Assessing Internet and Reading Culture among Secondary School Students

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Abstract
This study investigated the impact of the Internet on the reading culture of students of Government Secondary School, Anguwan Romi. The study adopted Uses and Gratification media theory to explain the relationship between internet usage and reading culture of secondary school students. Survey method was adopted; a total of 158 questionnaires were distributed to the students. The study found that students of Government Secondary school Anguwan Romi are conversant with the Internet and used it as a means of improving their reading culture and other academic activities, while some misuse the Internet due to poor guidance on how to use it positively, thus making it a distraction. The study also found that 15% of the students spent one hour on the Internet; 25% of the students spent two hours on the Internet; 24% of the student spent five hours on the Internet; while 49, representing 36% of the students, are always on the Internet. The study concluded that the Internet has contributed in promoting students' reading culture and has reduced the culture of going to the library to read. The study recommended that government should provide its schools with reading facilities like e-libraries and teach them how to use the Internet to source for reading materials and for other academic activities.

Key Words: *Reading, Culture, Public, Internet, Students*

Introduction

The Internet is a digital communication platform delivered to a wide variety of devices, including desktop computers, wireless laptops, smart phones, and other mobile devices. The Internet according to Wells (2000) is a computer-mediated communication tool, providing the individual with access to a broad spectrum of information and unique communication technologies. The Internet provides a wide range of international resources often very well organized which allows easy information access and exchange.The Internet is a double-edged sword, as students can access any educational data base and learn about any country.However, they can also be subjected to perverse and deviant topics. Educational institutionsuse the internet infrastructure to improve and

supplement traditional courses and degree programmes made available on their web sites (Hick, 2002). The Internet allows students and teachers to exchange greetings, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct meetings, share knowledge, offer emotional support, make plans, brainstorm ideas, learn about other cultures and otherwise broaden their mental horizon (Baker, 2000). The Internet is an effective teaching tool in university education as many university teachers publish their course materials via the internet (Cheung & Huang, 2005).

Readingis a process that requires the use of complex thought process to interpret printing symbols as meaningful units and comprehend them as a thought unit in order to understand a printed message (Collins & Cheek, 1999).Reading is one of the fundamental building blocks of learning, and becoming a skilled and adaptable reader enhances the chances of success in academics and beyond (Sisulu, 2004). Reading is not only meant for success in examinations, but it has the potential to enhance individual political participation in a democratic and structured society. Technological development has influenced and changed reading habits in our society today.While technology is slowly taking a steady control over individual lives, the reading habit is fast vanishing into thin air (Hindu, 2004).Reading according to Holte (1998) adds quality to life and provides access to culture and cultural heritage.He pointed out that reading empowers and emancipates citizens and brings people together. It is one of the oldest habits of human civilization. It can also be defined as the process of interpreting written language.

Reading enhancesthe application of recorded knowledge enabling citizens to be readily mobilized for attainment of political, educational, social and economic goals of the nation.It has immense value for the success of every society as it imparts knowledge; hence, the ability to read should be highly valued because of its pre-condition for social and economic advancement. Reading is one of the basic things a child begins to do in the early stages of formal education within the school building. Children also learn to read from their parents even before they start

schooling. Reading is very powerful and indispensable tool for learning and acquisition of the varied skills and experiences needed by man to develop a satisfactory personal life. The school library is a gateway to knowledge and serves as a starting point or road map to reading and the promotion of reading culture(Mefor, 2011).

Similarly, Osundare (2009) argues that a country's level of development is a function of its level of mental and cultural evolution as well as the state of its educational advancement. This paper seesreading as the process of studying and mentally digesting the content of information material for immediate or future use.This study therefore examined the effects of the Internet on the reading culture of students of government secondary school Anguwan Romi in Kaduna State.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are

1. To ascertain why students of Government Secondary School Anguwan Romi use the Internet.
2. To determine the extent to whichstudents of the government secondary school use the Internet.
3. To identify ways in which the Internet affects the reading culture of the students of Government Secondary School Anguwan Romi.

Research Questions

RQ1. Why do students of Government Secondary School Anguwan Romi use the Internet?

RQ2. To what extent do students of Government Secondary School Anguwan Romi use the Internet?

RQ3. How does the Internet affect the reading culture of students of Government Secondary School Anguwan Romi?

Internet and Reading Culture

A study by Oluwaferanmi (2017) posits that students today are the luckiest in that they have modern technology easily available to them, unlike in the past when students had to rely on their books

and those they could find in the libraries. Thus scholars believe that the Internet can help students academically by improving the quality of their works.

A study by Salako and Tamiya (2007) found that the Internet is a technology globally dominated by young people, particularly students who are more inclined to exploit Internet resources for education, social interaction and entertainment.They also found that students now use the Internet intensely to communicate with existing friends and to also make new friends. It observed that the emergence of the Internet has been of great help to students especially towards improving them academically. It however noted that students can misuse the Internet, be it through cyber bullying or being distracted by it, which can negatively have an impact on them.

Ngoumandjoka (2012) is of the view that the Internet has become a daily commodity in most students' lives. However, the addictive-like features of the Internet makes whoever excessively uses it a potential victim of its negative effects e.g. impaired sleeping patterns, poor academic performance, mental and physical health problems, etc. A number of students now depend heavily on the Internet for answers to their assignments and no longer feel the need to go to libraries.

Salako and Tiamiyu's (2007) studies however found that students now use the Internet intensely to communicate with existing friends and to also make new friends. The emergence of the Internet has been of great help to students, and it has helped in making them improve academically. In view of the above conflicting view, this study tried to find out the impact ofthe Internet onthe reading culture of students of Government Secondary School, Anguwan Romi in Kaduna State.

Theoretical Framework

The paper employed the Uses and Gratification theory to explain the impact of the Internet on the reading culture of public secondary school students in Kaduna State. The theory was

propounded by Elihu Katz and Jay Blumler in 1974 as a reaction to traditional mass communication research emphasizing on the sender and the message.

It is an approach to understand why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. The theory also discusses how users deliberately choose media that will satisfy given needs and allow one to enhance knowledge, relaxation, social interactions/ companionship, diversion, or escape (Peirce, 2007). The Uses and Gratification theory strives to understand what people do with media outlets and the reasons behind their decisions and actions. Katz and Blumler describe the concept as the social and psychological origins of needs which generate expectations of the mass media and other sources which lead to differential patterns of media exposure resulting in needs gratifications and other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones (Katz, Blumler,&Gurevitch, 1973).

Through the Uses and Gratifications research, communication scholars have shown that everywhere, people selectively expose themselves to mass media content, choosing only those media messages that would serve the function of satisfying or gratifying their needs (Katz, 1985).

Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) identify five basic assumptions of the theory which provide a framework for understanding the correlation between media and its audiences. They are:

1. An audience is conceived as active i.e. they are goal-oriented and attempt to achieve their goals through media.
2. The audience determines the absorption of media content and does not allow the media to influence them.
3. The media compete with other sources of need satisfaction i.e. the needs served by mass communication is made up of a segment of a wider range human needs and the rate at which they can be adequately met through mass consumption varies.

4. Uses and gratification emphasises audience members and motive for making specific consumption choice and the consequences of that media used.

Justification for Using the Theory

With the increased use of the Internet around the world, the concern of many communication theorists is on the need to investigate what people do with the Internet and whether the old communication theories still apply to the Internet.Scholars like Ruggiero predicted that the emergence and widespread usage of the Internet would come with new changes in roles, personal, and social habits of the media users. This diversification of the use of media is what promotes the Uses and Gratification theory. Similarly, Stafford, Stafford and Schkade (2004) observe that the emergence of new media and computer-mediated technologies have rejuvenated the Uses and Gratification theory and have also provided a new wave of scholarship. Unlike the traditional media that provides users with limited choices, the new media comes with new options, and the theory helps to explain the user's needs and gratifications (Gallion, 2010).

The uses and gratification theory gives an insight into motivation for consuming a particularmedia content, which complements the findings about the interaction between the media and its users. The theory considers recipient's individual motives (Griffin, 2012).Katz, Gurevitch and Blumler hypothesized that some media recipients are aware of their needs.They can express them and then link them to different media uses which gratify those needs.

Methodology

The research adopted survey research method using questionnaire to investigate the impact of the Internet on the reading habit of students of public secondary schools.It is a research method in which a group or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data which is considered to be representing an entire group. The questionnaire consisted of a set of questions designed to gather information for analyzing the result used to answer the research questions. The population of this study is the entire students of

Government Secondary School Anguwan Romi, Kaduna numbering 230.

This study adopts the systematic sampling system. Systematic sampling system is a probability sampling method in which sample members from a larger population are selected according to a random starting point but with a fixed periodic interval. This interval called sampling interval is calculated by dividing the population size by desired sample size. In determining the sample size, the researcher decided to use Survey monkey online calculator in calculating the sample size. Using the calculator, the population of 230 was calculated at confidence level is 95%, with themargin of error being 5, to arrive at a sample size of 145.

In order to gather meaningful responses from the respondents, this study employs the use of questionnaire. This is because of the fact that the instrument of data collection for a survey research method is a questionnaire. The questionnaire according to Babbie (2010) is an instrument designed to gather or elicit information that will be subjected to further analysis.

Data are presented using frequency and percentage tables. Frequency table showed the variables of interest that formed the basis for classification and entries of frequencies. Data generated for this research are analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics are used to summarize data in an organized manner by describing the relationship between variables in a sample or population.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

SECTION A: Demographic data of respondents

Table 1: Gender of respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Male	72	52.2
Female	66	47.8
Total	138	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table one revealed that male respondents constitute 52.17% of the total students while the percentage of female respondents is 47.82%. This showed that there were more males from the school where the questionnaires were administered.

Table 2: Age of respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
10-12 years	16	11.6
13-15 years	37	26.8
16-19 years	78	56.5
20 years and above	7	5.1
Total	138	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 2 showed that ages 10-12 represent 11.6% of the population, 13-15 represents 26.8%. 16-19 represents 56.5%, while age group of 20 and above represents 5.1%. From the above table, it is evident that the ages 16-19 (56.5%) of the respondents form the dominant age unit.

Table 3: Class of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
SSS 1	26	18.8
SSS 2	32	23.2
SSS 3	80	58
Total	138	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The data above indicated that 18.8% of respondents were in SSS1, 23.2% were in SSS2, and 58% of the respondents were in SSS3.

Section B: Use of Internet

Table 4: How often do you use the Internet?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	78	56.5

Twice a Week	35	25.5
Weekly	25	18
Monthly	0	0
Others specify	0	0
Total	138	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The table indicated that 56.5% of the students use the Internet daily, 25.5% of the students use the Internet twice a week, 18% of the students use the Internet weekly, 0% of the student use the Internet monthly and 0% of students use the Internet under the others specify category.

Table 5: What do you use the Internet for?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Assignment	40	28.9
Research	45	32.6
Chatting with friends	46	33.3
Others specify	7	5.1
Total	138	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 5 indicated that 28.9% of the students use the Internet for their assignment, 32.6% use the Internet for research, 33.3% of the students use the Internet to chat with their friends while 5.1% of the students use the Internet for other purpose not mentioned in the options.

Table 6: How many hours do you spend on the Internet daily?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
One hour	22	15
Two hours	34	25
Five hours	33	24
Always	49	36
Total	138	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The data in table six indicated that 15% of students spend one hour on the internet, 25% of students spend two hours on the Internet,

24% spend five hours on the Internet, while 36% of students always spend their time on the internet.

Table 7: What means do you use to access the Internet?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Cell phones	93	67
School/ICT computers	12	9
Cyber cafes	6	4
Personal computers	27	19
Total	138	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The data in table 7 indicated that 67% of students access the Internet through cell phones, 9% through the school/ICT computers and 19% of the students through their personal computers. This means most students access the Internet through their cell phones.

Table 8: How does the Internet affect students' reading culture?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
It makes them lazy	13	9.4
It distracts them from their studies	62	44.9
It encourages negative habits	12	8.7
It aids easy understanding	16	11.6
It promotes plagiarism	35	25.4
Total	138	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The data in table 8 indicated that 9.4% of students said the Internet makes them lazywhile 44.9% of the students said the Internet

distracts them from their studies when they chat.8.7% said the Internet makes them learn bad things, 11.6% said it aids understanding and 25.4% said it promotes plagiarism.

Table 9: what benefits do you derive from the use of Internet?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Learn new things	54	39.1
It enhances communication	18	13.1
Update of news and information	13	9.4
Helps in assignments	53	38.4
Total	138	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The data above indicated that 39.1% of respondents learn new things from the Internet,13.1% of respondents said the Internet helps in improving their communication skills, 9.4% use the Internet to get news and information while 38.4% of respondents use the Internet for assignments.

Discussion of Findings

This paper examined the impact of the Internet on the reading culture of secondary school students in Government Secondary School, Anguwan Romi, Kaduna State. The research questions of this study were answered from the questionnaire data gathered for this study.

Data from table 5 showed that a majority of the students use the Internet to chat with their friends. This may be the reason most students in Government Secondary School Anguwan Romi own cellphones which they use to communicate with one another. It shows that the students spend most of their time on the Internet chatting rather than focusing on their studies. So the Internet has affected their reading culture negatively. Individuals who depend

on the media to meet their needs or desires will view the media as more important, and those who view the media as an important factor in their life are more likely to be affected by it. But the same table 5 indicated 61.5% used the Internet for academic activities(assignment (29%) and research (33%)) meaning that the Internet also influences students reading culture positively. This is supported by Ogedebe (2012) who agreed that a majority of students obtained relevant information such as academic materials from the Internet, thus suggesting that students use the Internet to enhance their study.

Data from table 6 showed that 36% of respondents use the Internet always, meaning that they are always online. This could be because most of the students own smartphones which they used to get access to the Internet. In this internet age, everybody wants to own a smartphone. The students depend on the Internet for many things like their assignments, research, etc.

Table 4 showed that 56.5% of the respondents use the Internet daily, and 25% use the Internet twice a week. This showed that the students spend most of their time online chatting with friends and playing video games. They also learn whatever they see online, be it good or bad.

The data in table 8 and 5 indicate that the Internet distracts students from their studies in the sense that it makes them chat instead of reading their books or surfing the net for information that will help them.

The advent of the Internet has led to the development of various social media applications for chatting or communicating with people which has continued to take students' time leaving books as old fashioned. Akin-Adaramola (2014) revealed that the topmost activity done by secondary school students is chatting, followed by downloading, watching videos online, surfing the web, using the Internet to study for school work, looking for other websites such as sports websites, reading news online, games websites and lastly online shopping. Statistically, 40% of students spend most of their

time chatting on social media daily, while 14.4% use the Internet for academic purpose daily. Children in the internet age enjoy easy access to an astonishing collection of digital information.
This concurs with Almasi (2017) who indicated that most of the observed students who accessed programmes via internet cafes used the Internet for entertainment and socializing purposes such as chatting on Whatsapp, twitter, Facebook, etc. During the interview, students with smart phones revealed that they used software applications like Whatsapp, Imo, etc. for downloading and uploading pictures, videos, and audio, listening to music, searching for friends, etc. In most schools, reading is associated with passing examinations and is seen as a means of accomplishing success.

Conclusion

The findings of this study confirmed that reading culture is a very vital ingredient for children's success in life. It has been found that students of Government Secondary School, Anguwan Romi mostly use the Internet for entertainment purpose instead of using it to improve their reading culture. A major phenomenon that has been linked to the dwindling reading culture of students is the coming of the Internet. Bankole (1999) however postulated that as good as the Internet is, it has also cast some measures of negative effects in students especially on their reading culture. Internet obsession or addiction has caused many kids to waste their valuable time surfing diverse anti-moral and socially inclined websites.

It is a fact that reading is very vital to the development of every child, especially in the 21st century, and children of this century seem to be too attached to technology.It is therefore advisable that schools and teachers should include ICT in their curriculum and also teach students the proper way to use the Internet. Including ICT in their curriculum would help Nigeria catch up with developed countries in terms of fast Internet as suggested by Mercer (2017).

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

1. Teachers should be tricky in setting their exam or assignment questions so as to make students read more and so that they would not go online and copy answers.
2. It is recommended that students should spend more time reading their books rather than spending time on the Internet for social activities.
3. A functional and fully stocked library should be provided for the students to encourage them to read and improve their reading culture.
4. The Internet should be used by students as a source of educational information and not just for social interaction.
5. Reading competition and awards should be organized to encourage students to read more.

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