	0	0	4	4.9
ii.	To exchange study materials/ ideas with colleagues	31	38.3	48	59.3	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.2
iii.	For sending and receiving materials/ information										
iv.	To send and receive e-mails	56	69.1	23	28.4	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.2
v.	To access database not found in the library	35	43.2	19	23.5	26	32.1	0	0	1	1.2
vi.	For entertainment purpose	51	63.0	15	18.5	14	17.3	0	0	1.	1.2
vii.	To read news online	33	40.7	14	17.3	33	40.7	0	0	1	1.2
viii.	For social content i.e. face book, chat etc whatsapp, YouTube etc.	47	58.0	13	16.0	20	24.7	0	0	1	1.2

The table reveals that respondents who use internet for e-mails ranked highest with a total of 56 (69.1%) strongly agreed, follow by those who use it for entertainment purposes with a total of 51 (63.0%). Those who use it to read news online ranked lowest with 33 (40.7%) respondents strongly agreed to it.

Table VIII: The Type of Web Browser Respondents' Use

ITEM	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Internet explorer	40	49.8
Netscape	5	6.2
Opera mini	8	9.9
Google chrome	15	18.5
Mozilla	10	12.3
Unspecified	3	3.7
Total	81	100

Table VIII indicates that most respondents use internet explorer as web browser. This recorded a total of 40 (49.4%). This is followed by google chrome with a total of 15 (18.5%). Mozilla recorded15 (18.5%). Netscape recorded the lowest with a total of 5 (6.2%).

Table IX: Regularity of Internet Use by Respondents

ITEM	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Everyday	43	53.1
Once a week	22	27.2
Thrice in a week	9	11.1
Others	7	8.6
Total	81	100

Table IX shows 43 (53.1%) respondents that used internet on daily basis ranked the highest. This is followed by respondents that use internet once in a week with 22 (27.2%). The study therefore, reveals that academic staffs in the Rufus Giwa Polytechnic mostly use Internet every day.

Table X: Channels Used by Respondents to Surf Internet

S/N	ITEM	Strongly agreed		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly disagreed		unspecified	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
i.	Public cyber café	49	60.5	13	16.0	12	14.8	4	4.9	3	3.7
ii.	Polytechnic ICT Centre	49	60.5	14	17.3	9	11.1	9	11.1	-	-
iii.	Modem via personal laptop	68	84.0	2	2.5	5	6.2	5	6.2	1	1.2
iv.	Office Internet Connection	3	3.7	5	6.2	50	61.7	21	25.9	2	2.5
v.	Mobile phone	49	60.5	27	33.3	1	1.2	4	4.9	-	-

Data presented in table X reveals that modem via personal laptop is the major means used by the academic staff with 68 (84.0%) respondents indicating strongly agreed and 2 (2.5%) agreed. This is followed by mobile phone with 49 (60.5%) respondents strongly agreed and 27 (33.3%) agreed.

However, the table also indicates that (3.7%) respondents strongly agreed that they used office internet connection, while 5 (6.5%) respondents agreed to this. This may be as a result of non availability of internet facilities in most of the offices of the academic staff in the institution.

Table XI: Method of acquiring Internet Search Knowledge and Skills

S/N	ITEM	Strongly agreed		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly disagreed		unspecified	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq	%	Freq.	%
i.	Self thought	43	53.1	26	32.1	6	7.4	2	2.5	4	4.9
ii.	Through friends	20	24.7	41	50.6	5	6.2	12	14.8	3.	3.7
iii.	Through computer tutor	21	25.9	37	45.7	7	8.6	15	18.5	1	1.2
iv.	Through workshop/ seminar	11	13.6	37	45.7	12	14.8	20	24.7	1	1.2
v.	Through computer training program	21	25.9	37	45.7	7	8.6	15	18.5	1	1.2
vi.	The trial and error basis	8	9.9	41	50.6	5	6.2	26	32.1	1	1.2

Table 11 indicates that most respondents acquired internet search knowledge and skills through self thought, 43 (53.1%) respondents strongly agreed to it, while 26 (32.1%) respondents agreed to the method, computer tutor and computer training programmes ranked second as each of the methods has 21 (25.9%) respondents strongly agreed and 37 (45.7%) agreed to both methods. Trial and error basis ranked lowest amongst the methods through which respondents acquired their internet search knowledge with 8 (9.9%) respondents strongly agreed and 41 (50.6%) agreed to the methods.

Table XII: Problems Respondents Encounter While Using Internet

S/N	ITEM	Strongly agreed		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly disagreed		unspecified	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
i.	Inability to access some websites	41	50.6	38	46.9	0	0	0	0	2	2.5
ii.	Irregular power supply	18	22.2	62	76.5	0	0	0	0	1	1.2
iii.	High cost of Internet services	12	14.8	40	49.4	28	34.6	0	0	1.	1.2
iv.	Difficulties in finding relevant information	53	65.4	24	29.6	3	3.7	0	0	1	1.2
v.	Internet connectivity always off	33	40.7	18	22.2	29	35.8	0	0	1	1.2
vi.	Slow Internet connection	43	53.1	31	38.3	2	2.5	0	0	5	6.2

Table XII reveals that respondents experience series of problems while using the internet. Difficulties in finding relevant information ranked the highest with a total of 53 (65.4%) respondents strongly agreed, 24 (29.6%) agreed. Other problems with high response rate include slow internet connection with 43 (53.1%) respondents strongly agreed, 31 (38.3%) respondents agreed to this. Inability to access some websites, 41 (50.6%) respondents strongly agreed, internet connectivity is always off, 33 (40.7%) respondents strongly agreed while 18 (22.2%) respondents agreed.

Findings and Conclusion

Based on the findings and their interpretations in this study, it is concluded that academic staff in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria are quite familiar with internet use.

The findings revealed that academic staff do not have access to internet in their respective offices as just 3.7% respondents indicated that they surf internet through office internet connection.

It was revealed that there was no adequate workshop/ seminar on internet search knowledge for academic staff in the institution. This is evident as only 13.6% of the respondents acquired their skill through seminar/ workshop and 9.9% through trial and error basis.

It was discovered that internet connectivity in the institution is always slow and there are difficulties in accessing some website and finding relevant information.

The presence and availability of internet usage cannot be overemphasized. It should therefore be a thing of necessity which has to be fashioned into corporate existence of every faculty of the Institution.

Recommendations

Based on the findings obtained in this study, it is recommended that:

i. Authorities of the Institution should install internet services that will connect all the offices of the academic staff. This will afford all academic staff irrespective of their status under access to internet facilities.
ii. Management of the Institution should as a matter of policy on regular basis organize workshop/ seminar for academic staff especially newly recruited one on internet knowledge and skill.
iii. As a result of slow internet connectivity and difficulties in accessing website and findings relevant information, academic staff should be trained on how they can effectively use internet. The type of internet services install in the Institution must have the capacity to cover the entire institution premises with strong connectivity power.

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