Assessment of Students' Consciousness on Internet Exploration for Productive Social Life Amongst Students of Tertiary Institutions in Owerri Municipality

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Abstract- With the critical importance of the internet for learning in this 21st century, and the increasing access to internet for studies and other rich benefits and significant impact on various aspects of life, it is crucial therefore to assess and understand how students perceive and utilize this wonderful opportunity for productive life. The study therefore aims to assess the level of consciousness regarding the exploration of the internet for leading a productive life. It further explores the awareness, perception and utilization of the internet for educational, career and personal development purposes by the students, as well as the factors that affect their internet usage. A descriptive survey method was adopted in which a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection was employed to ascertain the students' consciousness and awareness of the internet availability, and the types of online activities they engage more frequently. Three research questions guided the study, while a four-point likert questionnaire was formulated for quantitative data collection, and interview for qualitative information. The data were analyzed using Mean Rating Statistics at 2.5 value benchmark. Results show that almost all the students are aware of the availability of the internet facilities around the campus, but spend a deal of time on things that do not matter significantly on their academics. Also the majority of the students are not conscious of the rich potentials that they can explore for productive and meaningful economic capacity. Factors that challenge the students access to the internet were identified and recommendations were made for sustainable and harnessed internet exploration by the students.

Keywords: Acculturation, Consciousness, Exploration, Internet, Productive.

INTRODUCTION

Right from the olden days, education and socialization of the child has been the most basic concern and philosophy of every society. Every society thrives to ensure continuity of the positive and productive life of the citizenry. This is upheld by providing adequate orientation for the members of the society through effective acculturation, socialization and providing strict regulation and checked social behaviour which has to be embedded and guided by the cultural background of the society.

This cherished philosophy is provided to the child right from the very cradle of his life; by his parents elderly relatives within the child's primary environment. All effort is made to ensure that all that is taught to the younger minds is devoid of immoral contents. All these philosophy is what the society referred to as education of the child.

Fafunwa (2004) defines education as the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive values to the society in which he lives. That is to say, it is a process for transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth and for disseminating knowledge either to ensure social control or to guarantee rational direction of the society or both. All educational systems, whether formal or informal seek to achieve these goals irrespective of the curriculum, methods and organizational design for the purpose.

Adjudging one an educated person may differ across societies based on their philosophical parameters and expected values and exhibitions that should trend from the esteemed educated man. For instance, Fafunwa (2004) speculates that the Ancient Greek's idea of an educated man was on mental and physical effectiveness. The Romans emphasis was on oratorical and military might. In the Middle Age Europe, the elites were the lords temporal and spiritual, the knights and the socially high place catels. In France the scholars and philosophers and men of excellence were refereed as the educated. In Germany, a patriot was regarded as educated and noble. In the Old Africa, a man of character who has skills for productivity was referenced as educated.

However, on the general basis, education is meant for functionalism. In fact, is a means to an end; and not end in itself. The education for this time should be exclusively inclusive, wherein all the necessary factors and condition suitable and considerable for effective intuition be put integrated and put in place for the wellbeing and benefit to the learner.

Jacob an Olisaemeka (2016) affirm that inclusive education is concerned with minimizing and removing barriers to access, participation and learning for all children, but especially for those who have been socially discriminated because of poverty, disability, gender, religion, ethnicity or any inequalities. Centre for studies on Inclusive Education cited in Okobah (2007) defines inclusive education as a programme for all children and young people with or without or difficulties or disabilities learning together in ordinary pre-primary provisions, schools, colleges and universities with appropriate network. Graham (2019) argues that this education explores evidence-based strategies to support diverse learners, including specific changes in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices and the use of data, as well as technological gadgets.

Smart Campuses, Trending Concept

Education in campuses in the 21st century has evolved from the primitive route memorization of theories into a more practical and technology based intuition which is highly IT compliant. No one library in any school can contain all books and documents one can ever need for research or any reference at any time, and even if such can be traced one may not easily trace his information duly. Hence, the physical and logistic limitations abound. The internet remains the stock of information that can afford one any needed reference or information per time and irrespective of location.

Haralambos and Holborn (2008) posit that the internet has rigidly established itself as an invaluable source of information for students, lecturers and researchers. It makes a vast amount of material from a very diverse range of sources readily available to anyone with internet access. However, there are some controversies about internet sources and information against authenticity and reliability of stocked information. Stein (2002) argues there is little or no vetting of material on most internet sites. According to Stein (2002)

"There is no need for submission of proposals to publishers and editorial committees with the attendant referencing processes. Commercial and scholarly considerations operate to a substantially lesser degree, if at all. Finally, there is not post-publication evaluation system in place that approximates reviews published in scholarly journals, bibliographies and citation indexes."

Hence, Stein believes internet sources need to be used with particular caution. In the same vein, Cameron, Flowers, Hart, Peace, Renton, Watts, Wright and McNeill (2008) argue that the internet is not controlled by media conglomerates; it is controlled by the individuals and groups who use it. There is horizontal rather than vertical control. This seems to correspond to "Habermas concept of the public sphere" cited in Cameron et al (2008), which he defines as the area of social life that is not controlled by governments or the market.

In spite of all odds, the exclusive prospects of the internet to education and research cannot be overemphasized. Presently, virtually every institution of learning has adopted the installation of IT facilities of internet via Wi-Fi devices to make for a smart space for online researches and information. Most course contents have been converted into electronic materials and made available in the internet for access to any user. This new development has trended across the globe and as broken the barrier walls of distance, scarcity and stress. One can stay in his location now and attend lecturers and seminars without losses in any part of the globe. Communication and business dealings have been compressed into a global village.

In line with this, Henslin (2007) predicted that a day will come when you will be able to key in the terms of any reference or knowledge and you will be overwhelmed with unlimited sources from diverse authors and perspectives without any form barrier. He posits that distance learning, courses taught to students who are not physically present with their instructor, will become such a part of mainstream education that most students will take at least some of their high school, college and graduate courses through distance learning in the "class" to see everyone else simultaneously, although the students live in different countries. Imagine this – and likely it soon will be a reality for young, he predicted, that your fellow students in a course on diversity in human. Culture will be leaving in Thailand, Iceland, South Africa, Germany, Egypt, China and Australia etc. You will be able to compare your customs on eating, dating, marriage, family or burial – whatever is of interest to you. You can then write a joint paper in which you compare your experiences with one another, applying the theories taught in the text and then submit your paper (electronic version) to your mutual instructor.

The Paradox

The core objective of every school management to install the internet facilities in and around the campus is to enhance learning and research works both by the students and lecturers. This is not a feeble project in terms of finance and maintenance cost. This project take lumps of resources in terms of fund, management and maintenance, as well as technical know-how.

This project in no small measure provides the students and staff a wide range of opportunities to explore the potentials in the cyber space for a great deals of life changing dealings for productivity. Apart from learning and research, the internet is a think tank and hob of vital information and medium of interaction, as well as an open market. The student can learn many useful experiences online, participate in various platforms that enlighten one for any field of business, craft and skills. One can display what he does in the online space and attracts numerous clients and patronage, thereby making a good living while still schooling. This is quite productive and encouraging and should be a worthwhile lifestyle to emulate.

But unfortunately, what is meant to be a key enabler for a better life and global equality for progress seems now to be a major source of distraction and miscriance to the young one and major benefactors of the internet.

The management of most tertiary institutions have put efforts and spent hugely to install internet facilities and make the school environment "smart campus". This is quite ideal and pertinent in this 21st century computer age as there are volumes of information now available on the internet at free and highly affordable cost for teaching and learning, research, business potentials as well as entertainment and communication; as Nathan (2010) affirms. In fact the numerous potentials and benefits that abound in campus networking cannot be exhausted. Among these according to Michaelpage.com (2023) include;

Access to Opportunities:

By this both the students and staff will have unlimited access to many opportunities and networks for collaborative research and studies, grants and business deals. Most of these opportunities will enhance financial breakthroughs and career advancement. Active networking helps to keep you in mind when opportunities such as job openings arise and increase your likelihood of receiving introductions to potentially relevant people or even referrals.

New Information:

This avails the internet users the ample range of new ideas and technologies, and to learn about the new business techniques of your peers and stay abreast of the latest industry developments. A wide network of informed, interconnected contacts means broader

access to new and valuable information. Other major advantages of this trend are strengthening relationships, fresh ideas, raised profile, advice and support among others (www.michaelpage.com).

However, the diversion of the core values and essence of the internet by most youth is so worrisome and has become an issue of a great concern by all. Kumar (2022) states that the internet has taken over the youth by a storm. The effects are two vivid to be ignored. Almost everyone that we come across now has access to smart phones with internet connection in various forms. But the exponential rate of abuse and misconduct on the cyber space by our youth is so alarming; that one now wonders whether this breakthrough is a bane than boon. These youth that are blessed in their generation by this advanced technology are now prone to be victims of the negative impact of internet, probably because of their still raw and vulnerable minds as suspected by Kumar (2022). McGillivray (2021) reveals in a study that the GPA is of students who stay more on internet was on the average of 3.06 against those who give more attention on social media whose average GPA is 3.82. According to his study, for every 93 minutes, over the average, 106 minutes spent on Facebook daily, college students' grade dropped 12 points. Again, that students who went online while studying scored 20% lower on tests. In the area of employment and productivity, the study reveals that social networking sites harm employees' productivity, as 51% of users aged 25-34 check social media at work.

Sharma (2023), the addiction of the teen and youth nowadays is so alarming that it has led to many untold vices among them. Today, it is impossible for teens and children to do anything without the internet. This excess internet use can cause a child or teen to develop internet addiction or "compulsive internet use" which can have several ill effects according Sharma (2023). Among these effects are:

i.   **Inability to keep to Schedules**: Most internet users among youth get carried away once they have connected and started online interactions. This takes their mind off scheduled activities like lectures, errands and other important matters, as long as they have given attention to browsing, chatting, watching movies and comedies and gaming. As a result of this they lose track of time in the real world and more relevant schedules.

ii.   **Sleep Deprivation**: Most youth who stay with their parents and those in campuses engage more on the internet at night when they think the cyber space may be less busy and decongested, and when they have retired into their privacy from their parents. A number of them who visit porn sites do this mainly in the night. This can carry them away all through the quiet hours of the night, making them to feel drowsy and weak in the day.

iii.   **Social Isolation**: Addiction to internet exposes one to a community of online pals which leads to constant hook-ups, and dissociates them from physical contacts with family members and friends.

iv.   **Compromised Lifestyle**: Wide range of social vices are associated with youth on the internet. Internet fraud (popularly referred to as Yahoo) is becoming a norm and order of the day. You now see students who are very deficient in their academic work parading exotic cars and living in executive lodges. The girls tune to hook-ups with fake identities and many more compromised characters.

Some other negative impact of the internet may include mental stress, cyber bullying, high risk of falling victim to online scams and phishing attacks which often causes financial losses.

Objectives of the Study

The researchers are much perplexed with pervasive misconduct and misuse of the internet by the youth of nowadays, especially the undergraduate students. It is a paradox that most students have access to the internet and virtually all higher institutions have installed free internet facilities all around the campuses for e-learning and research, and with the unlimited sources of knowledge and opportunities for wealth creation in various sites, most of the internet users among these students have not shown any remarkable advancement in their academic works, nor made any good exploits from this rich domain.

It was surprising in 2020 at the outbreak of the pandemic COVID-19 disease when schools were shut down and the Federal Ministry of Education ordered school to embark on online classes via several apps (mainly Google classroom), that the compliance to that amongst the students was less than 20%. Not that the students did not have internet enabled phones or devices, nor that was a network hitch, but majority showed little or no interest on that, while a number of them were completely ignorant of the new trend. But these students were very active on Facebook, Whatsapp, Tiktok, Twitter and other social media platforms. Research showed a remark poor performance on their academic records at resumption of physical school activities. These students also never explored the internet for any productive business engagement, but a few can tell you of just a little exploits. Even up till now, our youth spend a deal of time on internet for frivolities and entertainments, dates and gambling. What a Paradox.

Research Design

The study assumed a descriptive survey method to ascertain the extent of the students' consciousness on internet exploration. The employed a combination quantitative and qualitative research method. A survey questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data about the students' frequency of internet usage, types of online activities they engage in more frequently, and their perceptions of the benefits and challenges associated with internet exploration. In addition to this, qualitative survey was employed via interviews to assess the students' experiences, motivations, and perspectives regarding internet usage for productive life.

Research Questions

The researchers formulated the following research questions to guide the study:
1.   To what extent are the students conscious of the internet facilities and their rich benefits in the campus?
2.   How frequently do the students explore the internet on their daily life?
3.   What are the regular activities the students engage in over the internet?

Research Question 1:

To what extent are the students conscious of the internet facilities and its rich benefits in the campus?

Table 1 below shows the response of students on their awareness of the internet facilities and its benefits in their campus.

S/N	Question Item	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean $\bar{x}$	Decision
1	I'm aware of the internet facilities in the campus and that it has many benefits	50 / 200	46 / 138	68 / 136	36 / 36	2.55	Majority are aware
2	I do not know about that	13 / 52	27 / 81	40 / 80	120 / 120	1.67	Insignificant
3.	I'm very much exited at that and explore this gold opportunity well	31 / 124	40 / 120	44 / 88	85 / 85	2.10	Only few make good use it
4	A very wonderful development, but it's more of fun to me on campus	61 / 244	56 / 168	30 / 60	53 / 53	2.63	Majority use it for fun
5.	A wonderful development that really helped me in academic works and some money making deals	37 / 148	48 / 144	55 / 110	60 / 60	2.31	Only a few explore the net for good works
	Grand Mean					**2.8**	

Table 1, indicates that majority of the students are very much aware of the installation of internet facilities in the campus, but their productive exploration on the internet is poor. Majority of them only use the internet on frivolities and are not conscious of the ample opportunities for economic gains.

Research Question II: How frequently do the students explore the internet on their daily life?

Table II below shows response of students on their frequency of internet activities.

S/N	Question Item	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean $\bar{x}$	Decision
1	I can't just stay for a couple of minutes so freely without internet connection and activity	89 / 356	48 / 144	42 / 84	21 / 21	3.01	Majority of stay frequently on the internet
2	Only when I want to browse or chat	33 / 132	47 / 141	49 / 98	71 / 71	2.21	Insignificant
3.	Always on the internet studying and doing great deal of business with potential benefits	29 / 116	37 / 111	54 / 108	80 / 80	2.09	Insignificant
4	Always on internet doing some funny things that I cannot be able to say here	67 / 268	53 / 159	46 / 92	34 / 31	2.75	Majority use the internet frivolity
5.	Rarely stay online for anything	19 / 76	38 / 114	56 / 112	87 / 87	2.0	Insignificant
	Grand Mean					**2.41**	

Table II, indicates that majority of the students stay constantly on the net at their free time but do less work on their courses or adventural deals, but more on funs and chats.

Research Question III

What are the regular activities the students engage in over the internet?

S/N	Question Item	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean $\bar{x}$	Decision
1	Chatting on social media	73 / 292	59 / 177	47 / 94	21 / 21	2.92	Majority use the social media for chats
2	Browsing for my academic works	40 / 160	53 / 159	38 / 76	69 / 69	2.32	Poor
3.	Movies, music and entertainment	97 / 388	39 / 117	39 / 78	25 / 25	3.04	More on frivolity
4	Online betting and football watching	82 / 328	47 / 141	43 / 86	28 / 28	2.92	More of frivolity
5.	Exploring business opportunities	28 / 112	33 / 99	69 / 138	70 / 70	2.10	Insignificant
6	Religious activities and current news	40	48	50	62	2.33	Insignificant

		160	144	100	62		
7	I always participate in the online class even	30	45	63	62	2.22	Insignificant
	when session is not on	120	135	126	62		
	Grand Mean					**2.55**	

Table III, indicates that the students activities on the internet are mainly things that do not matter much to their academic and economic productive, rather on frivolous chats, betting, movies etc.

Discussion

Analysis of Research Question 1 shows that virtually all the students in the campus are not ignorant of the internet facilities installed in the campus and the essence of it in harnessing teaching and learning with other numerous benefits therein. In line with the position of Haralambos and Holborn (2008) that the internet is a stock house of varieties of information which one can assess at any time and at a very little or no cost. But it is unfortunate that the students mainly utilize the potentials of the internet on things that do not matter much on their academics and economic development. This is evident in the grand mean of 2.8 showing that the majority of the students are aware of the facilities and the rich benefits but majorly use it for fun and frivolous things.

On the other hand, analysis of Research Question II shows that most students who have access to internet stay very regularly on not on their free time. But the paradox is that only a few engage in activities that will harness their academic works and things that can boost their economic capacity for financial gains. The mean score of 3.01 and 2.75 respectively indicate that most students do not do without the internet at their free time, and also engage in some unspeakable activities on the internet.

Finally, analysis of table II is also line that only a few students engage on more meaningful activities on the internet.

Recommendations

Some extra information gathered on course revealed some factors which militate against students' access to internet to include poverty which limits some students from having computers and internet-enabled phones, poor electricity supply on campus among others.

It is recommended therefore that the management of the tertiary institutions make it mandatory upon admission that every student must acquire an internet enabled phone or a set of computer for online intuition and research. This can be done by building in the cost of the device in the fee at a subsidized rate, while the school can bargain with IT firms or dealers for supply. By this the issue of students' inability to acquire such devices can be indirectly addressed.

Also, the stakeholders in the frontiers of education should identify the gaps in internet literacy and awareness, which can inform for the development of targeted educational programs and initiatives to enhance students' digital skills and competencies. Again, as Amele (2008), Iwejuo, Igbokwe and Nkume (2016) opined, there should regular and effective re-orientation to promote responsible internet usage and digital citizenship education to equip students with the knowledge and ethical guidelines needed for safe and productive internet exploration.

Furthermore, the government through the Ministry of Education and other relevant agencies should strategize on the ways to bridge the digital divide and address disparities in internet access, particularly the marginalized and underserved student population.

Lastly, institutions should be encouraged to collaborate with policy makers and relevant agencies to create supportive environments and opportunities that will foster productive internet exploration and utilization of the internet as a tool for learning, innovation and personal growth.

Conclusion

The rich benefits of internet for teaching and learning cannot be overemphasized in this 21st century. Internet literacy for productive life is inevitable. This refers to the digital skills, competencies and knowledge required to navigate, evaluate and effectively utilize online resources. Both teachers and students need to develop internet literacy skills to maximize the potentials of the internet. Assessing students' consciousness on internet exploration helps to identify gaps in their internet literacy and orientation, as well as perceptions on the internet usage. This also helps to strategize to promote responsible and productive internet usage.

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