

# INTERNET ADDICTION AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN UNIVERSITIES IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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## *Abstract*

*Internet use has become a common phenomenon among undergraduates all over the world. Hence the study investigated Internet addiction among undergraduates in universities in Delta State, Nigeria. Three research questions were raised and one hypothesis tested. The specific objectives of the research were to find out the Internet activities engaged in by the undergraduates, how many hours do they spend on the Internet in a day, their level of Internet addiction. The descriptive survey design was employed for this study. The population of the study was 43,500 undergraduates in three universities in Delta State. The sample size for this study was 500. The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Data were analyzed using frequencies, statistical means and z-test statistics. Findings from the study revealed that majority of the respondents engaged in information searching and the usage of social media on the Internet. It was revealed that the respondents spent 30 minutes to 1 hour on the Internet in a day. It was also found that the respondents exhibited high level of Internet addiction and that there was no significant difference between male and female undergraduates with regard to Internet addiction. The study concluded that undergraduates in universities in Delta State are addicted to the Internet. The study recommended among others that orientation, workshop and seminar should be organized by the universities for their students on the proper use of the Internet and that there is also the need to screen them for Internet addiction and depression with a view to isolating those who are addicted and depressed so that relevant psychological interventions can be put in place to help prevent them from excessive use of the Internet.*



## Introduction

The Internet was the result of some visionary thinking by people in the early 1960s that saw great potential value in allowing computers to share information on research and development in scientific and military fields. It is a global communication of millions of computers in a single network (Block, 2008). The Internet is a widely recognized channel for information exchange, academic research, entertainment, communication, and commerce. The invention of the Internet has made it possible for students in different fields of study to access information worldwide and it helps them in scouting for information materials to complete their assignment, research, improving their communication skills, enhancing their relationship with others, assisting them in increasing their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) and even as a medium to release their stress (Widyanto & Griffiths, 2006).

Over the last decade, the pervasiveness of the Internet has increased radically. Usage has grown by 23% in the developed world (International Telecommunication Union, 2012). This technology-driven interconnectivity is paralleled by an increase in research indicating that excessive Internet use can lead to addiction (Young, 1999). Internet may be seen as a global connection of computers that allows sending and receiving of all kinds of information such as text, graphics, video, voice and computer programs and so Internet addiction is the excessive use of the Internet at the expense of the undergraduates' other academic engagements. The Internet has the propensity to divert its users' attention. Most times users spend more time on the Internet than they originally planned and this may affect their overall productivity in other areas of life. The Internet is known to be addictive, since there are many activities on it that can hold its users spell bound for a long period of time. All these will lead the user to derail from his focus.

The excessive use of the Internet may have contributed to the distraction of many undergraduates that were not aware of the disadvantages of the Internet. For example, accessing pornographic websites, gambling, academic cheating, facebooking, chatting during lectures, playing games, listening to music and overnight browsing are detrimental to their studies and academic work. However, when the use becomes obsessive and at the expense of other aspect of life of the undergraduates, this use could be problematic and could be classified as Internet addiction (Shu & Chiehju, 2007). Although the positive aspects of the Internet have been readily praised, there is a growing amount of literature on the negative side of its excessive and pathological use (Frangos & Frangos, 2009).

Anderson (2000) noted that Internet addiction is the loss of control over the Internet. For many undergraduates, the university is the first place where they gain their independence (p.12). Moving away from home means no curfews, no more



asking for permission and no parents looking over them. In such environment, wireless connections allow students to access Internet from lap-top computers and other hand-held devices without being monitored.

Excessive use of the Internet phenomenon may affect undergraduates with negative impacts on the academic, relationship, and other aspects of people's lives (Griffiths, 2001; Young, 1998). Specifically, Young (1996:34) in a study found that "many students are academically impaired to the use of the Internet across various application formats which may lead to their difficulty in completing homework, assignments and late night sleep due to such Internet misuse". This will eventually result in poor grades and in some extreme cases withdrawal from the university.

Internet addiction has been described as a 21<sup>st</sup> century epidemic with prevalence estimates ranging from 0.3% in the USA to 18.3% in Great Britain (Christakis, 2010). In spite of the widely perceived use of the Internet by undergraduates of Nigerian universities, psychologists and educators have noted the negative impacts of its misuse, especially the problematic Internet use which is generally termed Internet addiction (Chou, 2001).

Undergraduates could manifest Internet addiction behavior in many ways such as losing track of time while on the Internet, intense preoccupation with the Internet without being conscious of it and too much time spent on it, becoming irritated if disturbed while online, decreased social interaction with "real" people, feeling that the world outside of the Internet is boring, isolation from friends and family (Truer, Fabian & Furedi, 2001; Chou, 2001). All these may not only work against academic achievement but also hamper emotional stability and contribute to physical discomfort of students manifesting as sleeplessness, dry eyes or strained vision, severe headaches, back and neck ache (Joanna, Melinda, Lawrence & Jeanne, 2014).

Internet use is very common all around the world, especially for work, academic and recreational purposes. As opposed to these positive aspects, frequent and prolong periods among Internet use are associated with psychological and sociological problems among undergraduates. In 2013, approximately one third of the world's population had access to the Internet. Since undergraduates are more interested in technology, they use the Internet more often than other groups (Gunuc & Dogan, 2013). Heavy use of Internet among undergraduates, who are not yet psychologically mature and are still trying to adapt to social environments, may put them at risk of Internet addiction (Tsai & Lin, 2000).

Now-a-days, individuals are getting hooked on the Internet for various reasons such as pornography, Internet gambling, online shopping, searching for information or chatting. This could happen because the Internet is a medium of communication that allows sending and receiving all kinds of information like text, graphics and video. When the Internet users are in online state the addicted



young adults feel excited, thrilled, uninhibited, attractive, supported, and more desirable, whereas, offline situations make him or her frustrated, worried, angry, anxious, and depressed. These strong positive emotions reinforce the compulsive behavior referred to as Internet addiction of young adults which create a numbing effect (Young, 1999).

On the other hand, the Internet brings the world so close together by its positive aspects such as conducting research, performing business transactions and communications, accessing library journals, and communicating with social relations, etc. Unfortunately, the Internet is misused by some groups of individuals. Some individuals tend to get obsessed in the midst of getting exposed and familiarized with the Internet (Sukunesan, 1999). However, Young (1998) observes that it could be hazardous to someone's mental and physical health if Internet is being used excessively.

Several researches have been carried out to explore the situation of Internet addiction in different places. Moraham-Martin and Schumacher (2000) found that "8.1% of their 283 US students had four or more symptoms of Internet addiction" (p.8). Also Johanson and Gotestam (2004) in their study applied Young's Diagnostic Questionnaire (YDQ) to study Internet addictive behaviors among Norwegian youth and they found out that "10.66% of the respondents had problematic Internet use" (p.12). Arun (2015) investigated the problem of Internet addiction and their determinants among arts, engineering and medical college students in South India and found that the "prevalence of Internet addiction is high among the college students, more than half of the study group (565%) showed addiction; hence the problem of Internet addiction should gain significant attention" (p.11). Young and Rodgers (1998) reported that the average Internet use among problematic Internet users is 38.5 hours a week and among healthy users is 4.9 hours a week. Okwaraji, Aguwa, Onyebueke and Shiweobi-Eze (2015) studied the assessment of Internet addiction and depression in a sample of Nigeria university undergraduates and found that more male undergraduates were addicted to the Internet than female undergraduates.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What is the Internet activities engaged in by undergraduates in universities in Delta State?
2. How many hours do undergraduates spend on the Internet in a day?
3. What is the level of Internet addiction among undergraduates in the universities?

### **Hypothesis**

The following hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance



1. There is no significant difference between male and female undergraduates with regard to Internet Addiction

### Method

The study employed the descriptive survey design. The population for the study was 43,500 undergraduates in the three universities in Delta State. The sample size for this study was 500 undergraduates. The proportionate and accidental sampling techniques were adopted for this study. The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The Internet Addiction Test constructed by Young (1996) was adopted for this study. Frequencies, statistical mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and z -test statistics were used to analyse the data.

### Findings

The findings of the study are presented in the following tables with explanations

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Institutions**

Institutions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun	69	(13.8%)
Delta State University, Abraka	413	(82.8%)
Western Delta University, Oghara	18	(3.6%)
Total	500	500 (100.0)

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents according to their institutions and their sample size. It reveals that 69 (13.8%) of the respondents were from the Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun while 413 (82.6%) were from the Delta State University, Abraka while Western Delta University, Oghara had 18 (3.6%)

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by to Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	253	53.7
Female	218	46.3
Total	471	100.0

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents according to gender. It shows that 253 (55.7%) were male while 218 (46.3%) were female. This implies that majority of the undergraduates were male.



**Table 3: Age Range of Undergraduate Students**

Age range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
15-20yrs	130	27.6
21-25yrs	207	43.9
26-30yrs	66	14.0
31yrs and above	68	14.4
Total	471	100.0

Table 3 shows the age bracket of the respondents. Majority, 207 (43.9%) of the respondents were within the age bracket of 21-25yrs. This was followed by 130 (27.6%) who were within the age bracket of 15-20 years.

**Table 4: Internet Activities Engaged in by the Undergraduates**

Internet activities	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Information searching	262	55.6
Social media sites usage	214	45.4
Online shopping	77	16.3
Online gambling	46	9.7
Cyber relationship e.g online dating	62	13.2
Instant messaging or discussion group	120	25.5

Table 4 reveals the Internet activities engaged in by the respondents. Majority, 262 (55.6%) of the respondents engaged in information searching on the Internet. This was followed by the usage of social media, 214 (45.4%) on the Internet. Online gambling, 46 (9.4%) and cyber relationships, 62 (13.2%) were the activities least engaged in while online

**Table 5: Hours Spent on the Internet**

Hours	Frequency	Percentage (%)
30mins-1hour	147	31.2
1-2 hours	104	22.1
2-3 hours	100	21.2
3 hours and above	120	25.5
Total	471	100.0

Table 5 shows the hours spent on the Internet. Majority, 147 (31.2%) of the respondents spent 30mins-1 hour on the Internet in a day. This was followed by 120 (25.5%) of the respondents who spent 3 hours and above on the Internet in a day.



**Table 6: Level of Internet Addiction**

<b>Levels of Internet Addiction</b>	<b>Mean</b>
How often do you find that you stay on-line longer than you intended?	3.58
How often do you prefer the excitement of the Internet to intimacy with your partner?	3.71
How often do you neglect household chores to spend more time on-line?	3.75
How often do you form new relationship with on-line users?	3.68
How often do others in your life complain to you about the amount of time you spend on-line?	3.81
How often do your grade or school work suffer because of the amount of time spent on-line?	3.73
How often do you check your email before something else that you need to do?	3.64
How often does your job performance or productivity suffer because of the Internet?	3.86
How often do you become defensive or secretive when anyone asks you what you do on-line?	3.82
How often do you block out disturbing thoughts about your life with soothing thought of Internet?	3.84
How often do you find yourself anticipating when you will go on-line again?	3.78
How often do you fear that life without the Internet would be boring, empty and joyless?	3.65
How often do you snap, yell or act annoyed if someone bothers you while you are on-line?	3.84
How often do you lose sleep due to late-night log-ins?	3.69
How often do you feel preoccupied with the Internet when off-line or fantasize about on-line?	3.74
How often do you find yourself "just a few more minutes" when on-line and fail?	3.64
How often do you try to cut down the amount of time of time you spend on-line and fail?	3.73
How often do you try to hide how long you've been on-line?	3.68
How often do you choose to spend more time on line over going out with others?	3.86
How often do you feel depressed, moody or nervous when you are off-line, which goes away once you are back on-line?	3.70
<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>3.74</b>
<b>Criteria mean</b>	<b>3.5</b>

Table 6 shows the level of Internet addiction among undergraduates. The results show that the undergraduates were addicted to the Internet because the average mean of 3.74 is greater than the criterion mean of 3.5. This implies that undergraduates in universities in Delta State were addicted to the Internet.

### Testing of Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between male and female undergraduates with regard to Internet Addiction

**Table 7: Z-test analysis of no significant difference between male and female undergraduates with regard to Internet Addiction**



Gender	N	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	df	z-cal.	p-value	Decision
Male	253	3.76	1.12	0.05	469	0.925	0.355	Not Significant
Female	218	3.66	1.14					

The result of Levene's test for equality of variances (0.926) is greater than 0.05, hence, "Equal variances assumed" is used for the result. There is no significant difference in the scores for statistical mean of male ( $M=3.76$ ,  $SD=1.12$ ) and female ( $M=3.66$ ,  $SD=1.14$ ;  $z$  ( $df=469$ )= $0.925$ ,  $p=0.355$ ). The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This means that the "statistical mean of male and female do not differ significantly. This implies that the gender of the undergraduates in universities in Delta State do not influence Internet addiction. The students were equally addicted to the Internet.

### Discussion of Findings

The majority of the undergraduates indicated overwhelmingly that they engaged in information searching and usage of social media on the Internet. This finding is in conformity with Widyanto and Griffiths (2006) who stated that the "invention of the Internet has made it possible for students in different field of study to access information worldwide and it helps them in scouting for materials to complete their assignment and research work" (p.24). This could be that the students search for information to improve on their educational performance such as to complete their assignment, projects, seminar, to pass examination and to carry out research.

The study indicated that majority of the respondents spent 30minutes - 1 hour on the Internet in a day. This is in agreement with Young and Rodgers (1998) who reported that the average Internet use among problematic Internet users is 38.5 hours a week and among healthy users is 4.9 hours a week.

It was further revealed that the undergraduates were addicted to the Internet. This finding is in agreement with that of Arun (2015) who found that the prevalence of Internet addiction is high among college students. This may be as a result of the advent of social media sites where undergraduates are involved in social communication and collaboration.

The study also revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female undergraduates and Internet addiction. This means that gender is not a determinant of Internet addiction among undergraduates in universities in Delta State. This view is contrary to that of Okwaraji, Aguwa, Onyebueke, Shiweobi-Eze (2015) who found that more male were addicted to the Internet than female undergraduates in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.



## Conclusion and Recommendation

For a while now, undergraduates in Nigeria universities have been obsessed with the abstract world of the Internet, which is beginning to have a deep effect on them. It is clear that most of the undergraduates in universities in Delta State used the Internet for information sharing and social media communication and were addicted to the Internet.

The study recommends that:

- i. Orientation, workshop and seminar should be organized by the universities for the students on the proper use of the Internet
- ii. There is also the need to screen university undergraduates for Internet addiction and depression with a view to isolating those who are addicted and depressed so that relevant psychological interventions can be put in place to help prevent them from excessive use of the Internet.
- iii. University counsellors can provide small group or individual counselling for students who are Internet addicted.
- iv. Time management should be incorporated into the curriculum of the universities in order to assist them on how to manage their time on campus.



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