

EFFECT OF MISUSE OF INTERNET RESOURCES AND SERVICES AMONGST STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY OF THE GAMBIA (UTG)

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Abstract

This study which was on the Effect of Misuse of Internet Resources and Services among Students of University of the Gambia, uncovered the types of internet resources and services available to undergraduate students, it examined amongst others, the effect of misuse of internet resources and services by undergraduate students, and ways of controlling misuse of internet resources and services among undergraduate students. Survey research method was adopted in order to effectively conduct the research. The sample of 121 from the total population of 1300 was used. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Descriptive statistical tools which consist of tables, frequency and percentages were used to analyse the data collected. The finding showed that academic journal database, search engines and World Wide Web were available and used frequently by students. Copyright infringement and online gambling were revealed by the finding as types of misuse of Internet resources and services which in turn has a negative effect on the students. In suggesting the way forward, the study recommended that there should be massive sensitization against the misuse of Internet resources and services, mechanisms should be developed by staff in charge of Internet resources and services to monitor how these resources

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were use etc. It was concluded that even though there lies abundance of knowledge in internet resources and services, students should endeavour to be cautious in the use of internet resources and services to avoid misuse.

Keywords: Effect, Internet, Internet resources, Internet service

Introduction

Internet as an information and educational tool from its existence has helped to bring the world closer to a centre stage of civilisation, (Abdulsalami and Dika 2017). It has been a medium for the world of human population to communicate extensively, especially in academic environments. It has transformed academic landscape.

In the words of Young (2006), the Internet has been described as a mirror of society. Like a mirror, it reflects all aspects of life, good and bad. It reflects the outermost boundaries of human potential, limited only by our imagination. In fact, it can be argued that with its relative anonymity and global dimensions, it facilitates the full expression of our darker side more than any other communication medium so far. Kandell (2008) opines that the Internet allows the same ease of expression to evil as it does to good. To achieve an understanding of what we can do to address the downside of the Internet, we must first confront and understand the nature of the Internet. The Internet has revolutionized the computer and communications world like nothing before. The invention of the telegraph, telephone, radio, and computer set the stage for this unprecedented integration of capabilities.

Nature of the Internet

According to the Cable Communications Association of Ireland (2008), internet at a physical level is a vast system of connected computers. A particular set of connected computers is called a “network”. To be conceive of the “Internet”, one must go somewhat further than a single network of computers. We must think in terms of a “network of networks” of computers. Thus, we have the term “inter” “net” - networks communicating between themselves. The computers on this “network of networks” have a very important capability hence they speak the same language - a

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form of Esperanto of the electronic world. Many of the special terms and abbreviations relate to the different languages, protocols or rules used in this universal communication process.

Effectively, the Internet is able to operate as if it was a single network speaking the same language even though it contains many different networks of computers ranging from small local networks to large international ones. New developments are constantly emerging. “Intranets” use Internet technology to allow business to create its own internal networks. “Extranets” use Internet technology to allow communication with a chosen subset of a particular business community (Abdulsalami and Dika 2017).

Internet resources and services

Fast-paced technological innovation and widespread increasing accessibility of ICTs, including high-speed Internet connectivity, have transformed education around the world and has certainly made possible some information resources and services. According to Kandell (2008) Internet resources and services include the following:

- **Online Catalogue Search**

The library of any institution is to make provisions for online catalogue search. Library collection development policy should be supported by the core mission of the library. A university library must evaluate its collection from time to time in order to check, how well it is supporting the mission of the university to promote utilization of library collection, a library must have online catalogue to search and browse the catalogue of books anytime, irrespective of location. Catalogue provides access to books, CDs/DVDs and provide basic search and advanced search facility. Books and CDs/ DVDs search can be made with title and author and keywords. Users can define range of year, up to, after and selected year of publication to precise hits results. Retrieved results can be sorted with title or author. Users of library can check status of books borrowed against their account no. List of new books are also enlisted on the online catalogue page.

- **E-Reference**

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Web based information services as vital alternatives to the traditional face-to-face reference service. In early eighties virtual reference service appeared in the form of e-mail. In recent time with the emergence of chat based e-mail services such as Gmail and Yahoo, we began thinking of virtual reference via web based chat and web tools provided on library websites such as FAQ or internet resource gateway. Instant messaging (IM) is virtual communication between two people using textual format, providing real time reference service. Instant messaging reference service is quite popular in many libraries, providing instant messaging reference service to their clients.

- **E-Resources through Library Website**

Owing to technological revolution and advent of modern information and communication technology, academic community no longer relies upon the traditional library services. Indeed with presumption that electronic resources can utterly manage their information needs in better way as substitute to print resources. Various studies conducted by researchers revealed the increasing dependence of student's community on e-resources to fulfil their information needs. In the words of Saye (2001) electronic resources are resources that are generated through some electronic medium and made available to wider range of viewers both onsite or off-site via some electronic transforming machine or internet.

- **Institutional Repository**

Libraries is an organization that preserve information and in digital era, libraries have remain relevant than professionals have to respond as per the changing information needs of the users. D-Space is far and above the most common repository platform implemented worldwide with over 350 instances, it was developed between 2000 and 2002 by a well-funded collaborative effort between the MIT and Hewlett-Packard led a remarkable product that has proven successful at hundreds of institutions. D-Space is freely available at <http://sourceforge.net/projects/Dspace>, it requires a server that stores the files that are

loaded, a Postures' or oracle database that creates the structures and allow the management of data within the repository, a web application server Apache Tomcat that deliver the web pages. Code of the D-Space is written in Java.

- **Knowledge Gateway**

Building of knowledge gateway was to assist individuals to locate relevant record with short span of time and full fill the Fourth Law of Library Science i.e. save the time of users. Caswell (2004) in his study stated that the purpose behind the federated and gateway is to increase success at early stage of search process. The key feature of gateway is quick search and each of the features represents the starting point of research. James described the gateway as core, teaching and advocating the libraries to take its growing role in teaching by saving various open access contents relevant to their course curriculum for use.

Methodology

Survey research method was adopted for the study. The choice of this research method is informed by the fact that it involves gathering the opinions of people on a particular issue or problem. The populations for the study were undergraduate students of University of Gambia. Out of total population of 1300 students, 130 students were selected for the study using systematic sampling technique which represent 10% of the population. The instrument used for the data collection is the questionnaire, the questionnaire according to Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) include: Ability to gather information for investigations, its usefulness for obtaining opinion for judgment and for surveying attitudes, using it to gather information by correspondence, and by large assemblage of people and provision of more efficient data collection, which many subjects can be tested at the same time, Completion of the questionnaire at the respondents' convenience necessitate the use of questionnaire. The descriptive statistical tools were used to analyse data collected. The data generated were analysed using distribution tables, percentages and frequencies. The responses were analysed according to their relevance to the research questions.

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Objectives of the study

The study seeks:

1. To identify the types of internet resources and services available to undergraduate students of University of The Gambia.
2. To ascertain the effect of misuse of internet resources and services on undergraduate students.
3. To identify ways of controlling the misuse of internet resources and services among undergraduate students.

Literature Review

Internet resources and services

According to Goel and Kamath (2013), the Internet is at once a world-wide broadcasting capability, a mechanism for information dissemination, and a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic location. The Internet represents one of the most successful examples of the benefits of sustained investment and commitment to research and development of information infrastructure. Beginning with the early research in packet switching, the government, industry and academia have been partners in evolving and deploying this exciting new technology.

The most effective communication resources, i.e. computers and the Internet, are part of our daily life as students and have become one of the important tools in education. The Internet helps to transfer information between different points therefore making the Internet a very powerful information system. The following are the Internet resources and services available to students in University of The Gambia. In the words of Leiner and Clark (2011) these internet resources and services that are available to University of The Gambia students are as follows:

- **Academic Journals Database**

The efficiency of Academic Journals Database is related to the number of periodicals covered and the evaluation techniques of them in order to form a universal academic index. They provide a rich source of specialized information, and are widely used by many

academics and students. They are an essential reference tools for these people for detailed research into different subject areas, and are grouped into subjects according to the different disciplines. They include science direct, AGORA, HINARI, OARE etc.

- **Search Engines**

Search engines are open access sites and are the most widely used resources for students' projects. Many of them have open access on Internet Explorer programs, but some are customizable tools supplying multiple search engines like "Copernic". Resources which are accessed through these engines are mostly used by students for gathering the required information for their projects. Information obtained from these sites changes according to the student's level and the importance of the project content. By using different filters in the advanced search tabs, directly accessible resources provide more effective query results for specific types of documents such as documents with PDF, PPT, and DOC extensions. This makes it possible to access the information required or to extract unwanted resources. However, interesting trap/pop-up sites attract the student's attention and divert them into spending time on different subjects in different sites while working on the project.

- **Electronic Libraries**

The University of The Gambia (UTG) e-library connect and American E-Library is an example of an electronic library available to students. Electronic Libraries offer an important advantage in accessing information required from related sites classified into two different groups: open or closed access web sites of universities, and other web sites which are completely open through the Internet. The closed sources in Electronic Libraries in universities are based on academic books and contractual journals and are completely trustworthy. These collections are ideal for the undergraduate/graduate students, researchers, and academicians. However, the reliability of open access libraries is not at a suitable level, and is approximately at the same level of reliability as the external sources that write them.

- **Blogs/Forums**

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University of The Gambia Students are able to access the required information by using search engines for project assignments. The majority of subjects that are listed in search engines are written blogs and forums. The information given in these links is often all that can be found and so is judged acceptable by the readers. Consequently, a comparison should be made after applying different sources and information should be confirmed. These open-access resources are often personal studies of people who are interested in the subject, no matter whether they are academicians or not, and therefore, should be confirmed with other sources on the same subject written by people who are well qualified.

- **Distance Learning**

Through the use of current advanced technologies, University of The Gambia students can learn anytime, anywhere by means of distance education, where the student-teacher relationship is carried out at simultaneous or different times without the need for physical proximity. The infrastructure of distance education is based on web-based training. However, institution likes Open University of Gambia, University of The Gambia, American International University etc., has a distance learning centre. The current information is reliable and valuable depending on how reliable and well organized the information management of the institution is. Information management systems should be flexible, easy to understand, dynamic, manageable, valued by people, and with a culture that supports learning.

Response Rate

A total of one hundred and thirty (130) copies of questionnaires were distributed to respondents. One hundred and twenty one (121) were duly filled and returned representing (93%) of the respondents.

Table 1: Types of Internet resources and services available to undergraduate students of University of Gambia

Information Resources and Services	Frequency	Percentage
Academic journal database	27	22.3%

Search Engines	29	23.9%
Electronic Libraries (E-Library)	19	15.7%
Blogs/Forums	9	7.4%
World Wide Web	24	19.8%
Electronic mail	13	10.7%
Total	121	100

Table 1 reveals search engines as the highest respondents 29(23.9%), academic journal database 27(22.3%), World Wide Web 24(19.8%), Electronic libraries 19(15.7%), Electronic mail 13(10.7%), Blogs/Forum 9(7.4%) Search engines, academic journal database and World Wide Web have the highest response rate while Blogs/Forums and Electronic mail record the lowest. This simply means that student of University of Gambia uses the internet resources and, are aware of the resources and services of their University Library.

Table 2: Effect of misuse of Internet resources and services among undergraduate students of University of Gambia

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Criminal behaviour	20	16.5%
Indiscipline	42	34.7%
Internet abuse and addiction	13	10.7%
Social diseases	4	3.3%
Violation of academic principles	20	16.5%
Lack of morals	10	8.3%
Cybercrime	12	9.9%
Total	121	100

Table 2 indicates that Indiscipline as a result of misuse of Internet resources and services has the highest respondents with 42(34.7%), criminal behaviour 20(16.5%), violation of academic principles 20(16.5%), cybercrime 12(9.9%), Internet abuse and addiction 13(10.7%), lack of morals 10(8.3%) and social diseases 4(3.3%). From our analysis we can see that indiscipline has the highest respondents, followed by criminal behaviour and violation of academic principles. It

is clear that this misuse has negative effects on the lives of students which imply that the society will be full of crimes and deviant behaviours if action is not instituted to stop this.

Table 3: Ways of controlling misuse of Internet resources and services among undergraduate students of University of Gambia

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Acceptable use policy	9	7.4%
Surveillance and morale	14	11.6%
Discipline	56	46.3%
Monitoring and Filtering	16	13.2%
Sniffing	6	4.9%
Lists	10	8.3%
Quarantine/censorship	10	8.3%
Total	121	100

Table 3 shows ways of controlling misuse of Internet resources and services among undergraduate students of University of Gambia. This is so as the analysed findings showed, Discipline 56(46.3%), Monitoring and Filtering 16(13.2%), Surveillance and Morale 14(11.6%), Lists/Quarantine/censorship 10(8.3%), Acceptable use policy 9(7.4%), Sniffing 6(4.9%). It is clear that controlling misuse of Internet and services among undergraduate students, discipline is one of the act that can be used as controllable measure. This confirmed the words of Lazarus (2009) that discipline will guide individuals to do the right thing at the right time. The implication is that students will have to act within the confines of certain rules and guidelines knowing that if these rules are violated, there will be sanctions.

Findings

The following are the summary of the major findings as revealed in the study:

1. The findings revealed that there exists types of Internet resources and services to undergraduate students of the University of Gambia, such as; academic journal database, search engines and World Wide Web.
2. The study showed that Internet resources and services were used frequently by undergraduate students of University of Gambia.
3. The study revealed the nature of misuse of Internet resources and services by undergraduate students of University of Gambia, such as copyright infringement and online gambling.
4. It was revealed by the study that misuse of Internet resources and services has a negative effect on the undergraduate students of University of Gambia in that it leads to Indiscipline, criminal behaviour and violation of academic principles.
5. The study highlighted some ways of controlling misuse of Internet resources and services. These include; discipline, surveillance, monitoring and filtering.

Conclusion

Internet resources and services are very important resource in this era of information revolution. The Internet represents one of the most successful examples of the benefits of sustained investment and commitment to research and development of information infrastructure. This is obvious as several Internet resources and services were frequently used by students of University of Gambia. Despite the benefits offered by the availability and use of Internet resources and services, students still engage in misuse of Internet in forms of copyright abuse and online gambling. These acts, certainly has a negative effect on students' academic works. Internet resources and services no doubt have revolutionized all sectors while the academic sector has benefitted massively, but more have to be done.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings, the following recommendations were made; that:

1. Internet resources and services such as institutional repositories and newsgroups should be made available because they also offer enormous benefits to students.
2. In order to sustain high level of utilization, there should always be a periodic upgrade of Internet resources and services to keep them up to date for use.

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3. There should be massive campaign and sensitisation against the misuse of Internet resources and services among students.
4. Mechanisms should be developed by staff in charge of Internet resources and services to ensure surveillance and monitoring.
5. Disciplinary measures should be put in place to deter students from misusing Internet resources and services.

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