

Impact of Internet Related Challenges on Final Year Undergraduate Students in Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto

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ABSTRACT

Undergraduate research is a discussion topic at academic administrators' conferences these days for a number of excellent reasons, often lost in these discussions, are the challenges faced as they conduct their research projects. These challenges are mostly linked with poor internet services, following this, the study examines the impact of internet related challenges on final year undergraduate students in Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto. The research Utilized a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative method of data collection: 200 hundred questionnaires were distributed to final year students in 10 departments out of which 192 were retrieved.

An in-depth interview with 10 persons; 4 research project coordinators, 4 library staff and 2 MIS staff was also conducted for a deeper insight of these challenges. The study observed that, slow internet service in UDUS pose a great challenge to undergraduate final year student's as they conduct their research projects. Finally, the study recommends the improvement of internet services in UDUS

Keywords: Internet, challenges, Undergraduate, students.

BACKGROUND

Research project related challenges in our institution of higher learning and a university in particular has drawn the attention of several researchers. This is because project writing is a major pre-requisite for the award of degrees in different field of studies (Ilo and Iffier, 2010) and therefore, undergraduates are required to carry out a research project in their final year in the university. Research project writing involves a student or group of students carrying out a study on a topic of interest under the guidance of an academic adviser (supervisor).

When the project is completed, it is evaluated by the quality of the work submitted within the stipulated time (Fatoki, 2004). However, even though, undergraduate research is a discussion topic at academic administrators' conferences these days for a number of excellent reasons, often lost in these discussions, are the challenges faced as they conduct their research projects. While the research project challenges can be blamed on the declining standard of education in general, specifically, Universities especially in developing nations lack available research facilities in terms of quality libraries, laboratories, information and communication technology (ICT) facilities, staff etc. (Zakri, 2006 cited in Mutula, 2009).

One of the failures in the African continent is the failure of many nations in Africa to accord research the priority it deserves. Research is strategically important in universities, as it is necessary to facilitate good quality undergraduate and graduate training, help universities to motivate and empower its researchers and

promote the training of future researchers. Unfortunately, many African Universities have lost the capacity for doing sustainable research (Oyewole, 2009) Research in Africa generally, is facing a lot of challenges. Oyewole (2009) argued that Most research in Africa is carried out in the tertiary institutions set-ups. These research institutions are limited by poor infrastructures, ill-motivated staff, incessant and inadequate power and water supply, out-dated equipment, poor funding and poor connectivity to the rest of the world. The last problem of poor connectivity is due to the poor state of telecommunication infrastructure in the continent.

Over the years, the quality of the research projects submitted in universities across the country has declined considerably resulting in the controversy regarding the desirability of making the production of a research project optional (Abdulrahman,2012). While some of the reasons for the declining quality of research projects can be traced to the arguably declining standard of education in general, and the more specific problem has to do with inadequate materials, a great deal of the problems has to do with inadequate preparation on the part of students. In line with this, Mbofong (2003) asserted that, the quality of the research project is to a large extent dependent on the quality, quantity and relevance of resources consulted and cited.

Undergraduate research is a valued curricular activity that has involved increasing numbers of students and faculties in recent years (Webber, Nelson, & BrckaLorenz, 2012). As one of the Nigeria's higher institutions, Usmanu Danfodiyo University (UDUS) is engaged in the same practices to develop the research skills and competences of both undergraduate and graduate students. But in the course of its implementation there are many challenges. When we look at the practice of student research at UDUS in terms of quality, and their achievement, one can see that there are a number of problems. These problems which could be student related, supervisor-related and institutional-related have cause challenges among final year undergraduate students in the course of conducting research projects in UDUS. Therefore, it is based on this background that the

LITERATURE

Uses of Internet by Students

The Internet serves as a useful tool in support of the various educational activities that ranged from research to teaching. Anderson and Reed (1998) noted that the Internet technology and computers has made it possible for students to be active learners and allowed instructors to be facilitators. Jackson, et al. (2011) remarked that the Internet will level the educational playing field due to its availability to everyone, everywhere, and any time, irrespective of gender, race/ethnicity, income or other socio-demographic characteristics. Thus, the Internet is a vital tool that will propel University education to greater heights as the world move further into the knowledge-based economy.

Universities worldwide now invest a lot on internet access because it reduces the time between the production and utilization of knowledge; improves co-operation and exchange of ideas with fellow researchers in other institutions, regions or countries, furthers the sharing of information; and promotes multidisciplinary research. Bon (2007) states that the Internet can substitute for expensive hardcopy libraries, by availing students' access to scholarly information resources. Today, survival in academics without the Internet is hardly imaginable. The Internet has found useful applications in online data repositories, library catalogues, journals, news services, student and financial administration systems, online supported or solely online conducted teaching, as well as in digital communication with fellow students and lecturers.

The internet is very useful to university students and staff in Nigeria because it enables them to have access to timely, accurate and relevant information that cannot be obtained from library shelves. Chan and Fu (2009) cited in Bankole & Oludayo (2012) noted that Internet searching helps university students to boost their intellectual development and job preparation. Due to the endless nature of information resources on the Internet, libraries are increasingly investing in provision of Internet services and resources to enable their clients have better access to the information.

However, Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) cited in Bola & Ogunlade (2012) asserted that resources may be available in the library and sometimes there may be identified bibliography relevant to one's area of interest, but the user may not be able to locate the material. The students revealed in the interview that the slow Internet connections increased the time spent on Internet and invariably the cost of usage is increased. That the non provision of free Internet facilities for them in the University unlike their counterparts in some neighborhood Universities that enjoy their intuitional Internet free of charge is a very serious impediment. The Internet provides several opportunities for the academia in research, lecturing or teaching. It is a mechanism for information dissemination and a medium for collaborative interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic limitation of space (Leiner, et al. 2002). Information is created on the Internet which ranges from simple e-mail messages to sophisticate 'documents' (sites) incorporating sounds, images and words. Massaquoi (2006) also confirms that 84 percent of journal articles and 97 percent of completed research works are now available on the Internet. He adds that making use of the Internet helps in conducting research, publishing articles and exchanging ideas. Similarly, Yusuf (2006) says that the Internet provides wide range opportunities for easy access of relevant and current literature, wide range of instruments, online opportunity for validation of instrument, simulation of an on-going research, and so on.

Theoretical Framework

To understand internet related challenges among final year undergraduate students in UDUS, there is the need for a theoretical interpretation of the phenomenon. Support and Challenge theory is applied to this study, because it is the only student development theory that best explains the causes of the challenges faced by students in the course of their study. Therefore, support and challenge theory was adopted and adapted in this study. Support and Challenge was propounded by Stanford in 1962 to explain student's growth and development. The theory explains that people grow best where they continuously experience an appropriate balance of support and challenges.

Environments that are weighted too heavily in the direction of challenge without adequate support are toxic; they promote defensiveness and anxiety. Those weighted too heavily toward support without adequate challenges are ultimately boring; they promote lifelessness, both kinds of imbalance lead to withdrawal. But balance of support and challenge leads to vital engagement. In order for a life-like pattern to flourish, it requires challenge and support.

Challenge sets a process in motion- it provides the motivation or energy for a respond. Support helps to ensure successful adaptation. Support alone creates laziness in humans, challenge alone can be harmful. Together, challenge and support can create a myriad of adventurous growth experiences. Therefore, the challenges faced by undergraduate final year student is a basic requirement for growth and development in terms of quality of the research project, but this can only happen when there is sufficient support. There must be a balance between the challenges they face and the support they get. The challenges final year students face in the course of research project must have a sufficient amount of support.

Relevance of the theory

Support and Challenge theory is relevant in the explanation of the challenges faced by students in the course of learning and development as well as provides us with a remedy as to how to manage these challenges. Undergraduate students face challenges in the course of conducting their research projects; challenges caused by the institution e.g. poor or lack of internet facilities, lack of or obsolete materials in the library etc or student related challenges like financial constrain, poor time management, laziness and lack of commitment to research work etc, supervisor related challenges e.g. few meetings with the supervisor, absence of supervisor without leaving co-supervisor etc.

According to the theory these challenges create a toxic environment which will definitely affect the quality of student's research work. There should be support by the institution in general and supervisors in

particular. Support in terms of creating an environment conducive for research e.g. availability of internet service, materials in the library etc as well as thorough guidance by the supervisor Therefore support and challenge theory explains the degree of challenges undergraduate students should face that will not affect the quality of their project.

METHODS AND PROCESS

The research design was descriptive in nature as it described research project related challenges among final year students in UDUS. The research employed the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research method. The study setting is Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto (formerly University of Sokoto), in the city of Sokoto State established by the Federal government of Nigeria in September 1975. The population of this study was drawn from undergraduate final year students conducting their research project at the time of the study. This category of students could best explain research related challenges because they are engaging in their first academic research. Furthermore, for a better understanding of the subject of study, some selected staff were drawn to further make up the population of study. A systematic sampling was used in administering the questionnaires to 20 undergraduate final year students each in the selected departments. For the IDI a purposive sampling method was used in selecting ten (10) persons for the interviews. The information obtained using the questionnaire was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The qualitative data on the other hand was analyzed using Content analysis. The data was transcribed through converting recorded conversations into written form; the data was then studied and linked with analytic notes.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

This chapter presents and analyzes the data gathered from the study carried out to investigate research project related challenges among undergraduate final year students in Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto. During the study a structured questionnaire was designed and administered to the students while an in-depth interview (IDI) was conducted with some selected research co-coordinators, library staff and MIS staff. The data collected using questionnaire was presented in tables, frequencies and percentages while, the qualitative data was presented in a narrative manner through verbatim quotations based on the objectives and research questions.

Distribution of Respondents on Use and Access of Internet

Internet Use	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	183	95.3
No	9	4.7
Total	192	100
Internet Access		
Very accessible	41	21.4
Slightly Accessible	127	66.1
Not accessible	13	6.8
Undecided	11	5.7
Total	192	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

Table 4.2.1 shows respondents' distribution on use and internet access. The study shows that majority 95.3% of undergraduate final year students in UDUS use the internet to conduct their research projects. While only 4.7% respondents do not make use of the internet. Furthermore, on the accessibility of internet in UDUS, 21.4% said internet in UDUS is accessible, 66.1% slightly accessible, 6.8% said internet is not accessible in UDUS while 5.7% of the respondents were undecided.

Corroborating this in the IDI, an MIS staff on access to internet said; Access to internet in UDUS presently is moderate, thought we still have a long way to go compare to other schools. But I believe Isha- Allah we will get there someday (IDI Respondent).

Table 4.2.2 Distribution of Respondents on Motive and Point of Internet Access on Campus

Motive for Internet Use	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate materials in the library	48	25.0
Internet contains more information	80	41.7
Easy to Use	46	24.0
Free access to internet	18	9.4
Total	192	100
Point of Internet Access		
University library	43	22.4
Cyber café	11	5.7
Wi-Fi network	110	57.3
ICT center	28	14.6
Total	192	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

Table 4.2.2 shows the distribution of respondents on the motive and point of internet access on campus. Majority of the respondents represented by 41.7% used the internet in sourcing materials for their projects because the internet contains more information, while 25% of the respondents use the internet because of inadequate materials in the library, 24% of the respondents said internet is easy to use and only 9.4% of undergraduate final year students in UDUS use the internet for their project simply because of its free access. On the point of internet access on campus, majority of the respondents represented by 57.3% access the internet using the Wi-Fi network, 22.4% university library, 14.6% use the ICT center in UDUS while only 5.7% of undergraduate final year students access the internet using the cyber café on campus.

Table 4.2.3 Distribution of respondents on Alternative sources of internet off campus

Alternative source of internet off campus	Frequency	Percentage
Use of Modem	36	18.8
Private cyber café	19	9.9
Home	13	6.8
Personal phone/laptop	124	64.6
Total	192	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

Table 4.2.3 shows the distribution of respondents on alternative sources of internet off campus. The studies show that, majority of the respondents 64.6% access the internet with their personal phones/ laptops, 18% use the modem, 9.9% use the private cyber café while only 6.8% access internet in their homes

Table 4.2.4 Distribution of Respondents on charges incurred and affordability of the charges

Charges incurred	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	144	75.0
No	48	25.0
Total	192	100
Affordability		
Yes	20	10.4
Sometimes	152	79.2
Never	20	10.4
Total	192	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

Table 4.2.4 shows the distribution of respondents on whether they incur charges when using the internet and do they always afford these charges. The study shows that majority of the students 75% said they incur charges while using the internet for their research projects, while only 25% of the respondents do not incur charges. Furthermore, on the responses of whether they always afford these charges, majority of the students which were represented by 79.2% said they afford these charges but only sometimes, 10.4% said yes, they always afford to pay for the internet while 10.4% said they never able to afford for these charges.

Therefore, even though a large number of final year undergraduate students in UDUS incur internet charges while using alternative source of internet, probably as a result of the fact that internet is only slightly accessible in the school only few can keep up with the charges i.e. only 10.4% can always pay for these charges.

Table 4.2.5 Distribution of Respondents on slow speed of server and power failure in UDUS

Slow speed of internet	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	160	83.3
No	32	16.7
Total	192	100
Power Failure		
Agreed	100	52.1
Strongly agreed	72	37.5
Disagreed	14	7.3
Strongly disagreed	5	2.6
Undecided	1	.5
Total	192	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

Table 4.2.5 shows the distribution of respondents on slow speed of server and power failure as some of the challenges they encounter when using the internet in UDUS. The study shows that majority of the students 83.3% said slow speed of internet server is one of the challenges they encounter while accessing internet in UDUS, while 16.7% said no to whether slow speed of server is a problem encountered in the school while accessing the net During the IDI, an ICT staff has this to say;

Sometime using the internet in UDUS can be very frustrating due to slow speed of server. This problem sometimes is from our network providers and sometime because of too many people accessing the net at a

time. The implication is, you see people spend more time than necessary trying to achieve one simple task (IDI Respondent)

Furthermore, 52.1% of the students agreed that power failure also pose a challenge to internet use in UDUS, 37.5% students strongly agreed, 7.3% disagreed, 2.6% strongly disagreed while .5% of the students were undecided. Therefore, based on the above information, we understand that one slow speed of internet is a problem in UDUS that has become a challenge to undergraduate final year students in UDUS while using the net in conducting their research projects.

Table 4.2.6 Distribution of Respondents on all website accessible and whether inaccessibility pose a challenge

All websites accessible	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	91	47.4
No	101	52.6
Total	192	100
Inaccessibility all websites		
Agreed	94	49.0
Strongly agreed	55	28.6
Disagreed	23	12.0
Strongly Disagreed	11	5.7
Undecided	9	4.7
Total	192	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

Table 4.2.6 shows the distribution of respondents on whether all websites are accessible in UDUS. Majority of the respondents 52.6% said not all websites are accessible in the school, while 47.4% said all websites in UDUS are accessible. The table also shows the distribution of respondents on whether inaccessibility of some websites in UDUS becomes a barrier to access some information that might be of use to their project. Majority of the respondents which are represented by 49.0% agreed, 28.6% strongly agreed, 12.0% disagreed, and 5.7% strongly disagreed while 4.7% of the students were undecided. Thus, some websites in UDUS are deliberately blocked and denied access, the study found out that majority of the undergraduate final year students in UDUS are of the view that, the blocking of some websites prevents them from access to some information that might be of use to their research projects

DISCUSSION

It was observed in this study that though, major 95% of undergraduate final year students in UDUS conducting their research project use the internet, 66% said it is slightly accessible in UDUS. Anyira (2011), confirmed these findings. In his study on internet services in Nigerian private Universities, it was reported that majority of the respondents' said internet was only slightly accessible to them, even though they are willing to use the service. Furthermore, it was seen in this study that majority of the respondents prefer to use the internet in conducting their research projects because the internet contains more information. In line with these findings, Shehu et al (2015) in their study on accessibility and utilization of internet service in Nigerian libraries; they reported that students prefer using the internet because it contains more information. The study also found out that since internet is only slightly accessible in UDUS, majority of the students result into using alternative source of internet to conduct their studies. One of the mostly used alternative sources based on the findings is the use of personal phones/laptops. The study also found out that final year undergraduate students often incur internet charges when using this alternative source of internet which most at times they cannot afford to pay.

This research also discovered that, slow speed of internet server is one of the internet-related challenges undergraduate final year students face in UDUS. This is in line with Luambo and Nawe (2004) who observed that slow Internet connections attributable to small bandwidth is a major factor hindering Internet access and use in Africa. Furthermore, the study also confirmed that power failure is a problem to access to internet service in UDUS. Omotayo (2006) found that power outage and information over- load are among major challenges faced by internet users. The study also revealed that, not all websites are accessible to student in UDUS while using the internet. An MIS staff during the IDI affirmed that restrictions are placed on some websites the institution feel are not of academic importance.

He explained; We block some websites that are not academically relevant to the students, for examples betting sites, access to pornographic sites sometimes even YouTube (IDI Respondent). However, the study discovered that majority of the students think inaccessibility to some websites could hinder them from getting information that might be relevant or useful to their research work. In line with this finding, Anderson (2016) argued that, zealously blocking students, access to certain websites can end up undermining learning. Students sometimes depend on certain websites like YouTube to support homework time, including tutorials to solve math problems and to learn more about historical characters and other relevant information. Limiting students' access to the Internet limits their opportunities to succeed, explore their passions, and discover their strengths (Hertz, 2006, cited in Anderson, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Research project related challenges have the ability to compromise the smooth conduct of research projects by undergraduate final year students. Specifically, it delays timely submission of projects, not able to finish at the stipulated time and ultimately result in the decline in the quality of projects submitted. Poor internet service is one of the challenges undergraduate final year students face while conducting their research work. Surfing the net in UDUS could take too much time than required because of the slowness of the server.

RECOMMENDATION

Internet facilities in UDUS should be improved to increase effective efficient internet service also reduce the charges students incurred while using alternative source of internet.

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