The Use of Internet Resources for Learning and Research among Nigerians Studying in European University of Lefke, Northern Cyprus

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Abstract

A lot of the studies on the use of internet in contemporary educational contexts have focused more on students in their home countries. This study extends to investigate the use of internet resources for research and learning among international students (Nigerians) studying in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). The study inquired if the students had access to the internet; their internet access points; the internet search engine mostly consulted by the students and the perceived benefits of using internet resources for learning and research. A qualitative study employing a focus group discussion was conducted among 25 conveniently selected students, which reveals that majority of the students use the internet daily for learning and research. Additionally, the study discovers that the students access and use the internet in their school library via their laptops and computers provided in the library. This signifies that there are adequate internet facilities on their campus. The students held the notion that the use of internet resources improves their research and learning, enables them to carry out assignments within a given deadline, permits the comparing and contrasting of different forms of literature, encourages self-learning, promotes peer learning and enables them to prepare better for examinations. These were realized through sourcing materials from search engines such as Google and Google Scholar as well as scientific electronic databases such as Web of Science, Science Direct and Scopus. This suggests that international students who are studying in TRNC have adequate internet facilities and scientific resources at their disposal.

Keywords: Contemporary Educational Contexts; Internet; Learning and Research; Perception; Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).

Introduction

The internet has been described as a system consisting of interlinked computer networks and data superhighway which has developed into an essential tool in the modern information-based society. This has resulted in the shaping of information management, communication, and research (Bankole, 2013). Supporting this view, Ceyhan (2011) noted that the internet offers a range of prospects that enables, expands, improves and change human life. This indicates that it allows unlimited distribution of information and provides a means for collaboration and communication amongst individuals and computers regardless of the geographical limits.

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Interestingly, the internet has been delineated as one of the most noteworthy technological advancement of the twentieth century, which has created an impact on academic inquiry and development (Sanni, Awoleye, Egbetokun, and Siyanbola, 2009).

There is evidence to show that the antiquity of internet has long been associated with tertiary education. This is because the incorporation of internet resources in the university settings has been proven to increase the access to information and communication through the provision of e-publications (Aminu, 2014). This might not be surprising, as substantial research evidence has likewise confirmed that the advances in information technology and the growth of the Internet have influenced students' approaches to research and learning in this present-day advanced educational milieu. For example, studies have shown that the internet is now a noteworthy tool for modifying human performance (Ogaji, Okoyeukwu, Wanjiku, Osiro, and Ogutu; Steyer, 2015). The internet has now advanced into a platform for students' interactions and learning (McLeod, 2008). Intrinsically, computer and the internet, to a large extent, have been proven to impact students' research and educational growth (Roudbaraki and Esfidvajani, 2011). This implies that the use of internet resources and technologies for educational purposes can never be overemphasized (Manasijević, Živković, Arsić and Milošević, 2016).

Indeed, integrating internet technology into the students' learning process provides them with an opportunity to take control of their learning activities, which in turn boost their confidence (Yunus, Salehi and Chenzi, 2012). This student-centred learning approach is what is changing the culture of many of today's learning classrooms (Apuke, 2016; Brown, 2010). Intrinsically, through the internet, students can form their own page, access news as well as lecture notes from an email sent by lecturers (Apuke and Ezeah, 2017). In view of this submission, a research has recommended that in this era of technological progress, it is expected of students in tertiary institutions to be computer literate and use the internet to ease their learning and research. As such, a similar survey has shown that in recent decades, students have been well developed through the use of the internet and its resources, and this has effectively helped them to undertake significant researches (Devi and Roy, 2012). These findings signify that the use of internet in the educational settings has attracted a great body of literature.

Yet, evidence indicates that these studies predominantly focused on students in their domestic countries. This suggests that there is an ample concentration of studies on students in their home countries. It is, therefore, pertinent for research to extend to inquire about the use of internet resources for academic purposes among students who are studying abroad. This will contribute to and expand the literature on internet usage among students; it will likewise provide a different understanding of the application and appreciation of the internet resources by students who are away from their domicile country. To address this gap, this paper investigates the use of internet resources for learning and research among Nigerians studying in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the use of internet resources for learning and research among Nigerians studying in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. In this regard, four (4) specific objectives are considered as follows:

1. To ascertain if the students have access to the internet.
2. To realise the students internet access points.
3. To determine the internet search engine mostly consulted by the students.
4. To find out the students perceived benefits of using internet resources for learning and research.

Literature Review

The evidence largely from documented empirical research has shown that the utilization and incorporation of the internet in the academic setting have attracted a growing body of investigations. Several studies have maintained that the internet utilization is most predominant among younger, educated individuals (Poushter, Bell, and Oates, 2015). In this view, this section will examine students' access to internet facilities and access points, the use of internet search engine, and the benefits of using internet resources for learning and research. It will also describe the theoretical underpinning.

Access to Internet Facilities and Access Points

Ivwighreghweta and Igere (2014) investigated the impact of the internet on academic performance in selected tertiary institutions in Nigeria and found that most of the students were computer literate and merely access relevant academic materials through the Cyber Café. Similarly, a survey conducted by Ahmed and Bukar (2016) found that majority of the students in the Adamawa State of Nigeria who utilize the internet for educational and entertainment purposes depended on their mobile devices for internet access. Fasae and Adegbilero-Iwari (2015) discovered that science students who regularly access the internet facilities on their smartphones, such as e-mails, social media and search engines, utilize it for educational and communication functions. However, poor internet connectivity and the high cost of data subscription were identified to be the major challenges facing the students.

Briz-Ponce, Pereira, Carvalho, Juanes-Méndez, and García-Peñalvo (2017) surveyed established that medical students at the University of Coimbra had a confident attitude towards utilizing mobile learning and applications. Although, the authors demonstrated that students were willing to promote its utilization for learning, yet, they had an average willingness to adopt it due to social influence and behavioural intention, such as perception towards ease of use and the

reliability of this technology for learning. Previous research by Omotayo (2006) reported that most students access the internet through cyber cafes; however, both male and female students used the internet differently. Although the rate at which the internet was utilized in both groups were alike. The male participants were more addicted to internet usage compared with female, although both genders lacked formal training on internet usage, as such they learn from friends.

Use of Internet Search Engines

A study carried out by Bashir, Mahmood, and Shafique (2016) revealed that most of the students use the internet for course-related reading and research needs because it is user-friendly and time-saving. The authors found Google and Yahoo as the primary search engine used by students. In the same vein, Adekunmisi, Ajala, and Iyoro (2013) research finding demonstrated that most of the students use the internet facilities, such as e-mails, web pages and search engines for chatting and academic activities respectively. Another study concluded that e-journals and e-books were among the resources often used by most of the students in selected Nigerian Universities (Ivwighreghweta and Igere, 2014).

Benefits of the Use of Internet Resources for Learning and Research

A research has reported that most of the students in a selected Nigerian institution disclosed that the internet usage ameliorates their examination preparation (Ivwighreghweta and Igere, 2014). Consistent with this notion, a considerable amount of documented research evidence has also confirmed that internet utilization has a profound impact on teaching, learning and research activities (Fasae and Adegbilero-Iwari, 2015; Adekunmisi *et al*., 2013; Nwezeh, 2010). For example, Nwezeh's (2010) investigation indicated that most of the academic staff and students found the use of email and web worthwhile for research and information retrieval. Similar empirical evidence suggested that the use of e-mail for academic-related actions should be promoted among students in order to harness its full potency in improving academic performance (Nketiah-Amponsah, Asamoah, Allassani, and Aziale, 2017).

Additionally, Sampath Kumar and Manjunath (2013) noted that there was an enormous utilization of the internet by teachers and researchers to support their study and teaching, thereby enhancing their academic performance, research skills and learning. On the other hand, Parkes, Stein, and Reading (2015) reported that the level of preparedness of students and staff towards e-learning through a learning management system was very minimal. It was established that the students and staff were not fully prepared to incorporate these technologies, such as reading and writing, imbibing clarity and conciseness in responses, synthesizing ideas, planning strategies, making arguments and working with others. This supports Guzmán-Simón, García-Jiménez, and López-Cobo (2017) who reported that Spanish Universities do not integrate information and communications technology and information literacies processes into their educational Praxis. They further propose that there is a broad gap between digital competence in informal learning and formal learning.

Nevertheless, a prior study has proven that the internet enables students to access relevant and up to date materials for their research work without travelling to other places to source for research materials (Adogbeji & Akporhonor, 2005). Additionally, Oduwole (2004) argues that the internet has a great impact on the research outcomes of students, as this enables them to have fast communication with their schoolmates, as well as offer a platform for accessing and publishing papers online. Other studies reported that the internet contributed significantly to the easiness of research through downloading materials (Adegboji and Toyo, 2006) as well as enhance the cognitive operation of data dissemination (Kamba, 2008).

In contrast, Ureigho, Oroke, and Ekruyota (2006) study on the impact of the internet on learning, teaching and research in higher institutions disclosed that students and staff use the internet primarily for online chatting and e-mailing, rather than accessing research materials. Emeka and Nyeche (2016) reported that the employment of internet-enhanced the skill and capacity of students. Though, lack of computer skills, slow internet server and the problem of paying for online were established as some of the problems encountered in the use of the internet. Generally, it can be deduced that students extensively use the internet for their research work (Ani 2010), and this has progressively improved students' academic performance (Ogedebe, 2012).

The studies reviewed shows that the use of internet in the educational settings has attracted a growing body of research, yet, there has been much focus on students in their domestic country. Therefore, this study extends to investigate the use of internet resources for research and learning among international students who are studying abroad, with a focus on Nigerian students in TRNC.

Theoretical Underpinning

This study is focused on Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The theory was propounded by Fred Davis in 1986 to explain why people accept or reject particular technology (Park 2009). According to Venkatesh and Davis (2000), there are two factors that may lead to adoption or rejection of any new technological innovation. These factors are “perceived usefulness of the technology” and “ease of use of the technology.” Perceived usefulness (PU) is the degree to which a person believes that using a particular device would enhance his or her job performance, while perceived ease-of-use (PEOU) is the degree to which a person believes that using a particular device would be free from effort or has less effort.

TAM has been widely criticized, leading to extended versions of the model called TAM 2 (Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw 1989). The model is said to have limited explanatory and predictive power, triviality, and lack of any practical value (Chuttur 2009). Furthermore, Benbasat and Barki (2007) argued that TAM “has diverted researchers' attention away from other important research issues and has created an illusion of progress in knowledge accumulation.” Despite this criticism, the model (TAM) remains relevant in explaining

technology adoption and/or employment. This is because the theory encompasses elements from theories like Uses and Gratification and ACE (Accessibility, Control and Excitement) model (Wu, Tao and Yang, 2008) which are established theories often use to explain the use of technology. In addition, Lee, Cheung, and Chen (2005) suggested that TAM is a solid and valid theoretical model to apply in explaining the use of technology among students. It is based on this premise that the model fits into this current study. Hence, the perceived usefulness of internet resources for research and learning will be demonstrated in this present study.

Methodology

Research Design

This paper is a qualitative study that aims to investigate the use of internet resources for learning and research among Nigerian students in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). To achieve this, a focus group discussion was conducted among 25 Nigerian students in TRNC.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants were twenty-five (25) full-time undergraduate Nigerians studying at the European University of Lefke, Northern Cyprus. The University runs 25 undergraduate courses. Therefore, one student for each was selected. The researchers adopted purposive and convenience sampling technique to choose the participants. The selection criteria were based only on those who acknowledged that they regularly use the internet resources as well as willing to participate in the investigation. Indeed, selecting those who frequently use the internet has the advantage of providing a deeper understanding of the areas internet improves students' academic inquiry and learning. Furthermore, at the time of this study, some students were not willing to partake in the study due to reasons that were best known to them; hence, the authors conveniently selected the participants that were available.

Instrument and Procedure for Data Collection

Three (3) focus group sessions (25 participants) with (8) eight students each in group 1 and 2, and 9 students in group 3 were conducted at the university without the presence of their lecturers (see Table 1 for seating arrangement). The audio-taped focus group discussions were transcribed manually. For anonymity purposes, the students were identified using their focus group number and the order of sitting in the focus group discussion. The interview started with demographic questions about age and study subject. Subsequent questions centred on student's accessibility and exposure to internet resources for academic research and learning; search engine and database resources, mostly utilised for educational inquiry and the substantial positive impact of retrieving and employing of electronic resources on the students' research and learning. The demographic information about the participants is presented in Table 1. Students in each focus group are represented by a code to protect their identity. For example, BACH_A-1 represent

Bachelor of Architecture student in group 1, GA_S-2 represents Gastronomy student in group 2, and BSC_N-3 represent the Nursing student in group 3.

Table 1. The demographic information of the research participants

Group Number	Focus group code	Gender	Discipline	Age Range
Group 1	BACH_A-1	Female	Bachelor of Architecture	23-29
	B_F-1	Female	Banking and Finance	
	B_A-1	Male	Business Administration	
	CIV_E-1	Male	Civil Engineering	
	COMP_E-1	Female	Computer Engineering	
	B_E-1	Female	Bachelor Economics	
	EE_E-1	Male	Electrical and Electronics Engineering	
	EC_E-1	Female	Electrical and communication Engineering	
Group 2	EL_T-2	Male	English language teaching	23-29
	GA_S-2	Female	Gastronomy	
	H_M-2	Male	Health management	
	HP_M-2	Female	Horticulture production and marketing	
	I_A -2	Male	Interior Architecture	
	I_A-2	Male	International relations	
	L_A-2	Female	Landscape architecture	
	MI_S-2	Male	Management Information System	
	NM_A-2	Male	New Media and Journalism	
Group 3	BSC_N-3	Male	BSc. Nursing	23-29
	Pharm_C -3	Female	Pharmacy	
	BA_Psy-3	Male	Psychology	
	P_R-3	Female	Physiotherapy and rehabilitation	
	P_A-3	Female	Public administration	
	S_E-3	Male	Software Engineering	
	T-M-3	Female	Tourism Management	
	PSIR 2_3-3	Female	Political sciences/international relations	

Source: Field work, 2017

Moreover, Table 1, reveals that the entire respondents were between the ages of 23-29 and (n=13) 46.4% were female, while (n=15)53.6% were male. This implies that there were more male participants.

Data Presentation and Analysis

During the data analysis phase, analysis across and between the data continued until no more thematic patterns could be identified. The data were treated equally without looking for specific differences. This implies that rather than looking for differences, the analysis focused on identifying common themes. All the Focus Group Discussion guide transcripts were printed, read multiple times, and notes were recorded in the margins to identify potential themes. These were then collated, reviewed, and examined for connections and redundancies. The data were analysed manually using thematic coding. Over time, the themes were expanded, contrasted and changed as more transcripts were analysed. To mitigate subjective bias and to provide triangulation, data analyses were reviewed by the research assistants recruited for this investigation.

Findings and Interpretation

Access to Internet Facilities

The entire students who took part in the focus group had smartphones and a Laptop. They all agreed to have access to internet facilities, and as such, they utilise the internet resources for their learning and research purpose. While (n=15) 60% utilise the internet on a daily basis, (n=6) 24% utilise the internet 2-6 times a week, and (n=4) 16% prefer to use the internet during weekends, that is Saturdays and Sundays. This signifies that majority of the students use the internet daily for learning and research.

Internet Access Points

In addition, the majority of the participants (n=20) 80% reported that they access and use the internet in their school Library via their laptops and the computers provided in the Library. This means that there is an adequate provision of internet facilities and resources on their campus. Conversely, (n=5) 20% prefer to access the internet through their smartphones and Tablets. They divulged that using their smartphones allows them to access the internet wherever they are.

Use of Internet Search Engines

It was established that the entire students preferred to use Google and Google search engine for academic inquiry more than any other search engines. In respect to the database consulted the most, a large number of the students (n=20) 80% remarked that they use *Science Direct* and the *Web of Science* more than any other database available in their institution. According to them, this database host credible, scholarly information that is carefully organized and easily accessible and most of the ISI web of knowledge papers are found in it. However, a few numbers of the

students (n=5) 20% preferred to use *Scopus* and *Directory of Open Access* (DOAJ). This implies that most of the students preferred to utilize the science direct and the web of science database more than any other database available online.

Perceived Benefits of Using Internet Resources for Learning and Research

The students were asked to comment on the perceived benefits of using the electronic databases and internet facilities for research and learning. Fig. 1 shows the key themes that emerged from the comments. These comments relate to the students' views on how the internet improved their learning and research. Each of the themes identified is discussed further below, illustrated by examples.

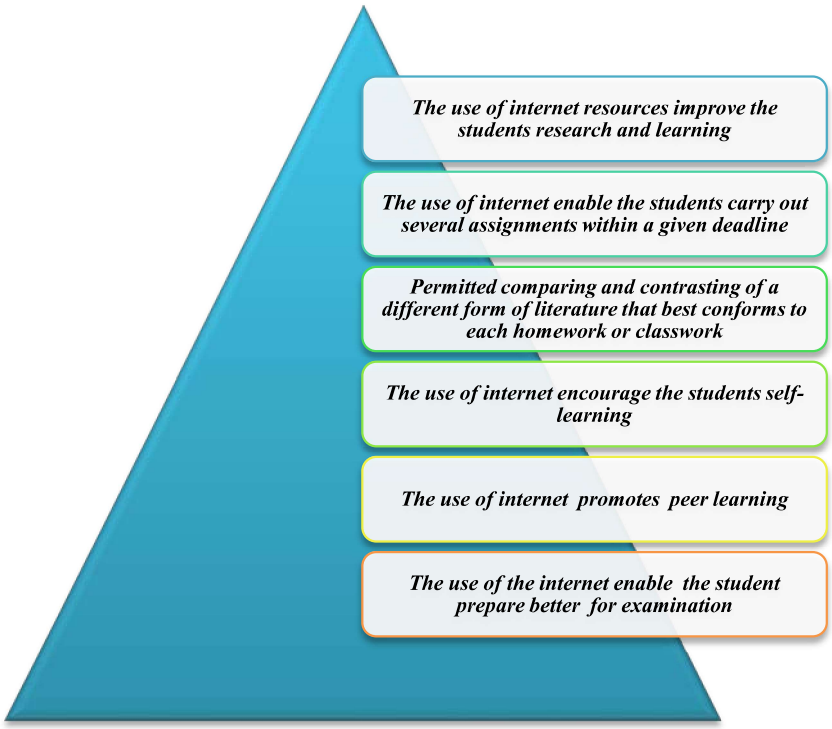

Figure 1: Perceived benefit of Internet use on learning and research

The Use of Internet Resources Improves Students Research and Learning

The entire students acknowledged that the use of internet sources has brought about positive change in their academic activities in general. In the same way, they noted that searching for materials via e-books and e-journals enabled them to carry out research ahead of time as well as easing and improving their academic pursuit. In this view, one of the students commented that:

> I do not require moving a far distance to source for materials anymore, I find almost everything I need online within split seconds and this has enhanced my research work [S_E-3].

This notion is consistent with another participant who remarked that:

> Indeed, the internet is a boon to us, its usage has brought some positive effects on my academic growth [B_F-1].

In the same vein, a Pharmaceutical student said that:

> The emergence of the internet has changed the custom of travelling to other libraries and universities for the search of relevant materials to support research [Pharm_C -3].

These suggest that the use of internet resources enable students to carry out research in advance/ahead of time, and in turn improve their academic output.

The Use of the Internet Enables Students to Carry Out Assignments within a Given Deadline

Students believed that internet usage has helped them to tackle multiple and tasking homework that was given to them by different instructors. They likewise agreed that the advent of the internet has made it comfortable for students to source and download substantial materials needed for their academic research and this has enabled them to conduct multiple assignments within a given deadline.

In respect to this, one of the students reported that:

> On several occasions, our instructors give a series of assignments with deadlines, and this has been often tackled using the internet, which I believe eased my burden. I only need to use up my time and search various databases available to retrieve relevant materials [MI_S-2].

Additionally, another student shared the same thought by divulging that:

> Sometimes when I am given a series of assignments I feel so worried and disheartened, yet, when I set out doing research using the internet I feel at ease as most of the materials I come across are related to what I require. This cuts down my burden and helps me in multitasking as well as enhance my learning process [I_A -2].

This implies that the utilization of the internet has assisted them in carrying out tasking assignment within a short period of time which has improved their research capability as well as improved their Cumulative Grade Points Average (CGPA). Intrinsically, one of the participants related that:

> The 'taps' provided in Mozilla Firefox and Chrome enables us to open numerous pages simultaneously while navigating from one page to another to read pertinent materials. Before the advent of the internet, it was difficult to perform given multiple assignments in a lesser time, due to insufficient sources. As of then, students relied merely on print sources in the library. Nowadays, the numerous electronic sources available have enhanced our research and academic output. Indeed, my CGPA has been enhanced when compared with my other classmates who do not frequently use the internet for their academic activities [EC_E-1].

From the above responses, it can be asserted that the utilization of various internet resources for the academic purpose has assisted students in conducting multiple and difficult assignments in a short period.

Permits the Comparing and Contrasting of a Different Form of Literature that Best Conforms to each Homework or Classwork

The students affirmed that the use of the internet resources has also permitted comparing and contrasting of a different form of literature that best conforms to each homework or classwork given to them by their respective tutors. This has inspired a broader scope of interpretation, reading and learning. In addition, they remarked that the internet contributed significantly to the easiness of research through downloading materials to support their study, thereby enhancing academic performance, research skills and learning.

A student stressed that:

> The internet as an online tool for research has widened our scope of reading and learning. It has made data retrieval easier, resulting in a positive impact on our educational development [P_A-3].

In addition, another student asserted that:

> I do not need to depend on one source when utilizing the internet, I just move from one source to another, comparing and contrasting and at the end, select the best and suitable source which has enhanced my academic research and productivity [CIV_E-1].

Correspondingly, another student admitted that:

> The use of internet search engines such as Google and Google Scholar has improved our access to information on various courses which has greatly upgraded our scope of reading and learning. This has resulted in a more serious academic achievement [GA_S-2].

Similarly, other students believe that the ubiquity of the internet has enhanced the scope of their reading and learning process. For example, a student reported that:

> I use my smartphones at any given time and situation to retrieve materials online. This is the ability of the internet, it is now in our pocket and we can take it along wherever we go [NM_A-2].

Buttressing on this notion, another student added that:

> The benefit of mobile devices to my learning is the ability to access data rapidly. Because of the convenience of constant connectivity, these devices allow me to retrieve the course content quickly. In addition, you can go to any available source you want to within a second and this has enhanced and broadened my research knowledge [B_A-1].

The Use of the Internet Encourages Students' Self-Learning

It was established that the use of the internet enhanced most of the students' self-directed learning. This was further shown as students acknowledged that on their own or together with their peers were able to discover new knowledge related to their courses. Furthermore, they opined that the availability of how-do-it online videos, such as YouTube tutorial videos, has broadened their horizons in research as well as have helped them to get conversant to certain practices and technical aspect of their various courses. A political sciences/international relations student declared that:

> The online YouTube tutorial has exposed me to different prior and recent research trends and evidentiary findings of researchers, which in turn has infused and given me the required knowledge for improving my research. For example, there are historical events that I watch on YouTube, which has really influenced my learning process. Courses such as Advanced History of Politics has been made easily understood through YouTube online Videos [PSIR 2_3-3]

This suggests that the use of the internet, most especially YouTube is greatly improving students learning and research. Additionally, the students believed that another way the internet has improved self-learning is the enhancing of critical thinking. This was particularly helpful for students in developing their abilities to think critically and exercise their analytical skills. This prompted a student to comment that:

> The use of the internet which has enhanced self-learning enables us to be more critical thinkers as we are exposed to a plethora of information. There is a proverb which says knowledge is power, thus, the internet has made us powerful critical thinkers [I_A-2].

Correspondingly, another student observed that:

> I now make constructive comments in class due to the numerous research I conduct online and this has also increased my intellectual capability to imagine beyond my peers. Also, I now think carefully before leaving a comment, so in a way, I believe the usage of the internet has not only improved self-learning but actually promotes critical thinking [L_A-2].

In addition, a Bachelor of architecture student ascertained that:

> Through the internet, I have been able to learn more about Graphic communication, motion graphic videos and 3D animations. Although our tutors teach us these subjects in class, yet, when I study alone via the internet, I get an in-depth explanation which betters my academic growth [BACH_A-1].

In a nutshell, this designates that utilization of internet has improved and enhanced students learning outcome and academic productivity.

The Use of Internet Promotes Peer Learning

Prior and recent research has described "peer learning" as the sharing of academic beneficial information from one student to another with the aim of supporting both formal learning activities such as revising for exams and more informal or incidental learning (Hamid et al., 2015; Boud, Cohen, and Sampson, 2001). All the students in the various focus group were affirmative that the advent of the internet facilities helps them share information with their peers to support each other's learning. This is evident as students share knowledge with each other through e-mail and other social technologies such as WhatsApp and Facebook. They likewise gained knowledge from their peers through materials collected for group assignment on wikis, including comments that other students make on their group chats. For example, a student claimed:

> I am always online when compared to some of my classmates. This always prompts them to ask if I have found new relevant information to share. I always share useful information discovered on the Internet in our group chats as well as post them on Facebook. It is now easier to share substantial information with my peer and lecturers which I believe has enhanced my peer's knowledge [T-M-3].

Consistent with this comment, another student stated that:

> At large, a greater occurrence of both off-curriculum (informal) and curriculum-based interactions among students is enabled by the internet. I share the internet retrieved information with my fellow classmates through Skype and WhatsApp Video calls. I likewise post useful downloaded tutorial videos to them via the same medium. From their remarks, the access and use of the internet have greatly improved their academic growth [B_E-1].

Similarly, a Health management student asserted that:

> Through the internet, I and my course mates are able to communicate and collaborate on the course content by using mobile computing devices as well as laptops to text message and email. This has made it comfortable for us to share information that is vital and up building. I recall when we were given a very difficult assignment task, I searched the internet but could not find related sources, withal, one of my classmates

> who understood the better utilization of the internet found a relevant material and emailed it to me. This particular material enhanced my assignment and boosted my CGPA. (With a smile on his face), the student exclaimed 'I had an A in that course' [H_M-2].

These findings suggest that students' informal interactions such as friendly chat among friends were often converted to academic deliberation on course topics. In addition, the evidence from the above statement suggests that the students share knowledge with each other through the internet technological devices such as social networking sites (i.e. Facebook and Whatsapp) and email.

The Use of the Internet Enables Students to Prepare Better for Examination

Internet search engines such as Google and Google Scholar as well as electronic sources, including Science Direct, Web of Science, Scopus and Directory of Open Access were particularly helpful to the student in their preparations for the examination. In addition, the students likewise claimed that they sporadically utilize Wikipedia as it offers initial orientation and basic information that occasionally simplifies and clarifies certain topics. However, they believed that it has limited knowledge or importance when compared with other databases such as Science Direct, Web of Science, and Scopus. Therefore, the entire students that participated in the focus group divulged that the use of internet has bettered their exam preparations. For example, a student remarked that:

> There are subjects or topics that I do not truly attain a fuller understanding in the class even when taught by our tutors, only with the help of the internet, I have been able to source extra and simplified materials that boosted my understanding of a subject or discipline before the exam. This has enhanced my intellectual capabilities as well as eases my examination preparations with positive results [H_M-2].

Likewise, students felt that they had the opportunity to support their course material through the internet. For instance, a student mentioned that:

> The materials I retrieve online are added advantages to the lecture notes given to us by our lecturers. For instance, most of our lecturers still give their lecture notes through verbal dictation in class and this sometimes provides insufficient information, as critical listening is demanded to grasp all the point established. Accordingly, I download related materials to support my lecture notes for better examination preparation and this has generally increased my academic productivity. I could recall in one of the semesters during my third year I entirely relied on the lecturers and this had a negative impact on my semester results, however, in the next semester when I downloaded various related sources to support the lecturer's notes, I had a better grade. Indeed, sourcing additional materials on the internet to support my lecturer's notes has helped me most in the preparation of examination [BSC_N-3]

This affirmation established that students better prepared for their examination with the aid of the internet. This also suggests that the use of the internet supports students study and preparation as well as serve as a tool to enhance their academic performance, growth, research skills and learning, thereby leading to better results.

Discussion

Much of the studies on the use of internet in contemporary educational contexts focused more on students in their home country (Ahmed and Bukar, 2016; Ivwighreghweta and Igere 2014; Nwezeh, 2010). Against this backdrop, this present study report findings on the use of the internet by Nigerian students' studying in TRNC.

This study found that most of the students studied use the internet daily for learning and research. This differs from Ureigho et al's (2006) results which demonstrated that students and staff use the internet mainly for online chatting (24.89%) and e-mail (24.16%) purposes, rather than for research materials which were ranked third (23.21%). Nevertheless, these present findings support Sampath Kumar and Manjunath (2013) research findings, which revealed that there was an enormous utilization of the internet by teachers and researchers to support their study and teaching, thereby enhancing their academic performance, research skills and learning.

In addition, it was discovered that the students have access and use the internet in their school Library via their laptops and the computers provided in the Library. This means that there are adequate internet facilities on their campus. This finding is in contrast with prior research (Ani, 2010) which found that undergraduate students in developing countries extensively need the internet to do their research work. However, it was not feasible due to poor access to the internet in their libraries, schools and ICT centres. The same study demonstrated that a large number of the students depend on private internet services and cyber cafés (Ani, 2010).

Furthermore, the findings of this present study differ from other prior studies (Ahmed and Bukar, 2016; Otunla, 2013; Agboola, 2010), which found that undergraduate students who utilize the internet for educational and entertainment purposes depended on their mobile devices for internet access, as well as frequently access the internet from Cyber Café (Ivwighreghweta and Igere, 2014). This implies that students who are studying in TRNC have adequate internet facilities at their disposal.

In addition, it was revealed that the entire students preferred to use Google and Google search engine for academic inquiry more than any other search engines. This supports Bashir et al.'s (2016) research which found the Google search engine and Yahoo to be most often used among students. However, with respect to the database consulted the most, a large amount of the students (n=20) 80% remarked that they use science direct and the web of science more than any other database available in their institution. These findings are contrary to prior research which found that open access E-journals and E-books are among the resources that students mostly

used in their research work (Ivwighreghweta and Igere, 2014). This implies that international students abroad have more benefits and opportunity to access and use a scientific database because it is being subscribed by their institution.

As such, this study points out that the internet is improving the academic research and learning of the students. These findings are in accordance with previous investigations (Emeka and Nyeche 2016; Adekunmisi *et al*., 2013; Nwezeh, 2010) which reported that the internet contributed significantly to the easiness of research through downloading materials as well as enhancing the cognitive operation of data dissemination. Additionally, the findings from this present research suggest that the use of the internet helped students carry out several assignments within a given deadline. This conforms to a research report which suggests that the internet contributed significantly to the easiness of research by downloading materials (Adegboji & Toyo, 2006). Other notable findings suggest that the use of internet permitted comparing and contrasting of a different form of literature that best conforms to each of the students' homework or classwork, and this has resulted to a broader scope of interpretation, reading and learning. This is coherent with Adogbeji and Akporhonor (2005) prior study, which found that the internet enables students to access relevant and up to date materials for their research work without going to other places to source for research materials.

Furthermore, this study indicated that the use of the internet encourages self-learning as well as promotes peer learning. The students opined that the availability of how-to-do-it online videos, such as YouTube tutorial videos, has broadened their horizons in research as well as have helped them to get conversant with certain practices and technical aspect of their various courses. This proposes that students on their own or together with their peers are able to learn new knowledge related to their courses. For example, a recent study conducted by Hamid et al. (2015) among Australian and Malaysian students found that use of social media, which is an offshoot of the internet enabled students to share materials collected for group assignment on wikis or by responding to the comments that other students made. The same study likewise reported that most of the students' self-directed learning was enabled through the application of social technologies.

As evidenced in the findings of this present study, the internet helps students prepare better for examination, which is realized through sourcing materials from search engines such as Google and Google Scholar as well as scientific electronic databases such as Web of Science, Science Direct and Scopus. This confirms the previous researches by Ivwighreghweta & Igere, (2014) and Ogedebe (2012) which hold that the internet has a significant role to play in assisting students to prepare better for their continuous assessment and semester examination, as well as have a positive impact on their results. Indeed, the findings of this study conform to the TAM model premise, which suggests that perceived usefulness and ease of use promotes the usage and adoption of technology.

Conclusion and Direction for Further Research

The findings of this study offer explanation of how Nigerians studying in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus use the internet for their academic research and learning. It has generated useful data to build more understanding and insight into the use of internet among students. Thus, it can be inferred from this study that the internet delivers a positive impact on the academic research and learning of the students. Therefore, this research contributes to enhancing the empirical research results that are beneficial for informing teaching and learning practice in higher education. However, it only focused on 25 undergraduate Nigerian students at the European University of Lefke, and the nature of the samples (a convenience sample) utilised is a limitation as regard to the wider transferability and generalizability of the findings, hence, it is not statistically generalisable.

Another notable limitation of this study is that it only examined the positive aspect of internet usage on the students' learning and research, overlooking the challenges the students encounter as regards the access and utilization of the internet resources. In view of this, future studies could investigate the challenges students encounter as regards the access and utilization of the internet resources as well as increase the sample size in order to make the findings more representative. Furthermore, a longitudinal and ethnographic study where a researcher spends a significant amount of time observing the students' practices as regards the utilization of the internet would be valuable in providing richer insights about how the internet is adequately used by students to improve their learning and research. Conclusively, a quantitative-based research via survey with a significant number of respondents (i.e. increasing the number of the university to be investigated) may yield different results and the findings could then be generalised to a larger population.

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