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The use of mobile phones by third year undergraduate students of the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria

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Abstract
This research paper examined the use of mobile phones by third year (300 Level) undergraduate science students of Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was prepared for this study and administered on the students. In all, three hundred (300) copies were evenly distributed across the nine departments, while 245copies (81.6%) were duly completed, retrieved and found useable for this study. Thus, the sample population for the study consisted of two hundred and forty-five (245) students, comprising of 118 male students (48.2%) and 127 female students (51.8%)in the Faculty of Science. The findings revealed that 229 respondents (93.5%) have mobile phones, which they use for various academic and other purposes, namely: completion of assignments, reading newspapers, getting current information, seeking for scholarship, social media chatting, games etc. However, for the use of mobile phones by students to be academically impactful and rewarding, a number of recommendations were made in line with the findings.

Keywords: Mobile phone use, undergraduates, Federal University, Library, Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria

Introduction

The use of mobile phones in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, particularly, in the universities, by undergraduate students is becoming more and more popular. University undergraduates use mobile phones for diverse purposes, namely: talking, text messages, internet search, listening to music, watching videos, playing games and for other social media uses. Mobile phones are not like accessory anymore; rather, they are integrated like our clothes. In other words, mobile phone has become an essential part of everyday modern life. However, to many, the mobile phone is not a tool for making just phone calls, but a 'lifeline' to the social network and instrument for smoothly operating and coordinating their everyday life (Matthew, 2004).

Mobile phones have become the most popular channel to communicate with other individuals. It has become less of a status symbol and more of a fashion statement. Adolescents and young adults often engage in SMS sending, making phone calls, accessing the internet from their phones or play a mobile driven game. Once they are bored, students resort to instant connection, to someone, somewhere to ease boredom.

The internet, coupled with the mobile phone can be used to perform different functions and to serve a number of purposes, depending on the need and the intention of the users. However, since the use of mobile phone to access the internet is common among students, it will be difficult to monitor or censor what is being done on the internet by them. According to Longe et al (2007), the internet is both a source of promise for our children and a source of concern. The promise is that the internet offers such an enormous range of positive and educational experiences and materials.

Purpose of the study

This study investigated the various uses to which the third year (300 Level) undergraduate science students, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti subject their mobile

phones to; whether for academics, relaxation, games etc.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. examine the mobile phone usage by third year science students of Federal University, Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE);
2. investigate how often students surf the internet with their mobile phones for academic purposes;
3. ascertain the academic resources the students make use of; and
4. establish how convenient is it for students to use mobile phones for academic purposes.

Literature review

In education, mobile phones have led to the evolution of new paradigm known as mobile learning or m-learning (Muyinda et al, 2007). Ferry (2009) asserts that modern mobile phones can be used to help students to access web based contents, remix it, share it, collaborate with others and create rich deliverables for the classroom teachers, as well as global audience. Bringing mobile phones to school and using it while studying or listening to the teacher is a common behavior for university students (Junco and Cotton, 2011; Jacobsen and Forste, 2012). Students are using their mobile phones for sending or receiving text messages, communicating on Facebook or surfing the internet while they are in class. They also identify a negative relationship between the use of a variety of electronic media, including mobile phones (calling and texting) and academic performance (self-reported GPA) among first year university students in the United States.

However, in a related study, Walsh, Fielder, Carey and Carey (2013) found negative relationship between media use and academic outcomes after controlling for prior academics and demographics among the first year female college students. Sanchez-Martinez and Otero (2009) found a relationship between intensive cell phone use and school failure. Lee (2014) using a sample of African American and Hispanic middle and high school teenagers found a negative relationship between Facebook activity and Mathsgrade.

Likewise, Ayub, Hamid and Nawawi (2014) who share similar views with Adaja and Ayodele (2013) opined that advances in computer technology have enabled the Internet to serve as a platform not merely to seek information, but also to exchange ideas and knowledge with other users, and obtain expert opinions via email, teleconferencing, chatting and other avenues. Nevertheless, the advent of social network sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and others that includes, chatting and online games have changed the perception on Internet use from one that is associated with learning, to that of a socializing facility. Such website applications have resulted in the Internet being used for both academic and non-academic activities.

Therefore, rather than see mobile phones as troublesome devices, educators should seek to exploit the potentials of the technologies learners bring and find ways to put them into good use, for the benefit of learning practice (Sharples, 2003). Over two-third of the university students in their study use electronic media (including cell phones) while in class, studying or doing homework (Jacobsen and Forste, 2011). Ojo (2006) noted that despite the fact that the mobile phones have become very indispensable in the day to day communication, it has become an object of worry to most parents and school administrators. Nwanne (2001) equally

observed that mobile phones affect students reading habit. Owning a mobile phone does not necessarily assure that students use it for learning purposes. Although many students know that smart phones are integrated with applications, including computing and communication, they seldom use these smart phones for learning purposes.

In spite of the enormous benefits of the use of mobile phones, like the support for coursework, via its huge potentials for learning, there are a number of challenges which have the tendency to derail the use of the mobile phone in education (Kirschner & Selinger, 2003). The wide diversity among mobile devices in terms of available features and proprietary platforms and designs are not always optimal for learners owing to limited capabilities for text entry, small screen sizes, and limited battery life (Shuler, 2009 as cited in Deubel, 2009). Adomi (2006) had earlier reported that Library and Information Science students at Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria experienced problems of frequent network failures, high cost of airtime among others with mobile phone use.

The mobile devices are too small and impractical for entering large amounts of text at one time as one might do quickly using a standard keyboard. Furthermore, the use of the mobile phone to interactively teach and learn at all levels in some institutions is not being encouraged at all because students are banned from possessing and using their phones during school hours. When 'internet' generation students become far ahead of their teachers in ICT knowledge, and the gap is not closed in time, schooling becomes dull, resulting in frustration and ultimately students become drop-outs (Kennedy & Krause, 2007).

Likewise, Wulystan, Roland, Andrew & Rachel (2012) asserted that the incompatibility of mobile phone applications with academic software like Microsoft Excel, Portable File Format (pdf) files and PowerPoint application, as well as the small size nature of the mobile phone screen are potential threats to students using their mobile phones for academic purpose.

Methods

The population of the study comprised the Faculty of Science students, in their third year (300Level) draw from the various departments that makeup the Faculty. The assumption was based on the fact that these categories of students have spent two sessions in the university, and are already used to making use of their phones for various purposes. A total of two hundred and forty-five (245) students were randomly selected and used in all.

Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection, which was administered to third year (300Level) undergraduates in their various departments in the Faculty of Science of the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti. These students were assumed to be conversant with the use of mobile phones for various academic purposes. The questionnaire (300 copies) was administered during the session, when lectures were on, with the assistance of the various class representatives. However, 245copies (81.6%) were duly completed, retrieved and found useable for this study. The data were analysed using frequencies, and percentages. The results are presented in the next section.

Results and discussion

The findings of the study are presented in line with the objectives of the study. As shown in Table1a, the sex distribution of the sampled students shows that the male students were 118(48.2%), while the female

students were 127(51.8%). Table 1b above shows the distribution of respondents from the nine (9) Departments sampled, in descending order of magnitude, with Animal and Environmental Biology having 29 respondents, representing 11.8%, and Geophysics and Industrial Chemistry with 26respondents respectively, representing 10.7%.

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Table 1a: Sex of the respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	118	48.2
Female	127	51.8
Total	**245**	**100**

Table 1b: Distribution of respondents by departments

Departments	Freq.	Percentage
Animal and Environmental Biology	29	11.8
Computer Science	28	11.4
Microbiology	28	11.4
Biochemistry	27	11
Geology	27	11
Mathematics	27	11
Physics	27	11
Geophysics	26	10.7
Industrial Chemistry	26	10.7
Total	**245**	**100**

Table 2: Percentage distribution of mobile phone practices among FUOYE science students

S/N	Items	Options	Freq.	Percentage
1	Do you have a mobile phone	Yes	229	93.5
		No	16	6.5
2	Years of Using Mobile phones	1-4yrs	109	47.6
		5-9yrs	76	33.2
		10+	44	19.2
3	Do you know how to surf the internet with your mobile phone?	Yes	219	89.4
		No	26	10.6
4	How long have you been surfing the internet with your mobile phone?	less than six months	35	14.3
		six months-1yr	37	15.1
		1-2yrs	29	11.8
		2-4yrs	29	11.8
		more than 4yrs	104	42.4
		Never	11	4.5
5	How often do you surf the internets with your phone?	Daily	132	53.9
		2-3 times a week	60	24.5
		2-3 times a month	12	4.9
		twice a month	6	2.4
		once in a month	10	4.1
		Annually	13	5.3
		Never	12	4.9

From the findings in Table 2 above, majority of the students (229) has a mobile phone (93.5%), only 6.5% of them has no mobile phones. Those who claimed that they have been using the mobile phones for at least 1-4years back was (47.6%), 5-9 years (33.2%), while those who have been using it for 10years were (19.2%). This implies that the sample respondents were not novice in the use of mobile phones.

Likewise, to establish the knowledge of Science students on surfing the internet with mobile phones for information, 89.4% said "Yes" in agreement, while only 10.6% said "No". Furthermore, (42%) of the students claimed that they had been surfing the internet with their mobile phones for more than 4years for information, followed by (15.1%) of them, who had been using it for at least 6 months. Those with less than 6months of usage were 14.3%, 1-2 years

was 11.8%,2-4years was 11.8%, while 4.5% of the sampled respondents claimed that they had never surf the internet hitherto. It is worthy of note to observe that 53.9% of the students sampled, surf the internet with their mobile phones daily, followed by 24.5%of them, who do so between 2-3 times a week, while 5% never surf the internet throughout.

Table 3: Use of mobile phone for academic purposes

S/N	Items	Options	Freq.	Percentage
1	Have you ever used your mobile phone for academic purpose?	Yes	222	90.6
		No	23	9.4
2	How often do you use your mobile phone for academic purpose?	Regularly	145	59.2
		Often	60	24.5
		Occasionally	29	11.8
		Never	9	3.7
3	Which place do you frequently use the mobile phone for academic purpose?	University campus	69	29.0
		University library	28	11.8
		My hostel	115	48.3
		Other places	26	10.9
4	What methods do you use in surfing the internet on your mobile phone for academic purpose?	Trial and error	78	37.0
		Guidance from colleagues	45	21.3
		Training from university	22	10.4
		External sources	66	31.3

From Table 3, when asked if the students ever used their mobile phone for academic purpose? Majority said “Yes” (90.6%) while only (9.4%) said “No”. For how often the students use mobile phones for academic purpose? 59.2% regularly use mobile phone for academic purpose, (24.5%) often use for some purpose, while 3.7% never used for academic purpose. Approximately 50% frequently used the mobile phones in their hostel to surf the internet, 29% used university/campus internet 11.8% use the university library while 10.9% use other places.

Table 4: The exact/specific academic resources FUOYE students use their phones for

Items: For what academic purpose?	Freq.	Percentage
Completion of assignments	191	76.4
Reading Newspapers	63	25.7
Research projects	89	36.3
Supplement notes given by lecturers	137	55.9
Updating knowledge/getting current information	136	55.5
Seeking scholarship and others	81	33.1

Table 4 shows that majority of the students surf the internet for completion of assignments given (76.4%), supplement notes given by lecturers (55.9%), and also to update knowledge and get other current information (55.5%). While few students use it for reading newspapers (9.0%)It was also discovered that most science student surf social media daily, Google (search engine), daily and instant messaging. Whereas, checking of emails, file transfer protocol was mostly visited on weekly basis. Likewise, on how often mobile phone is used for consultation, majority on daily basis, use mobile phones for chatting online and for other social sites, on weekly basis. Majority of the students use their mobile phones to access databases, e-books, online news, while they rarely use it for technical reports, conference proceedings, e-journals, e-books etc. However, some never used their mobile phone for thesis and dissertation writing.

Table 6 reveals that the use of their mobile phones in surfing the internet has fairly influenced majority - 179(73.1%) - of the students of their academic efficiency. However, only 65 respondents (26.5%) agreed that it has greatly influenced their academic efficiency and just 1 respondent (0.4%) claimed that it had badly influenced his/her academic efficiency. This could also be deduced from the previous analysis that affirms that majority of the students surf the internet for social media as against academic purposes.

Table 5: Influence of mobile phone on academic efficiency

Item	Freq.	Percentage
Greatly influenced	65	26.5
Badly influenced	1	0.4
Fairly influenced	179	73.1
Total	**245**	**100**

Table 6: Level of satisfaction with internet facilities in the university ICT section

Item	Freq.	Percentage
Fully	22	9.0
Partially	63	25.7
Least Satisfied	112	45.7
No comments	36	14.7
Not Satisfied	12	4.9
Total	**245**	**100**

As it can be seen from the Table 6, out of the sample population of 245 used for the study, 112respondents, representing 45.7% affirmed that the internet facility provided by the university is least satisfactory. 63respondents (25.7%) were partially satisfied, 36 respondents (14.7%) had no comments, and 12 respondents (4.9%) were not satisfied, while only 22 respondents (9.0%) claimed that they were fully satisfied with the internet facilities provided in the university ICT section.

Table 7: Respondents' opinion on whether internet can replace library service

Item	Freq.	Percentage
Yes	91	37.1
No	135	55.1
Don't Know	19	7.8
Total	**245**	**100**

It is evident from Table 7 that internet cannot replace library services as deduced from the survey. 135 respondents (55.1%) opined that internet cannot replace library service, 91 respondents (37.1%) claimed that it can, and 19 respondents (7.8%) were indifferent (Don't know).

Conclusion

This study has revealed that majority of the third year undergraduate science students have phones that are internet compliant. The study by extension showed that the students use their phones for various purposes. Ironically, the study shows that majority of the undergraduate science students said mobile phones has fairly influenced their academic performances because they mostly use it for social media. In view of this, and to enable students use their phones for more viable academic ventures/purposes, the following are recommended:

1. The Students in the Faculty of Science, in view of the scientific nature of their programs, should see internet compliant mobile phones as an academic working tool, which they should endeavour to own.
2. To be academically fulfilled, students must endeavour to use their mobile phones, more for academic purposes.
3. As part of orientation programs for fresher, students must be introduced to how to surf the internet using various search engines, for academic benefits.

4. All bonafide students must have uninterrupted access to the university's internet service and be equipped with the desired user name and password to facilitate access.
5. The University ICT Directorate should ensure that the internet on the campus is functional and accessible to all the students.
6. Training and re-training should be regularly done for library personnel to be acquainted with how to answer queries on how to surf the internet using various search engines.
7. The E-Library resources of the University Library should equally be fortified to enhance the use of mobile phones by student.

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He has worked and held several positions in a number of academic libraries in Nigeria, to date, namely: Ekiti State University Library, Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti Library, Nimbe Adedipe Library at Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta and Federal University Oye-Ekiti Library, which he joined in 2013 to date.

He is currently the Librarian of the FUOYE and he belongs to so many professional associations. He has published widely in library based journals, both within and outside Nigeria. He is married to Mrs. Iyabode Modupe Busayo, an administrator, and they are blessed with children.