Internet Access and Use by Female Academics in Selected Nigerian Universities

H.I.T. Akinyosoye and F.Z. Oguntuase
Principal Librarian, University Library, Federal University of Technology,
P.M.B. 704, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria

Abstract: The study examined the issue of Internet access and use by female academics in selected Nigerian universities. Three universities were selected from ten universities located in the South West of Nigeria. Two of the universities were owned by the federal government while the third is established by a state government. Only government owned universities were included in the study. Random sampling technique was used to select the samples for the study. A questionnaire was administered to 150 respondents cutting across the three universities. The rate of return of the questionnaire shows that (105) 70% of the questionnaires were returned and found useful. From the study, it was found that junior academics from the grade of Graduate Assistants to Lecturer II make greater use of the Internet, as 65% of them claimed they use the internet. On the other hand, 35% of the senior academics make use of the Internet. It was also found that 83.8% of the total respondents use the Internet for e-mail, while 80.9% use it for research. In order to achieve capacity building in research and teaching in universities in Nigeria, there is the need for academics to be trained in all aspects of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) use. The universities must invest in ICT infrastructure and the Internet connectivity to enhance research in Nigerian universities.

Key words: Internet acces, information and communication technology, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has received widespread attention in many developed and developing countries. ICT has become an important factor in both personal and organizational lives. The effective application of ICT has brought many benefits not only to the individuals but also to the corporate organizations. The Internet which is an integral part of ICT has undoubtedly become one of the most important media of information communication of our times. The potentials of the Internet to serve as sources of information for individuals and corporate organizations are tremendous. The Internet offers unprecedented access to information in all kinds of formats. Originally, the Internet was the domain of academics and researchers, but it has now become more commercialized as it is being used by all sectors of the society. The Internet has become a vital tool for learning, teaching and research. The Internet has become a major symbol of the information society and a means of accessing, sharing and extending the sphere of knowledge throughout the whole of human culture. Studies have revealed that the major uses of the Internet are for surfing the World Wide Web (WWW) and for electronic and (E-mail).

Literature review: Many writers and researchers particularly African writers and researchers have carried out studies on some aspects of ICT use, particularly the use of ICT by students in some universities in Africa (Idowu and Mabawonku, 1999; Windrum and Tong, 2000; Ojedokun and Owolabi, 2001; Ojedokun, 2003; Mutula, 2001; Unegbu, 2000). They have examined different aspects of ICT use. Some studies examined the use of the Internet by students and users from specific areas of study.

Ojoko (2005) examined the Internet access and use by students of the Federal University of Technology, Akure. Many other studies have concentrated on the study of a single institution (Ojedokun and Owolabi, 2003; Kipkongat *et al.*, 2005). However, the present study seeks to examine the gender use of the Internet in some selected universities. In specific terms, the study is aimed at examining the access to and use of Internet by female academics in some universities in South Western Nigeria. The universities selected for study are state and federal governments owned universities. Private universities were excluded from the study because they are relatively new.

Corresponding Author: H.I.T. Akinyosoye, Principal Librarian, University Library, Federal University of Technology, P.M.B. 704, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria

Table 1: Universities in South Western Nigeria

S/N	Universities	Year of establishment	Generation (cetegory of period of establishment)	Ownership	Focus
1.	University of Ibadan	1948	1st	Federal Govt.	Conventional
2.	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	1962	1st	Federal Govt.	Conventional
3.	University of Lagos	1962	1st	Federal Govt.	Conventional
4.	Federal University of Technology, Akure	1981	3rd	Federal Govt.	Specialized
5.	University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	1988	3rd	Federal Govt.	Specialized
6.	Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye	1982	3rd	State Govt.	Conventional
7.	Lagos State University	1983	3rd	State Govt.	Conventional
8.	University of Ado-Ekiti	1982	3rd	State Govt.	Conventional
9.	Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso	1990	3rd	State Govt.	Specialization
10.	Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko	1999	3rd	State Govt.	Conventional

Table 2: Questionnaires and the rate of return

Selected Universities	Abbr.	Distribution	Return rate	(%)	Owner-sship	Gene-ration	Focus
Obafemi Awolowo University	OAU	50	35	70	Federal	1st	Conventional
University of Ado Ekiti	UNAD	50	30	60	State	3rd	Conventional
Federal University of Technology Akure	FUTA	50	40	80	Federal	3rd	Specialized
Total		150	105	70			

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research instrument: The instrument of research is the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed and pre-tested on selected female academic staff in two universities.

Popuslation and sampling technique: Three universities were selected from eight in the South Western geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The sampling technique adopted was based on purposive stratified random sampling technique. The choice was based on three parameters, namely period of the establishment of the universities, ownership and the specialty or type. The following is the list of the State and Federal Owned Universities in South Western Nigeria (Table 1).

Out of the three first generation universities, one was selected. This is Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) which is also a conventional university. Out of the five states owned universities, one was selected and this is the University of Ado Ekiti, this represents a third generation conventional university. Out of the three specialized universities, one was selected and this is the Federal University of Technology, Akure. By this sampling technique, all the characteristics in the population are factored into the samples.

The sampled universities have many female academic staff, which cut across discipline and cadres. It was expected that the choice would exhibit variations in female academic staff population in term of cadre, subject specialization and the dimension of availability and accessibility to the Internet use.

A total of 150 questionnaires was distributed and 105 (70%) was returned and found useful. Table 2 shows the questionnaires according to institution and the rate of return.

Table 3: Internet use, institutions and discipline

Disciplines	OAU	FUTA	UNAD	Total per discipline	(%)
Humanities	12	-	-	12	11.4
Social Science	9	-	16	25	23.8
Science	8	21	8	37	35.2
Engineering	6	11	4	21	20.00
Environmental Studies	-	3	-	3	2.9
Agriculture	-	5	2	7	6.7
Total	35	40	30	105	

RESULTS

Internet access: The study examined the use of the Internet by female academics in some selected universities in South Western Nigeria. The first issue considered was the institutions and the areas of study of the respondents, which we term 'discipline' in the study.

Table 3 shows the use of the Internet by female academics in the three selected universities according to their institutions and disciplines or areas of study. Based on each university, the largest numbers of respondents using the Internet in Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) are from the Humanities (12 out of 35 respondents). This represents 34.2% of the total respondents from other fields of study in the university. The rest 65.8% are distributed among social sciences, sciences and engineering as follows, social sciences (9) science (8) engineering (6).

In the Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA) 21 respondents, which represents about 53.8% of the total respondents, are from the Sciences. The rest are distributed among three other disciplines namely; engineering (11), environmental (3) and agriculture (5). The respondents from University of Ado-Ekiti (UNAD) show that 16 representing 61.5% are from Social Sciences. The rest are from science (8), engineering (4) and agriculture (2). The total figures of the three institutions according to areas of study show that science has the

Table 4: Respondents according to status

S/N	Grade	OAU	FUTA	UNAD	Total	(%)
1.	Graduate assistant	2	12	-	14	13.3
2.	Assistant lecturer	10	10	9	29	27.6
3.	Lecturer II	11	8	7	26	24.8
4.	Lecturer I	7	4	5	16	15.2
5.	Senior lecturer	4	5	8	17	16.2
6.	Reader	-	1	1	2	1.90
7.	Professor	1	-	-	1	0.95
	Total	35	40	30	105	

Table 5: Ownership of computer

Universities	Ownership of computer	No. of respondent	(%)
OAU	18	35	31
FUTA	15	30	26
UNAD	25	40	43

Table 6: Access to computers

Universities	Access No.	(%)
OAU	24	34.2
FUTA	21	30.8
UNAD	24	35.2

Table 7: Use of computers

Universities	No	%
OAU	20	43.4
FUTA	21	45.6
UNAD	5	10.8

largest number of female academics using the Internet (37) followed by Social sciences (25) then by engineering (21), humanities (12), agriculture (7) and environmental (3).

Table 4 shows that there are 14 Graduate Assistants representing 13.3% of the total respondents. The largest group of respondents is the Assistant Lecturer grade with 29 persons, which amounted to 27.6% of the total number. Also Lecturer II grade constitutes 24.8%, while Lecturer I is 15.2%. The Senior Lecturer grade has 17 persons, which is 16.2% of the total respondents. Readers and Professors take 1.9 and 0.95%, respectively of the population.

The distribution of respondents according to cadre shows that Junior Academics from the grade of Graduate Assistants to Lecturers II constitutes the majority, which accounts for 65% of the total number and the Senior Academics from Lecturer I to Professor accounts for the balance of the 35%.

Table 5 shows that 25 (43%) of female academics in UNAD owned computers, followed by OAU where 18 (31%) owned computers. In FUTA only 15 (26%) or respondents have their own computers.

From Table 6 above it could be seen that female academics from UNAD claimed that 24 or 35.2% of their members have access to computers. At OAU, 24 or 34.2% have access to computers while in FUTA 21 or 30.8% have access to computers.

Table 7 shows that 20 female academics in OAU make use of computers. representing 43.4% while in FUTA, 21 females representing 45.6% make use of computers,

whereas only 5, representing 10.8% of the female academics in UNAD make use of computers.

Apart from the issues of ownership of computers, access to computers and use of computers, the study sought to find out the competency of the respondents and the frequency or regularity of use of computers by female academics. The reason for assessing computer use before the actual use of the Internet stems from a study by Uwaifo (2006). In his study of computer anxiety and perceived ease of use by library staff in Nigerian universities, he discovered that the ownership of computers or that one has access to computers does not mean that an individual would use computers. Inferring from the study, ownership or having access to the computers would not translate to automatic user of the Internet.

Table 8 shows that 56 or 53.3% of the respondents are competent in the use of computers. The table also shows the frequency of use of computers where 52 or 49.5% of the respondents use computers regularly.

Internet access: The study sought to know the sources that female academics use in their access to the Internet in their institutions.

Table 9 shows that the Internet access is more through the university Internet facilities then followed by private Internet facilities. The private Internet facilities refer to the commercial Internet centers.

Table 10 shows that access to e-mail was the main purpose for which the respondents use the Internet. The table also shows that above 80% of the female academics used the Internet to send and receive E-mail. On the whole 83.8% use the Internet to access E-mail. This was closely followed by use of the Internet for research as 80.9% of the respondents claimed they used the Internet for research purposes. The third major use of the Internet was to search for job. This shows that 35.2% or 37 of them use the Internet to search for job. This is followed by listening to music which recorded 20%. Watching film and for socialization are 16.1 and 15.2% respectively while the last purpose was for sundry information which recorded 14.2%.

The findings of this study, at least in respect to major use of the Internet by undergraduate in universities, support the observation of Ojoko (2005) who studied 590 undergraduates using the Internet. She found that 516 about 87.5% of the students used the Internet for E-mail. This study of female academics' use of the Internet in the universities also show that the main purpose for the use of the Internet is for sending and receiving E-mail rather than for research which is expected of female academics.

Internet use capability: Apart from the use of the Internet for accessing e-mail, the respondents were asked about their Internet use capability in respect of such skills like

Table 8: Competency in the use of computers

Universities	Usage		Competence				Frequency			
	Yes	No	V. good	Good	Just fair	Poor	Daily	Twice a week	Once a week	Occasion
OAU	20	5	3	15	5	2	15	2	9	7
FUTA	21	11	5	12	10	5	11	4	2	25
UNAD	5	-	10	11	8	-	18	2	3	2
Total	46	16	18	38	23	7	44	8	14	30

Table 9: Internet access series

Universities	Univ. Internet	Library Internet	Faculties	Private
OAU	15	2	-	16
FUTA	18	-	2	5
UNAD	-	-	-	7

Table 10: Purpose of use of internet

	OAU	(%)	FUTA	(%)	UNAD	(%)	Total	(%)
Access e-mail	28	80	32	80.0	28	93.3	88	83.8
Conduct research	31	88.6	35	87.5	19	63.3	85	80.9
Job search	15	42.9	21	52.5	1	33	37	35.2
Listen to music	6	17.1	12	30.0	3	10	21	20
Watch film	7	20	9	22.5	1	33	17	16.1
Socialize	5	14.2	6	15.0	5	16.7	16	15.2
For sundry Information	-	-	7	17.5	8	26.7	15	14.2

Table 11: Internet use capability

	OAU	FUTA	UNAD	Total	%
Web browsing	26	23	15	64	60.9
E-commerce	13	6	3	22	20.9
Tele-conferencing	6	6	3	15	14.2
Discussion group	10	25	9	44	41.9

web browsing, e-commerce, tele-conferencing and discussion group. Table 11 summarizes the capabilities of the respondents according to institutions.

Sixty four (60.9%) of the respondents reported they have capacity in Web browsing while discussion group took the second position of 44 or 41.9%. E-commerce took the third position of 20.9% and Tele-conferencing took the fourth position of 14.2%.

DISCUSSION

Problems encountered in the use of internet by female academics: The respondents were asked to state the major problem faced in their use of Internet facilities. Their major problems were:

- Many computers they have access to, were not connected to the Internet,
- There were erratic power supply which disrupted their use of the facilities,
- There were no training in the use of the Internet
- Some of the time, the computers were too slow for the period they had planned to spend,
- There was regular malfunctioning of the computers.

CONCLUSION

The study has implication for the authorities of Nigerian universities and the academic staff of Nigerian universities. The problems encountered by female academics may not be too different from those faced by their male counterparts. Each academic staff should strive to own his or her own computers. This is the place to begin, because ownership would motivate the individual to use the computers and access to the Internet would naturally follow.

There is the need for users to have Internet searching skill in order to get useful materials on the Internet. There are different skills that needed to be learnt in order to derive maximum benefit from the Internet. University authorities should facilitate access to the Internet by providing all the necessary infrastructure and accessories that would make academic staff benefit from the new information technologies.

The following issues would encourage the use of Internet in the academic setting.

Academic staff should offer themselves for training on the use of the Internet facilities. Universities should spend more on the provision of required infrastructures to upgrade their Internet facilities. The computers available should have Internet facilities with fast connection speed. Experienced and well trained network administrator should be employed to manage universities Internet facilities and the Cyber Café. There should be special reduced rate of browsing for academic staff in the University Cyber Cafés.

REFERENCES

Idowu, A.O. and I.M. Mabawonku, 1999. Information technology facilities and applications in some Nigerian research and university libraries. Afr. J. Library, Archives and Information Sci., pp: 9-25.

Kipkongat, J., A. Kurate and M.K. Smedu, 2005. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) adoption by Small and Medium Scale Enterprise (SME) tourism stakeholders in the Durbar region, South Africa. Afr. J. Library, Archives and Information Sci., 15: 133-140.

Mutula, S.M., 2001. Internet access in East Africa: A future outlook. Library Review, 50: 34-38.

Ojedokun, A.A., 2001. Internet Access and usage by students of Botswana. Afr. J. Library, Archives and Information Sci., 11: 97-107.

Ojedokun, A.A. and E. Owolabi, 2003. Internet access competence and the use of the Internet for teaching and research activities by University of Botswana Academic staff. Afr. J. Library Archives and Information Sci., 13: 43-53.

Ojoko, B.A., 2005. Studies on Internet access and usage by students of the Federal University of Technology Akure, Nigeria. Afr. J. Library, Archives and Information Sci., 15: 149-153.

Unegbu, A.N., 2000. Information communication networking in rural communities: The case of women in Imo State, Nigeria. J. Information Sci., 26: 51-59.

Uwaifo, S.O., 2006. Computer anxiety, self efficacy, ergonomics and perceived ease of use of computerized library systems by library staff in Nigerian universities. Unpublished doctorate dissertation, Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of Ibadan. pp: 23.

Windrum, P. and S. de Jong, 2000. Internet Access in the Netherlands: Themes and Issues. Paper for the SEIN project. Available at: http://www.digitale-chancen.de/content/downloads/index.cfm?key=40