BUSINESS EDUCATION POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' ACCESSIBILITY AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION TO USE INTERNET RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH

OLADUNNI-MOHAMMAD, Bilqees Mopelola
ISHOLA Adeniyi Nojeem
University of Lagos, Faculty of Education
Department of Technology and Vocational Education mopelolamohammed15@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper is aimed at assessing business education postgraduate students' accessibility and behavioural intention to use internet resources for research. The study reviewed literature on business education, university education, Technology acceptance Model (TAM). The study Postgraduate business education students highly value the internet for research due to its convenience, timeliness, cost-effectiveness, and contribution to skill development. *The study recommended among others that* students should create a peer review process to assess the reliability and quality of internet sources, policy makers should incorporate digital literacy and research skills development into education policies at both regional and national levels.

Keywords: Assessment, Readiness, Online teaching, and Learning

Introduction

Business education in universities encompasses a comprehensive study of various facets of the business world. This multidisciplinary field offers students a diverse curriculum, including subjects like finance, marketing, management, and economic (Jimba & Atinmo, 2020). It equips students with practical skills through hands-on experiences, internships, and real-world projects, fostering critical thinking, ethical awareness, and decision-making abilities. Business education also emphasizes adaptability in the face of evolving technology and global markets. Graduates are prepared for diverse career opportunities across sectors, including corporate, entrepreneurial, and non-profit, and are encouraged to pursue lifelong learning to stay abreast of industry trends.

Business education programs often facilitate networking opportunities and provide career development services to connect students with professionals in their chosen field. In essence, business education at the university level equips students with the knowledge and skills needed to excel in today's competitive and dynamic business environment while promoting ethical business practices and a global perspective. Postgraduate students in business education sometimes stay a long time in conducting academic research activities due to lack of access to relevant and recent information. Sometimes, the academic activities get difficult and intense that causes several modifications to manuscripts which brings the use of modern technology such as internet is important for academic research (Ogunlade & Olafare 2011).

Internet is a process that includes the production, discovery, invention, and creation of new information (Ogunlade & Olafare 2011). Internet is a global network of interconnected computers and network (Techopaedia, 2023). The internet is a globally connected network system that facilitates communication and data services through a vast collection of private, public, business academics and government network. Its significance cannot be overestimated because it affects a variety of human endeavours, including instruction, decision-making, policy application, accreditation, and more. Typically, in most university environments, students have access to the internet almost any time and anywhere within the school premises. This could be accessed from their laptops, computers, and on the handheld devices (Wheeler, Shanine, Leon, & Whitman (2014).

The Internet is the main informational resource, and it has made it possible to access electronic books, journals, data archives, and search engines. According to researchers, many individuals may not be aware that the Internet is also affecting the way they read (Ternenge and Kashimana, 2019). Meanwhile, the internet's rapid advancement has made possible 21st Century teaching methods that were previously unimaginable. Internet usage in schools is growing and having an effect that could boost student performance in business education. Postgraduate students studying business have a lot to gain from the tools available on the internet, particularly in terms of being able to continually enhance their academic results. Knowledge is no longer constrained by geographical distance, thanks to the variety of chances

for information sharing, achievement, and retrieval that the internet has to offer. The internet allows for instant access to information on almost any topic, and it is also having a big impact on how knowledge is created and ideas are generated. The internet has made it possible to access online journals, publications, papers, and other relevant materials on a range of subjects, as well as other means to receive knowledge and data for free online. Additionally, students can communicate with peers or other experts located anywhere in the world by using an internet messaging service (Wheeler, Shanine, Leon, & Whitman (2014).

Accessibility to internet resources is one of the prerequisites to utilization. Internet resources may be available in the school and even identified as relevant to postgraduate students' learning interest, but the user may not be able to lay hands on them because of accessibility problem. Utilisation means utilising something for practical reasons. Utilisation, according to Igwe (2009), is when something is used to achieve a purpose, uphold an ideal, or pique someone's attention. Internet resources include Internet-enabled electronic devices, Internet Network resources, Internet Browsers, Internet Search engines, Social Network technologies or websites, Electronic Mail (e-mail) services, and Electronic Library resources (Bradley, 2014). The Internet-enabled Electronic Device, for instance, immediately springs to mind when someone wants to obtain any information from the internet. They are devices that can access the Internet.

Consequently, postgraduate students in state universities may encounter challenges in accessing premium internetbased research resources, particularly those that require costly subscriptions or specialized software (Ogunlade & Ojo, 2020). While state universities often strive to provide quality education, these limitations can occasionally hinder students' ability to conduct comprehensive online research, potentially influencing the scope and depth of their research projects. However, limited studies available that focused on determining the availability, accessibility, and utilization of internet resources for research purpose by postgraduate business education students in universities in southwest, Nigeria. Again, very few studies have focused on using TAM to determine the availability, accessibility, and utilization of internet resources for research purpose by postgraduate business education students. The available relevant studies only focused on the attitude, effectiveness, and comparability of internet resources. This is an indication that studies examining the availability, accessibility and utilization of internet resources for research purpose by postgraduate business education student's context seem to have been ignored. It is on this note that this study examined the availability, accessibility, and utilization of internet resources for research purpose by postgraduate business education students in universities in southwest, Nigeria. The outcomes from this study will provide additional knowledge on postgraduate business education students' acceptance and use of internet resources for research purpose in universities.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, the higher education landscape in Nigeria has undergone significant transformations propelled by modern technology and the ubiquity of the internet. These changes have had a profound impact on the educational experiences of postgraduate business education students within Nigerian universities. As the digital age continues to evolve, the internet has become an indispensable resource for scholarly research, offering an extensive array of materials, databases, and tools. However, amid this digital transformation, there exists a pressing need to comprehensively understand the acceptance and utilization patterns of internet resources for research purposes among postgraduate business education students in Nigerian universities. This study seeks to address this critical gap in the existing literature by delving into the factors that influence students' acceptance of internet-based resources, the ways in which they incorporate these resources into their research activities, and the challenges they encounter during this process. By shedding light on these issues, this research aims to provide valuable insights that can inform universities, educators, and policymakers about how to adapt and optimize postgraduate business education in the digital era. One of the central aspects of this research problem involves examining the factors that shape the acceptance of internet resources among postgraduate business education students in Nigerian universities. Understanding why some students readily embrace online research tools while others may not is crucial for tailoring educational approaches. These factors may encompass issues related to digital literacy, access to technology, awareness of available resources, and perceptions of the credibility and relevance of online materials. Moreover, the influence of institutional policies and support structures on students' willingness to utilize internet resources must be explored to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Beyond acceptance, this research problem seeks to elucidate the various patterns of internet resource utilization by postgraduate business education students.

Reviewed Literature University Education in Nigeria

Nigerian university education has a storied history, with roots tracing back to the colonial period. Notably, the University of Ibadan, founded in 1948, stands as one of the oldest institutions. However, it wasn't until Nigeria's attainment of independence in 1960 that the higher education sector embarked on a remarkable expansion journey (Salami, 2015). This period saw the establishment of numerous universities across the nation to meet the growing demand for tertiary education. The university landscape in Nigeria is characterized by its diversity, with institutions falling into federal, state, and private categories. Federal universities, like the University of Lagos and Ahmadu Bello University, are directly funded and governed by the federal government. State universities, such as Lagos State University and Abia State University, operate under the auspices of their respective state governments. Private universities, including Covenant University and Babcock University, operate independently but are subject to government accreditation and regulatory standards (Tella et al., 2007). There are challenges in university education in Nigeria. The challenges in university education are as follows:

Funding Dilemmas: A pressing challenge for Nigerian universities revolves around funding issues. This predicament has given rise to inadequate infrastructure, outdated facilities, and a shortage of highly qualified faculty members (Ogunleye, 2019).

Access and Equity Struggles: Access to university education is a persistent issue, owing to limited slots available and an ever-increasing demand. Consequently, students often find themselves embroiled in fierce competition for admission, leading to a lack of equity in enrolment (Okebukola, 2017).

Quality Assurance Hurdles: Ensuring and maintaining the quality of education within Nigerian universities remains a complex task. Accreditation processes, designed to uphold educational standards, have faced criticism for their inconsistencies, resulting in varying standards across institutions (Ololube, 2016).

Security Concerns: Security challenges have plagued Nigerian universities, with incidents such as campus violence and kidnappings adversely affecting the safety and learning environment of students and staff (Ayodele, 2020).

Digital Divide: The digital divide is prominent within the Nigerian university system, with disparities in access to technology and internet resources among students (Igwe & Iwu, 2019).

More so, the Reforms and Mitigation Efforts also add to the University systems and they are as follow:

Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund): The Nigerian government established TETFund to provide funding for the development of tertiary education infrastructure and research in universities, aimed at addressing funding challenges (TETFund, n.d.).

National Universities Commission (NUC): The NUC serves as the regulatory body overseeing university education in Nigeria. It plays a crucial role in setting and enforcing educational standards and conducts accreditation exercises to enhance the quality of Nigerian universities (NUC, 2021).

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): Collaborations between the government and private organizations have led to the establishment of private universities, contributing to increased access to tertiary education (Tella et al., 2007).

E-Learning Initiatives: The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of e-learning in Nigerian universities. Institutions rapidly implemented online classes and resources, illustrating the adaptability of the sector (Obiegbu, 2020).

In conclusion, Nigerian university education has undergone a substantial transformation marked by growth in the number of institutions and enrollment. Nonetheless, it faces considerable challenges encompassing funding, access, quality assurance, security, and technology. The government, along with educational authorities, has launched reforms and initiatives aimed at addressing these issues and enhancing the higher education landscape in Nigeria, ensuring its continued significance in the nation's development.

Scope of Postgraduate programme in Nigeria

Postgraduate education in Nigeria plays a pivotal role in the nation's intellectual and professional development. This section provides a comprehensive literature review on the scope of postgraduate programs in Nigeria, focusing on enrollment trends, program diversity, quality assurance, and challenges. Nigeria has witnessed a significant increase in postgraduate enrolment over the years. According to the National Universities Commission (NUC), there was a

steady rise in the number of postgraduate students from 2015 to 2019, reflecting the growing demand for advanced education (NUC, 2019). This trend underscores the recognition of postgraduate degrees as essential for career advancement and specialization in various fields.

Nigerian universities offer a diverse range of postgraduate programs, including master's degrees, postgraduate diplomas, and doctoral degrees. These programs span various disciplines, from business and technology to humanities and social sciences (NUC, 2021). This diversity caters to the needs of a broad spectrum of students seeking specialized knowledge and expertise. Ensuring the quality of postgraduate programs is a paramount concern. The NUC has established rigorous accreditation processes to assess the curriculum, faculty qualifications, research output, and infrastructure of postgraduate programs (NUC, 2021). Accreditation exercises play a crucial role in maintaining educational standards and guiding program improvement.

Business Education as a Vocational Course

Business Education as a vocational course plays a pivotal role in preparing individuals for careers in various businessrelated fields. This literature review explores the scope of Business Education, encompassing its importance, curriculum diversity, quality assurance, challenges, and prospects. Business Education is instrumental in equipping students with practical skills and knowledge relevant to the world of work (Zakaria et al., 2019). It bridges the gap between academic learning and industry demands by providing hands-on training and relevant competencies. The scope of Business Education is extensive, covering a wide array of disciplines, including finance, marketing, management, entrepreneurship, and information technology (Okebukola, 2019). Business Education as a vocational course holds immense significance in preparing individuals for careers in various business domains. Its curriculum diversity, commitment to quality assurance, and alignment with industry needs contribute to its vitality. However, resource constraints, pedagogical challenges, and the need for continuous adaptation pose hurdles. Embracing opportunities such as globalization, technology integration, and entrepreneurship education can further enrich the scope and relevance of Business Education in today's dynamic business landscape.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is an information systems theory propounded by Davis in 1989. The theory posits that there are two factors that determine whether a computer system will be accepted by its potential users: (1) perceived usefulness, and (2) perceived ease of use. The Perceived usefulness refers to the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her performance, while perceived ease-of-use refers to the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort. The prediction of the acceptability of an information system is the focus of the technology acceptance model. This model's goal is to forecast a tool's acceptability and to pinpoint system improvements that must be made in order to increase user acceptance. The Technology Acceptance Model holds that a person's attitude toward using a system and his perception of its utility both influence whether or not they will use it. On the other hand, the Technology Acceptance Model holds that a person's behavioural intention determines whether or not they will use a system. According to Davis, a person's attitude is not the only thing that affects how he uses a system; it can also have an effect on how well he does. Therefore, even if an employee does not welcome an information system at work, there is a great likelihood that he will utilize it if he believes that it will improve his performance there.

TAM posits that perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU) are key determinants of an individual's intention to use technology, which in turn influences actual technology usage. Contextual Factors in the Nigerian University Setting: Incorporate contextual factors specific to Nigerian universities, such as:

Digital Literacy (DL): Given variations in digital literacy levels among students, DL influences the perceived ease of using internet resources for research purposes.

Institutional Support (IS): The level of support provided by Nigerian universities, including access to online databases, subscriptions, and technical assistance, affects the perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU) of internet resource utilization.

Information Quality (IQ): The perceived quality and reliability of internet-based research materials influence students' perceived usefulness (PU) regarding the use of such resources. **Cultural and Economic Factors (CE):** Factors like socio-economic status and cultural norms may influence students' perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU), as students may have varying access to technology and different social networks.

Postgraduate Business Students' Behaviour:

The interaction between TAM constructs (PEOU and PU) and the contextual factors in Nigerian universities shapes the following aspects of postgraduate business students' behaviour:

Acceptance (A): This encompasses the intention to use internet resources for research, influenced by PEOU and PU. It also involves the actual usage behaviour, which reflects the ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU) of internet resources for research.

Usage Patterns (UP): How students integrate internet resources into their research methodologies, including the types of resources they prefer and the extent to which these resources augment their research processes.

Challenges and Barriers (CB): Numerous challenges may hinder students' acceptance and usage behaviour. Factors such as limited internet access, subscription costs, and digital skills gaps can serve as barriers to effective utilization. According to the theory, self-efficacy and instrumentality are the two key mechanisms by which perceived ease of use significantly affects a person's attitude. Bandura (1982) developed the idea of self-efficacy, which states that a user's perception of efficacy should increase in proportion to how user-friendly a system is. Additionally, an easy-to-use tool will provide the user a sense of control over his actions (Lepper, 1985). Efficacy, one of the key elements driving intrinsic motivation (Bandura, 1982), is what best exemplifies here the connection between attitude and perceived ease of use. Perceived ease of use can also make a significant improvement to a person's performance. Because using an easy-to-use tool will require less work from the user, he will have more energy available for other tasks (Davis, 1989). It is interesting to note, though, that the study Davis (1989) used to support his model shows a larger correlation between the intention to utilize an information system and perceived usefulness than perceived usability. This paradigm states that a user's perception of a tool's usefulness has the most impact.

The model is perceived to be useful in this study because it clarifies the behaviour postgraduate business education students should exhibit when accepting and using internet resources for information sources. According to TAM's, the majority of postgraduate students will learn to value, accept, and make use of the internet resources if they see their value and usability, which is the study's main focus. **Conclusion**

Postgraduate business education students highly value the internet for research due to its convenience, timeliness, cost-effectiveness, and contribution to skill development. These benefits align with empirical research findings, emphasizing the pivotal role of online resources in enhancing students' academic experiences and research capabilities.

Recommendations

The study recommended that students should create a peer review process to assess the reliability and quality of internet sources, policy makers should incorporate digital literacy and research skills development into education policies at both regional and national levels and Governments should make investments in the development and upkeep of broadband internet infrastructure, especially where universities and other educational institutions are located.

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