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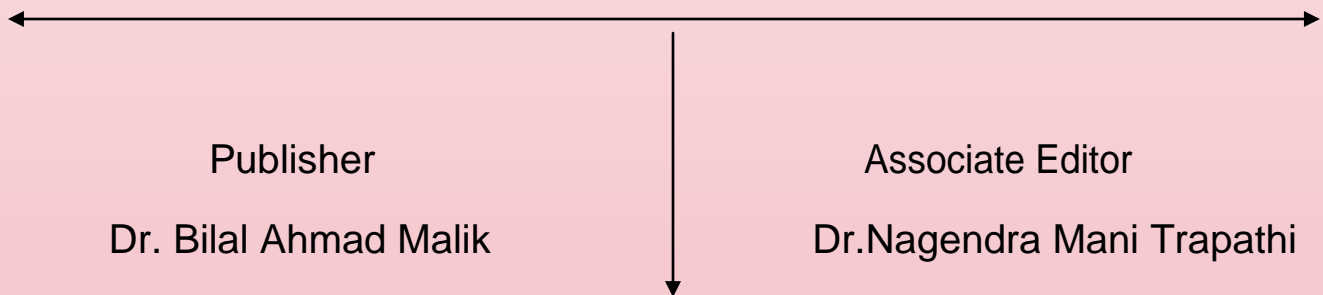
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INTERNET USUAGE BY NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: A CASE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN OWERRI MUNICIPAL

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ABSTRACT:

The study is a survey research on internet usage among secondary school students in Owerri Metropolis. Five research objectives were formulated to guide the study. The study population comprises respondents from six (6) schools in Owerri Municipal; Namely Emmanuel college, Owerri; Comprehensive Secondary School, Owerri; Owerri Girls Secondary School; Ikenegbu Girls Secondary School, Owerri ; Government College Secondary School , Owerri and Federal Girls Secondary School Owerri. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for gathering data for the study. Data collected were analyzed using frequencies, tables and simple percentages. The results of the study showed that most of the students (44.7%) are still at the beginning stage of computer knowledge. Most of the students (30.1%) admitted that the medium through which they learn the internet is through their homes. Most of the students (48.6%) use the internet 2-3 times a week and majority of them use it during the night. Most of the students mostly use it during the weekend especially on Saturday. Majority of the students use the internet for communication and entertainment. Major challenges hindering their use of internet is lack of fully equipped ICT unit and internet access at school that accounted for 47.7% and 46.8 % respectively. (20.3%) and (19.6%) of the students indicated provision of fully equipped ICT unit and internet connectivity at school respectively as major ways of improving internet usage. The researchers made some useful suggestions which when implemented will improve internet usage among secondary school students in Owerri Metropolis.

Keywords: Internet, secondary school, Owerri.

INTRODUCTION

The internet is a massive computer –linked network systems used globally to access and convey information by personal or business computers users. It is a global linking of computers that allows information transfer from one

place to another. The internet can be seen as the heart of the information age .According to Uhegbu (2007) the internet is the most visible, rapidly changing, dynamic, mind-boggling and exciting emerging technology. He stressed that the internet is transforming the whole business and information world into a unified accessible system .Most organizations and individuals are exploiting the internet to their maximum benefit. Today the internet has become the gate way of the world.

Due to its complexity and some inexplicable character ,the internet has been described in quite different ways .To Sayer and Williams (2003) the internet is worldwide network that connects hundreds of thousands of smaller networks. These networks link educational, commercial, non-profit and military establishment and even individuals. It can also be described as a global network connecting millions of computers. More than 190 countries are linked into exchanges of data, news and opinions .According to internet live status, as at July 1st 2016, there was an estimated 3,424,971,237 internet users worldwide. The number of internet users is growing explosively worldwide with 48.4% coming from Asia, 21.8% from America,19% from Europe while 9% come from Africa and 1.8% from Oceanic countries. (Internet usage June, 2016).The use of internet and computers has become an important aspect in the lives of many individuals of all ages including secondary school students .Most students carry out lots of work with the help of computers. Computers and internet have become indispensable passion for the youth, they use it more successfully and faster than the older generation (Tosun and Baris, 2011).No wonder Anunobi (2006) observed that youngsters especially students and researchers spend most of their time in cyber café where the latter is not available, they risk travelling to further distances to transact one business or the other. In fact there is no gain saying that the internet has an enormous impact in the way information is being managed today. Information can now be divided, reassembled, transferred wholly or partially across files, databases and even national and international borders. The use of internet has provided an extra – ordinary level of public accessibility to a wide range of communication. For example data storage, management and transfer, social website such as whatsapp and face- book. Computer and internet play a vital role in modern living such as communication, information searching and business activities (Benjadole, 2000).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The dramatic entry of the internet into major areas of our society has affected and enlarged our access to information as it enables new forms of communication and serves as arena for many on-line –services in the area of education, commerce, business and culture. Tella (2007) opines that the internet is an important source of

information, learning and research. It allows the students to broaden their academic experience, access important information and communicate with others within different academic communities.

Students at all levels of education should take full advantage of the information available on the internet to enhance their educational career and academic enhancement. They should be knowledgeable enough to understand that the internet can be used for academic purposes as most federal and external examinations with solved past questions and answers are available on the internet. Kikelemo (2002) maintained that the internet remains the best source of current information. In fact researchers have affirmed that it is more up – to-date than print resources. Ebiefung (2000) found that beside the library, the internet is also a useful tool for shopping and online schooling. It is important for students to strike a balance in the time spent online for academic and non academic purposes. This will go a long way to help them manage their time well. Selwyn (2008) observed that the use and motivation to use the internet by students tend to be overshadowed by purposes other than academic utilization. The internet is an increasing part of today's culture especially for children and adult for whom school work, online gaming and social networking are among the most important activities. Internet users can play games with other people in any part of the world, watch movies and listen to music. They can form new relationships on the internet (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe, 2007). According to Ojedokun (2001) it has broken down barriers of communication and information access from anywhere around the world. It is fast, reliable and does not have restrictions on content or format. There is so much that students can do with the internet. Not only can they communicate with international students, they can also gain from others knowledge and experiences participate in chat rooms, share ideas and solutions and learn about the many diverse cultures out there. Most secondary school students spent so many hours watching pornographic films, chatting, playing games, downloading music and watching movies. In his study Tella (2007) found out that majority of the students from Botswana University access the internet 1-5 hours a week. Yu (2011) also found that university students on average spend 164 minutes per day on the internet while Robinson (2005) found that 47% of African American College students spent an average of two hours per day online.

Most students do not have full exploitation of the internet because of certain factors. For Kikelemo (2000) uneasy access, lack of good guidance, time consumption, inability to get required information, attached health risk and boredom contribute to students inability to maximally use the internet. In as much as several studies have been carried out on internet usage by secondary school students, the researchers are not aware of any study

carried out on internet usage of students in Owerri municipal. Hence this present study is aimed at investigating the internet usage of secondary school students in Owerri Municipal.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives will guide the study:

- To ascertain the frequency of internet usage among secondary school students in Owerri Municipal
- To find out when secondary school students use the internet;
- To find out the purpose of internet usage by secondary school students;
- To ascertain the factors that discourages the internet usage by secondary students;
- And to proffer possible suggestions for the identified problems.

METHODOLOGY

The survey research method was employed for the study .The study population comprises respondents from six (6) schools in Owerri Municipal; Namely Emmanuel college, Owerri; Comprehensive Secondary School, Owerri; Owerri Girls Secondary School; Ikenegbu Girls Secondary School, Owerri; Government College Secondary School, Owerri and Federal Girls Secondary School, Owerri. The data collection instrument used was the questionnaire. In all a total of 300 copies of questionnaire were distributed and 286 copies of questionnaires were returned given a returned rate of 95.3%. The questionnaire was validated by some senior professional colleagues and their views and comments were used to arrive at the final version. The questionnaire was divided into section A and section B. Section A elicited data about demographic characteristics of the respondents while section B collected data on internet usage by secondary school students in public schools in Owerri Municipal. Data was analyzed using frequencies, simple percentages and tables.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Table 1: Sex of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	148	51.7
Female	138	48.3
Total	286	100

Table 1 above shows that 148 (51.7%) of the respondents are males while 138(48.3%) are females.

Table 2: Age of Respondent

Age of respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
10-12	37	12.9
13-15	78	27.3
16-18	85	29.7
19-21	86	30.1
Total	186	100

Table 2 shows that the ages between 19-21 years gave the highest percentage (30.1%) responses to the questionnaire; followed by the respondents between the ages 16-18 with 29.7%. While those between the ages 13-15 years gave 27.3% and those between the ages 10-12 years gave the lowest percent (12.9%)

Table 3: class of Respondents

Class of respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
JSS 1	44	15.4
JSS 2	50	17.5
JSS 3	0	0
SSS1	54	18.9
SSS 2	59	20.6
SSS 3	79	27.6
Total	286	100

The table 3 above shows that SS3 students have the greatest percentage (27.7%) ;followed by SS2 and SS1 students with 20.6% and 18.9% respectively. It could also be seen from the table that JSS2 had 17.5% while JSS1 had 15.4%.JSS 3 students had 0% because as at the time this was being conducted they had written their Junior WAEC and were away from school.

Table 4: Level of computer literacy

Level of computer literacy	Response rate	Percentage (%)
Beginner	128	44.7
Intermediate	71	24.9
Expert	87	30.4
Total	286	100

Table 4 shows that majority (44.7%) of the respondents are beginners; followed by 30.4% of respondents who are expert while 24.9% of the respondents are intermediates.

Table 5: Medium of learning how to use the internet

Medium of learning	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Home	87	30.4
Friends	54	18.9
Cyber café	30	10.5
School	44	15.4
Computer school	13	4.5
Mobile phones	58	20.3
Total	286	100

Table 5 shows that majority (30.6%) of the respondents learnt how to use the internet at home ;followed by 20.3% of respondents who learnt it through their mobile phones. 18.9% of the respondents learnt through friends while 15.4% learnt in their schools.10.4% and 4.4% of the respondents revealed that they learnt through the cyber café and computer schools respectively.

Table 6: Frequency of Use

Frequency of use	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Everyday	65	22.6
2-3 times a week	139	48.6
4-5 times a week	82	28.8
Total	286	100

Table 6 above shows that most of the respondents (48.6%) use the internet 2-3 times in a week .Some of them (28.8%) uses it 4-5 times while just few (22.6%) use it every day.

Table 7: Time of use

Time of the Day	Response	Percentage (%)
Morning	22	7.6
Afternoon	36	12.5
Evening	65	22.8
Night	163	57.1
Total	286	100

Table shows that majority (57%) of the respondents used the internet at night while 22.5% did so in the evening. Some of the respondents 12.5% preferred the afternoon while few(7.6%) made use in the morning hours.

Table 8: Days of use

Days of the week	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Monday	30	10.4
Tuesday	16	5.7
Wednesday	25	8.6
Thursday	27	9.4
Friday	53	18.7
Saturday	72	25.2
Sunday	63	22.0
Total	286	100

Table 8 above shows majority of the respondents 72(25.2%); 63(22%) and 53(18.7%) used the internet more during weekends that is Saturday, Sunday and Friday respectively .some of the respondents 27(9.4%) and 25(8.6%) indicated Thursday and Wednesday respectively as when they use the internet while 30(10.4%) and 5.7(16%) of the respondents indicated Monday and Tuesday respectively.

Table 9: Reasons for using the internet

Reasons for using the internet	Response	Percentage (%)
School work	84	29.4
Communication	136	47.7
Reading and sending e-mails	74	25.8
Entertainment	133	46.8
Reading newspaper	54	18.9
Browsing for fun	48	16.8

Table 9 above shows that majority (47.7%) and (46.8%) of the respondents gave communication and entertainment respectively as their reasons for using the internet while (25.8%) of the respondents used the internet for reading and sending of mails. This was followed by (29.4%) of the respondents who used it for school work. (18.9%) of the respondents used it for reading online newspapers while few of the respondents browse for the fun of it.

Table 10: Problems encountered in using the internet

Problems encountered	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of fully equipped ICT unit in school	43	15.0
Lack of internet connectivity in the school	52	18.2
Lack of internet connectivity at home	17	5.9
Very expensive cost of internet use	33	11.5
Time consumption associated with internet use	22	7.7
House chores takes the time I would have used for internet	28	9.8
Discouragement from friends	15	5.2
Lack of steady source of power	20	7.0
Fluctuating network	11	3.8
Lack of parental guidance/mentorship	34	11.9
Attendant health risk	12	4.2

Table 10 above reveals that majority (18.2%) of the respondents indicated that lack of internet connectivity in the school was the major problem they encountered in using the internet followed by 15% of the respondents who complain of lack of fully equipped ICT unit in the school.12.0% of the respondents view lack of parental guidance as their major problem while 11.4%complain of the high cost of internet access. Some of the respondents (9.7%) and (7.6%) indicated that house chores takes the time they would have use for internet and time consumption associated with internet use respectively while 6.9% and 5.8% indicated lack of steady power supply and lack of internet access at home respectively, 5.4% and 3.9% indicated discouragement from friends and fluctuating network respectively as their major problem encountered. Few (4.1%) of the respondents indicated attendants health risk as their own problem.

Table 11: Ways to improve internet usage

Ways to improve internet usage	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Provision of fully equipped functional ICT unit at school	58	20.3
Provision of internet connectivity at school	56	19.6
Provision of internet connectivity at home	17	5.9
Making internet devices affordable by service providers	42	14.7
Encouragement from Friends	27	9.5
Provision of steady network	47	16.4
Constant Power supply	24	8.4
Adequate parental guidance	9	3.1

Table 11 above shows that majority (20.3%) of the respondents indicated that fully equipped functional ICT unit at school while 19.6% of the respondents indicated provision of internet connectivity at schools as ways of improving internet usage.16.4% and 14.7 % of the respondents indicated adequate parental guidance and making internet devices affordable by internet service providers. It could also be seen that 9.5% and 8.4% of the respondents indicated provision of steady network and constant power supply respectively as ways of improving internet usage while 5.9% and 3.1 % indicated provision of internet connectivity at home and encouragement from friends respectively as ways of improving internet usage.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results on student's usage of the internet shows that male respondents constitute (51.7%) of total population of internet users, while their female counterparts constitute (48.3%). This could be linked to the established fact that in most literatures that technology is a male sphere and research has also showed that girls are more technophobic than the boys (Enochsson,2005). This result also concord with the outcome of earlier statistics where the male use the internet more than the female gender(Noguchi,2005).But it contradicts to more recent statistics which shows that girls and females are as frequent internet users as men(Fallows,2007).

It also reveals that majority (30.1%) of the students between the ages 19-21 use the internet more than other years. Also SSS3 students (27.6%) use the internet more than other classes. This could be associated to the fact that SSS3 students are in examination class and require past examination questions and answers to prepare adequately for their final examinations.

Findings from this study also revealed that majority of the respondents were at the beginning stage of internet knowledge. It is surprising to find out that at this jet age when the world is turning to a global village most of the students (44.7%) are still at the beginning stage of computer knowledge. The study contradicts the Environics Research Groups for the Media Awareness New York (2005) report that Canadian youths are not strangers to the internet. This is as a result of the fact that almost 8 in 10 (79%) of them indicated that they have internet access at home.

Most (30.1%) of the students admitted that the medium they use to learn the internet is through their homes. This findings concord with the definition of an internet user according to internet live status 2016 as an individual who can access of the internet at home via any device type and connection. The findings also contradict with the Pew internet American Life Project survey report (2004) which found out that 78% of the respondents say they use internet at school. This contrast is largely due to the fact that most of the secondary schools in Nigeria are ill-equipped with internet facilities if at all they have them.

Most(48.6%) of the students use the internet 2-3 times a week and majority of them use it during the night while most of the students mostly use it during the weekend especially on Saturday.

Another salient finding in the study is that which relates to the main purpose why students used the internet. One would have expected that searching, retrieving and using information especially for academic purposes would rank high in the respondents' use of the internet but this turn out to be the contrary as their primary use of the internet was for communication and entertainment. It appears that most of the students are not aware that the internet is a very useful tool for their academics. This study contradicts earlier findings by Weber and Flatley (2008) who found in their study that most students go to the Internet first when doing research. According to them, this is not a bad thing instead it is an opportunity to continually market and offer the library's services and resources through channels that are familiar to them. When students see the internet as a channel for communication and entertainment, their education and academic pursuits will be adversely affected. This study contradicts the findings of Chiemekwe; Longe; Umar & Shaib (2007) that the Internet enjoyed more patronage for the purpose of research because the students visited the internet more often than academic library facilities for research purposes. There are vast educational resources on the internet .School teachers should guide and refer the students to educational websites for additional information and further reading on subject matter taught in the class or additional information that will help to improve them academically.

Major challenges hindering their use of internet is lack of fully equipped ICT unit and internet access at school that is 47.7% and 46.8 % respectively. Also 11.9% complained of lack of parental guidance /mentorship. There is great need for parents to supervise the use of internet by their children and offer guidance when need arises.

Most (20.3%) and (19.6%) of them saw provision of fully equipped ICT unit and internet connectivity at school respectively as major ways of improving internet usage.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated the use of internet among secondary school students in public schools in Owerri. The results have so far demonstrated that the students use the internet mostly for communication and entertainment rather than for their academic enhancement. It also revealed that majority of the students learnt the internet through their homes and phones rather than through the school. Lack of fully equipped ICT unit and internet access at school are the major challenges facing the secondary students of owerri metropolis while provision of fully equipped ICT and internet access at school will equip the students to make effective use of the internet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from this study it is recommended that female students should be encourage to use the internet so as not to be left out in this current dispensation that is technology driven. Students at all level should be encouraged to use the internet for academic purposes, communication and chat with friends. Students should imbibe the principle of self discipline so as to avoid spending longer hours on non academics matter. The government should include the interest of secondary school students in their educational policies by establishing functional ICT units with internet connectivity so as empower the students in their educational pursuits. There should also be a solid policy and implementation framework by the Executive arms of government towards making poor Internet connectivity become a thing of the past in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. Parents should always monitor what media their children are using and accessing, and advice them on how to use the social networking sites

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