

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE USE OF INTERNET RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH BY POSTGRADUATE TECHNICAL EDUCATION STUDENTS IN EKITI STATE UNIVERSITY, ADO-EKITI

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Abstract

This study assessed the use of internet resources for research among postgraduate technical education students in EKSU. Specifically, the study highlights the types and extent of internet resource use in research among the students, identified the factors influencing the use of internet resources and challenges faced by postgraduate students in using internet resources. The descriptive research design was employed and a total of 50 technical education students were selected for an in-depth study in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. The result revealed that the major internet resources used by the students were search engines like Google, Bing, Yahoo, Google Scholar, open access journals were also commonly used which highlights a limited knowledge on the availability and usage of internet resources for research. It was discovered that gender and age interactively influence the use of internet resources among post-graduate students ($(F(2, 48)=.3.198, p<.05)$). Some of the major challenges to the use of internet resources in research among the students are technological barriers, information overload, and concerns about academic integrity. Additional hurdles include a lack of digital skills, insufficient guidance, and issues like outdated information and digital fatigue. It is therefore recommended that institutions should prioritize and expand digital literacy programs for postgraduate students.

Keywords: Internet resources, research, postgraduate students, technical education

Introduction

The internet has become an indispensable tool for academic research providing access to an immense repository of information and resources that support knowledge acquisition, critical thinking, and innovation. Postgraduate students, particularly in technical education, rely on the internet for accessing scholarly materials, conducting literature

reviews, and staying updated on emerging trends in their fields. Despite its benefits, the effectiveness and patterns of internet use for research among postgraduate students remain critical areas of investigation. This study seeks to assess how postgraduate students in technical education at Ekiti State University utilize internet resources on their academic pursuits. Understanding these aspects will

provide insights into improving digital literacy and resource accessibility for academic research. In today's digital age, the internet offers an unparalleled wealth of information, making it an invaluable tool for students at all levels of education.

The internet has become a fundamental part of students' life by providing them with convenient access to an extensive array of academic journals, databases, e-books, and scholarly articles (Rai, 2014; Deniz & Geyik, 2015). These resources cover a wide range of subjects and are often more up-to-date than traditional printed materials. Additionally, online resources are accessible 24/7, allowing students to conduct research at their own pace and on their own schedules. The internet also fosters collaboration and connectivity among students and researchers worldwide. This is evident in online forums, discussion boards, and social media platforms which enable students to share ideas, seek input from peers, and engage in academic discourse, mitigating geographical barriers that once limits collaboration (Sahin et al., 2010).

Although there has been a long history of internet in tertiary education facilitating research in education (Aminu, 2014), it did not become very important in research until the 1980s with the development of World Wide Web (www) by Tim Berners-Lee. ARPANET was only used to exchange emails and share data (Norman, 2020). The 1990s witnessed the rise of search engines like Yahoo! And Google making it easier for researcher to find relevant resources quickly.

Subsequently, social media in Web 2.0 enhances collaboration. The incorporation of the internet within the university environment has been shown to enhance

information access and communication by offering electronic publications (Aminu, 2014). This integration of the internet for educational and academic objectives has experienced significant growth, with numerous higher education institutions now integrating these technologies into their existing instructional models.

Bonk (2002) noted that it has become commonplace to encounter websites that host course materials and supplementary resources that complement traditional classroom teaching.

Furthermore, these resources cater to diverse learning styles and preferences, accommodating a broader spectrum of students. However, while the internet offers vast opportunities, students must also develop critical thinking and information literacy skills to discern credible sources from unreliable ones (Markhama & Buchanon, 2012). Despite information provided on the relevance and evolution of the internet in research, having the right skills still becomes pertinent to conducting an impactful research. In other words to harness the power of internet.

Statement of the Problem

The internet has revolutionized academic research by providing access to a vast array of resources including scholarly articles, e-books, databases, and other digital materials. For postgraduate students, particularly those in technical education, the internet serves as a critical tool for conducting research, exploring emerging trends and acquiring in-depth knowledge in their field of study. However, despite the widespread availability of internet resources, several challenges hinder effective utilization.

Postgraduate students in technical education at Ekiti State University may face issues such as limited access to high quality, subscription-based academic resources, inadequate digital literacy skills, unreliable internet connectivity, and difficulty in evaluating the credibility of online materials. These challenges could lead to suboptimal use of internet resources, ultimately affecting the quality of their research and academic performance. Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical data on the extent to which these students utilize internet resources, the specific types of resources they access, and how these resources impact their research outputs. Addressing these gaps is essential to understanding their research behavior and providing targeted interventions to enhance their use of internet resources. This study, therefore, seeks to assess the utilization of internet resources for research by postgraduate technical education students at Ekiti State University identify the challenges they encounter, and propose strategies to improve their access to and use of these resources.

Purpose of the Study

The study is to assess the use of internet resources among postgraduate VTE PG students in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. The specific objectives are to:

- i. assess the types and extent of internet resource use in research among postgraduate VTE students;
- ii. identify the factors influencing the use of internet resources for research among postgraduate VTE students;
- iii. challenges faced by postgraduate VTE students in

using internet resources for research in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti.

Research Question

1. To what extent do postgraduate technical students in Ekiti State University use internet resources for research purposes?
2. What types of internet resources are most frequently accessed by these students for their research?
3. What challenge do postgraduate technical education students encounter when using internet resources for research?

Hypotheses

1. There is a significant relationship between the level of digital literacy with Types and Extent of Internet Resources Use by Postgraduate VTE Students in EKSU
2. The Factors influencing the Utilization of Internet Resources by Postgraduate VTE Students in EKSU
3. The effect of gender, age and marital status on use of internet Resources by VTE Postgraduate Students in EKSU
4. The effect of challenges faced by postgraduate VTE students in using Internet Resources for Research

Empirical Review

Quite a study has been carried out on utilization of internet resources for research by students. Ime et al., (2021) assessed the availability and utilization of internet resources for final year students research project in Nigeria tertiary institutions. It was discovered that the internet plays a major role in helping undergraduate researchers' access large number of materials from different parts of the globe. It was also found that factors

such as internet speed, digital literacy skills and guidance on the use of internet resources were major factors influencing the use of internet resources among students. This was also true with the study of this was also true with the study of Oberiri (2020) on the utilization of internet resources for learning and research among students of Taraba University, Nigeria using the survey method among 30 students. Most of them stated that Google search engine and Google scholar was the major ones used for their research. The students affirmed that it helps them perform their research as at when due. They are also familiar with scientific journals like Elsevier, Pubmed, and Springer which is very helpful to their research. However, it was stated that the major problems experienced is the lack of digital readiness, inefficient internet infrastructure among others. Furthermore, Muhammad (2018) assess the use of internet for research in selected universities in North-Central Nigeria using the survey research method.

Findings showed that the use of the internet for research was common among students and most especially the use of search engines like Google and Bing for research purpose.. In examining the usage of internet resources and learning among students in Nigeria, Apuke and Iyendo (2022) carried out a mixed method survey among 250 undergraduate students in three selected universities within North-Eastern Nigeria. To gain an in-depth understanding of the perception of the students, Focus Group was conducted with 18 students. The studies revealed that most of them make use of their smartphones to access the internet and were more conversant with the use of Google, Yahoo as their search

engines and also open e-journals. However, they face issues such as poor internet infrastructure within the school community, digital literacy, and lack of guidance and attitude of staff towards the use of internet. The study of Abubakar and Adetimiri (2016) considered postgraduate students' use of E-resources in Nigerian University Libraries using a survey research design and multistage sampling technique to select 2,726 postgraduate students in 16 federal universities in Nigeria. It was revealed that the uses of internet resources among the postgraduate students were high and it influences their research. However, the limited library e-resources impede their internet usage.

Methodology

The descriptive research design was employed in this study. The study population consists of all postgraduate vocational and technical education students in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. A total of 50 postgraduate students was selected using the stratified sampling technique which was to ensure that all categories of post-graduate students. The strata used were the levels (Postgraduate Diploma, Masters, and PhD) and Gender (Male and Female). A total of 10 Postgraduate diplomas students, 30 Masters students, and 10 PhD students were selected in all. The research instrument used was a well-structured questionnaire which was structured into three sections, A, B and C.

Section A contained items on socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents: gender, age and marital status. Section B on types and frequency of internet resources and factors influencing the use of internet resource for research while section C focuses on challenges and barriers faced by PG technical education (TE)

students. The four-point likert scale will be used with the following score: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1).

The instrument content validity was ascertained by experts in Technical Education and Test and Measurement in the Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. The instrument was modified based on the comments of the experts to meet the face validity requirements. The reliability of the instruments was piloted with a small group of postgraduate students to refine clarity and accuracy. Statistical methods was used to test for consistency and reliability if the finding, and triangulation will be employed by comparing data from multiple sources, instrument was carried out using the test-retest method. To this end the instruments were administered

on 10 post graduate VTE students in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State (UNIBEN) twice within the interval of 1 week. The two responses were correlated and analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The reliability coefficient of 0.77 was obtained which was considered high enough for the study. The data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS v. 25). For the descriptive analysis, frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations was used. ANOVA was used to examine the factors influence the use of internet resources among the students tested at 0.05 level of significance Results obtained were presented in tables.

Results

Table 1: Types and Extent of Internet Resources Use by Postgraduate VTE Students in EKSU

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
1.	Academic Databases (EBSCO, JSTOR, ProQuest etc.)	16 (32.0)	21 (42.0)	8 (16.0)	5 (10.0)	1.96	0.70
2.	Search Engines (Google, Bing, Yahoo, Ask etc.)	36 (72.0)	14 (28.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2.72	0.63
3.	Educational websites (research notes, course materials)	14 (28.0)	17 (34.0)	11 (22.0)	8 (16.0)	1.74	0.61
4.	E-book and digital text	10 (20.0)	14 (28.0)	17 (34.0)	9 (18.0)	1.50	0.69
5.	Online forums and research communities (Quora research gates etc.)	5(10.0)	12 (24.0)	12 (24.0)	21 (42.0)	1.02	0.74
6.	Government and NGO websites (Census Data, reports)	8 (16.0)	11 (22.0)	18 (36.0)	13 (26.0)	1.28	0.72
7.	Open Access Journals	18 (36.0)	25 (50.0)	5 (10.0)	2 (4.0)	2.18	0.61
8.	Artificial intelligence tools (ChatGPT, Google Bard etc.)	9(18.0)	14 (28.0)	18 (36.0)	18 (18.0)	1.46	0.63
9.	Others e.g. Library databases, Endnote etc.	9 (18.0)	10 (20.0)	17 (34.0)	14 (28.0)	1.28	0.63

Survey, 2023

In Table 1, it was revealed that a total of 74% agreed that they make use of academic databases like ProQuest, JSTOR for their research. All the students seem to make use of search engines like Google, Bing, Yahoo for their research work. A total of 62% agreed that they use educational websites like research notes, course materials in their research while a total of 38% disagreed. Subsequently, it was revealed that not many of the students (48%) agreed to be using E-book and digital text. Only a few percentage of the respondents (34%) agreed that they do make use of online forums and research communities (Quora research gates etc.) while a total of 66% of the respondents disagreed. This is also the case in the use of Government and NGO websites (Census data, reports) for research as only a total of 38% agreed to be using this while a total of 62% of the respondents disagreed. It was also

revealed that a total of 86% of the students do make use of open access journals while 14% do not. The use of artificial intelligence tools in research was not so common among the students as only 46% of the students agreed to its usage while 54% disagreed. A few (38%) percentage of the students also use other internet resources such as library databases etc. Furthermore, it was revealed that search engines (Mean=2.72; SD=0.63) is the most commonly used internet resources by students. This is followed by open access journals (Mean=2.18, SD=0.61), academic databases (Mean=1.96, SD=0.70), and educational websites (Mean= 1.74, SD=0.61), while the list used are artificial intelligence tools (Mean=1.46, SD=0.63), Government and NGO websites (Mean=1.28, SD=0.72), and online forums (Mean=1.02, SD=0.74) in that order.

Table 2: Factors influencing the Utilization of Internet Resources by Postgraduate VTE Students in EKSU

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
1.	Access to technology	15 (30.0)	17 (34.0)	10 (20.0)	8 (12.0)	1.78	0.658
2.	Digital literacy	14 (28.0)	22 (44.0)	16 (16.0)	8 (14.0)	1.88	0.774
3.	Institutional support	9 (18.0)	17 (34.0)	17(34.0)	7 (14.0)	1.56	0.695
4.	Field of Study	12 (24.0)	18 (36.0)	12 (24.0)	8 (16.0)	1.68	0.712
5.	Time Constraints	4 (8.0)	11 (22.0)	21 (42.0)	14 (28.0)	1.10	0.750
6.	Technological infrastructure	16 (32.0)	19 (38.0)	9 (18.0)	6 (12.0)	1.90	0.695
7.	Awareness to available resources	11 (22.0)	16 (32.0)	12 (24.0)	11 (22.0)	1.54	0.697
8.	Other (Personal motivation, ethical factors, government policies etc.)	10 (20.0)	18 (26.0)	14 (28.0)	8 (16.0)	1.60	0.680

Survey, 2023

Result presented in Table 2 on the factors influencing the utilization of internet resources by Postgraduate VTE students in Ekiti State University revealed that a total of 64% of the students agreed that access to technology which can include internet connectivity influence the utilization of internet resources while a total of 36 disagreed. Majority of the students (72%) agreed that digital literacy is a major factor influencing utilization of internet resources by Postgraduate students while a total of 28% disagreed. A total of 52% agreed that institutional support could influence utilization of internet resources by PG VTE students while a total of 48% disagreed indicating varying responses. Majority of the students also believed that the field of study is also important in influencing utilization of internet resources in research as a total of 70% agreed while 30% disagreed. Only a few percentage of the respondents think time constraint could be an influencing factor to utilization of internet resource for research. It was also revealed that a total of 70%

agreed that technological infrastructure could influence the utilization of internet resources by PG VTE students while a total of 30 disagreed. A total of 54% of the respondents agreed that awareness to available resources could also influence the use of internet resource for research among the students while a total of 46% disagreed. Lastly, some of the respondents (46%) think that other factors such as personal motivation, ethical factors and government policies could influence the use of internet resource for research by VTE PG students in EKSU while majority (54%) disagreed. In addition, in rating the factors that is believed to influence the utilization of internet resources by students' technological infrastructure (Mean=1.90, SD=0.695), digital literacy (Mean=1.88, SD=0.774), access to technology were major factors to be considered while the least factor that will most likely not influence utilization of internet resource is time constraints (Mean=1.10, SD=0.750).

Table 3: Three-way ANOVA result showing influence of gender, age and marital status on use of internet Resources by VTE Postgraduate Students in EKSU

Dependent Variable: Utilization of Internet Resources
Type III Sum of

Source	Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	605.158 ^a	13	46.551	1.055	.426
Intercept	9674.860	1	9674.860	219.362	.000
Gender	1.515	1	1.515	.034	.854
Age	21.686	2	10.843	.246	.783
Marital	.083	2	.042	.001	.999
Gender * Age	282.089	2	141.044	3.198	.043
Gender * Marital	89.493	1	89.493	2.029	.163
Age * Marital	138.686	2	69.343	1.572	.222
Gender * Age * Marital	159.487	2	79.744	1.808	.179
Error	1543.658	35	44.105		

Total	32624.00	49
	0	
Corrected Total	2148.816	48
a. R Squared = .282 (Adjusted R Squared = .015)		

3-Way Analysis of Variance result presented in Table 3 on the influence of gender, age and marital status on use of internet resources by VTE Postgraduate students in EKSU revealed that gender ($F(2, 48)=.34$, $p>.05$), age ($F(2, 48)=.246$, $p>.05$) and marital status ($F(2, 48)=.001$, $p>.05$) does not significantly influence the use of internet resource by VTE Postgraduate students. Interactively, gender and age ($F(2, 48)=.3.198$, $p<.05$) significantly influence use of internet

resources by VTE postgraduate students while gender and marital status ($F(1, 48)=2.029$, $p>.05$), age and marital status ($F(2, 48)=1.572$, $p>.05$) do not significantly influence utilization of internet resources by VTE postgraduate students. In addition, it was shown that gender, age and marital status ($F(2, 48)=1.572$, $p>.05$) do not interactively influence utilization of internet resources by postgraduate VTE students in research.

Table 4: Challenges faced by postgraduate VTE students in using Internet Resources for Research

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
1.	Information overload	12 (24.0)	16 (32.0)	13 (26.0)	9 (18.0)	1.62	0.593
2.	Information credibility	8 (16.0)	12 (24.0)	19 (38.0)	11 (22.0)	1.34	0.695
3.	Academic integrity and Plagiarism	14 (28.0)	17 (34.0)	11 (22.0)	8 (16.0)	1.74	0.630
4.	Access restriction to resources	7 (14.0)	15 (30.0)	18 (36.0)	10 (20.0)	1.38	0.687
5.	Technological barriers	18 (36.0)	21 (42.0)	7 (14.0)	4 (8.0)	2.06	0.774
6.	Lack of digital skills	14 (28.0)	13 (26.0)	9 (18.0)	14 (28.0)	1.54	0.656
7.	Lack of guidance	11 (22.0)	19 (38.0)	12 (24.0)	8 (16.0)	1.66	0.675
8	Others (Outdated information, digital fatigue)	12 (24.0)	14 (28.0)	10 (20.0)	4 (8.0)	1.48	0.630

Survey, 2023

Result presented in Table 4 on the challenges faced by postgraduate VTE students in using internet resources showed that a majority of the students (56%) believed that information overload is one the problems while a total of 44% of the

respondents disagreed. Furthermore, it was revealed that only some of the respondents agreed (40%) that information credibility could be a major challenge to VTE students in using internet resources while majority (60%) disagreed. Indicating

that information credibility might not be a major challenge. It was also shown that a total of 62% agreed that academic integrity also constitute a major problem faced by postgraduate VTE students in using internet resources for research while 38% disagreed. Access restriction to internet resources might not be a major challenge as 44% of the respondents agreed while 56% disagreed. On technological barriers, a total of 78% of the respondents agreed while 22% of the respondents disagreed that it constitute the major challenge faced by PG VTE students in EKSU. A total of 54% of the respondents agreed that lack of digital skills affect is a major challenge faced by PG VTE students in using internet resources for research while a total of 46% disagreed. Furthermore, a total of 60% agreed that lack of guidance could be a major challenge faced by postgraduate VTE students in using internet resources for research while a total of 40% disagreed. 52% of the respondents thinks there could be other challenges such as outdated information and digital fatigue. While a total of 48% disagreed. Subsequently in Table 4, it was shown that technological barriers (Mean=2.06, SD=0.774) is the major challenge faced by the students, this is followed by academic integrity (Mean=1.74, SD=0.630), lack of guidance (Mean=1.66, SD=0.675).

Discussion

Findings obtained on the usage of internet resources for research among the postgraduate technical education students revealed that most students reported using academic databases like ProQuest and JSTOR, along with search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo for their research while they also rely on educational websites for course materials and

research notes. However, it was observed that only few of them students utilize E-books, digital texts, online forums, and government or NGO websites for their research while majority of students turn to open access journals for academic information, while the use of artificial intelligence tools remains relatively low. In other words, search engines like Google, Bing, Yahoo, Google Scholar are most widely used internet resources for research among the postgraduate student reflecting their universal appeal. Open access journals were also pronounced among the students highlighting their importance in research. This is in line with the findings of Muhammad (2018) who highlighted the major internet resources used by students in research and found search engines to be widely used. Similarly, Oberiri (202) discovered that search engines were commonly used among students because of their easy access and less technicality involved in accessing them. In addition, it was noted that open access journals were also commonly used due to low access restrictions.

On the factors influencing students perceive access to internet resources and its use for research, the major factors identified in the study were digital literacy, institutional support, field of study, and internet technological infrastructure as pivotal factors influencing their use of internet resources. This finding supports that of Ime et al., (2021) who discovered the major factors influencing the use of internet resources among students were the availability of internet resources, digital literacy and guidance. In addition, the result showed that socio-demographic factors such as age, gender and marital status does not

individually influence the use of internet resources to among the students. However, there is a notable interaction between gender and age, which alters usage patterns of internet resources in research among postgraduate students.

The major challenges highlighted in the study by the students on the use of internet resources for research include; technological barriers, information overload and academic integrity, which can hinder their effective use of internet resources, lack of digital skills, insufficient guidance, and other factors like outdated information and digital fatigue. However, concerns about information credibility are less prevalent, suggesting that students generally trust the sources they access. Access restrictions to internet resources do not seem to be a major obstacle for most students. It corroborates with that of Apuke and Iyendo (2022) whose study found that the major problems of the use of internet resource centers around access to internet infrastructure, lack of digital literacy and guidance on the use of internet resources for research. This is also similar to the highlighted problems of the use of internet resources among postgraduate students as found by Abubakar and Adetimiri (2016).

Conclusion

This study assessed the use of internet resources for research among postgraduate technical education students in EKSU. Specifically, the study highlights the types and extent of internet resource use in research among the students, identified the factors influencing the use of internet resources and challenges faced by postgraduate students in using internet resources. It was evident from the result obtained

that many of the postgraduate students' still have limited knowledge on the availability and usage of internet resources for research. It is evident as many of them only supported the use and reliance on search engines and open access journals while they are literary new to use of AI tools in enhancing better research and other research communities. Some of the influencing factors and challenges are technological barriers, information overload, and concerns about academic integrity. Additional hurdles include a lack of digital skills, insufficient guidance, and issues like outdated information and digital fatigue. It is therefore recommended that institutions should prioritize and expand digital literacy programs for postgraduate students. These programs should cover essential skills such as effective searching, critically evaluating online sources, and using research tools which can be achieved through workshops, online courses etc.

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