

PREVALENCE OF INTERNET ADDICTION AND RESILIENCE AMONG UNIVERSITY LIBRARY USERS AT THE NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the prevalence of Internet addiction and resilience among university library users at the National Open University of Nigeria. Recognising the integral role of the Internet in academic and social activities, the research aimed to elucidate the extent to which students exhibited addictive behaviours and their capacity to adapt and cope within the digital environment. The primary objectives were to identify the extent of internet addiction among library users in National Open University of Nigeria and to identify the extent of resilience among the library users in National Open University of Nigeria, thereby informing strategies to promote healthy Internet use and academic resilience. Employing a descriptive research design, the study sampled 400 students across six geopolitical zones using stratified random sampling. Data was collected via structured questionnaires and analysed with SPSS version 26, utilising descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses. The findings revealed a significant prevalence of Internet addiction behaviours, such as excessive online engagement, preference for virtual interactions, and emotional reliance on the Internet, indicating that many students struggled with self-regulation in their online activities. Conversely, students generally demonstrated high levels of resilience, characterised by confidence in utilising library resources, adaptability to challenges, and motivation to continue learning despite difficulties. The results underscored a dual scenario: pervasive problematic Internet use coexisted with strong self-efficacy and resilience in academic resource utilisation. These insights suggested the need for targeted interventions focusing on digital literacy and responsible Internet use, alongside leveraging students' resilient traits to foster balanced and healthy engagement with digital environments. Overall, the study emphasised the importance of integrative strategies to mitigate Internet addiction whilst strengthening students' adaptive capacities to enhance academic success and well-being.

Keywords: Internet addiction, Library Users, Prevalence, Resilience, National Open University of Nigeria University.

Introduction

Internet use has become an integral part of daily life, transforming the world through its vast array of possibilities. However, excessive Internet engagement can lead to Internet addiction, which is characterised by excessive time spent online accompanied by psychological dependence on its use (Zhu, 2024). Tertiary education students are particularly vulnerable to developing such dependence, more so than other demographic groups. Sserunkuuma (2025) identified several contributing factors, including the availability of free time, the ease of access, developmental and psychological traits of young adulthood, limited parental supervision, and the expectation of covert Internet or computer use for academic purposes such as assignments and projects, as well as social interactions with peers and mentors, additionally, the Internet offers an escape from exam-related anxiety.

Rebecca, Sim, Bergman, Choon, Constance Chau, and Hong (2024) noted that youths are especially at risk of Internet addiction because they tend to spend significant amounts of time engaged in online gaming and social networking platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Telegram. Lu, Qiu, Huang, Wang, Han, Zhu, Ning, Fang-fang and Yuan, (2024) described addiction as an obsessive preoccupation with a behaviour characterised by excessive thoughts and desires to perform it, considerable time invested in planning and executing the activity, and ongoing efforts to recover from its adverse effects, such as hangovers or fatigue. Over time, persistent engagement in addictive behaviours often results in negative consequences, including physical discomfort, social disapproval, financial hardship, or diminished self-esteem. Continuing such behaviours despite these adverse outcomes is often regarded as a criterion for dependence (Li et al., 2025). Furthermore, Liu, Cheng, Guan, Yang and Chen (2024) defined Internet addiction as an excessive or compulsive use of the Internet, frequently involving social networking, gaming, and online shopping activities.

A person experiencing a substance use disorder is unable to focus on anything other than obtaining and using the substances, even when they are aware of their other responsibilities. This stems from the brain's persistent craving for the chemical due to dependence. Behavioural changes are also a hallmark of addiction; individuals who regularly use drugs or alcohol often exhibit shifts in their habits and personality. Zhang (2024) noted that students may lose interest in activities they once enjoyed with friends or family. Additionally, developing tolerance- requiring higher doses of substances such as cocaine, opiates, or benzodiazepines to achieve the same effect- is another characteristic of drug addiction. Withdrawal symptoms, which occur when an individual with dependence tries to stop using the substance, can be severe and sometimes make cessation impossible. These symptoms may include headaches, difficulty sleeping, muscle and bone pain, and other physical signs of illness.

Currently, there remains considerable uncertainty regarding the conceptualisation of Internet addiction (IA) as a formal disorder, including Internet gaming disorder. Nonetheless, many scholars characterised IA as an impulse control disorder marked by excessive or poorly regulated preoccupations, urges, or behaviors related to computer use and Internet access that

result in impairment or distress. The clinical relevance of IA is supported by research demonstrating its association with various psychological issues, such as low well-being, diminished self-esteem and self-control, sleep disturbances, as well as depression, anxiety, stress, and loneliness (Zhu, 2024).

The technological revolution has significantly increased Internet adoption worldwide, leading to higher Internet traffic per connection as people transition to higher-bandwidth broadband connections and utilize numerous Internet applications. Resilience, as defined by Sserunkuuma, Kaggwa, Muwanguzi, Najjuka, Murungi, Kajjimu, Mulungi, Kihumuro, Mamun, Griffiths, and Ashaba (2025) involved the dynamic capacity of individuals or systems to respond to changes and disruptions while maintaining their functions, structure, and feedback mechanisms. Rebecca et al. (2024) highlight resilience as the ability to adapt and confront stress or trauma, emphasising its multidimensional nature influenced by factors such as context, age, gender, culture, and life experiences. As a personal trait, resilience is crucial for maintaining psychological well-being and self-efficacy in the face of adversity. Resilient individuals are effective at managing stress, which helps mitigate negative outcomes like anxiety and depression. There are four patterns associated with resilience: dispositional, relational, situational, and philosophical, each emphasising different contributing factors. Ultimately, resilience distinguishes individuals who can cope effectively with challenges from those who struggle, endure prolonged negative effects, and find it difficult to recover from setbacks.

Certain demographic factors are also associated with IA, such as higher school grades, poor academic performance, higher family income, and lower levels of parental attachment (Suk-Jung, Nagduar, & Hea-Jin, 2023). Some researchers have reported that lower social class and younger generations belonging to lower income groups are more susceptible to becoming addicted to the Internet. Demographic characteristics, including socioeconomic status, gender, age, and income, thus, play a vital role in internet addiction.

The studies on the impact of gender are mixed, some researchers found that males are more susceptible to Internet addiction. For example, Shokri et al. (2024) found that male students use smartphones more frequently than females. Additionally, some researchers report that males and females exhibit different behavioural patterns concerning internet addiction. Consequently, it is more likely that there are gender differences in outcomes such as stress and burnout. It is also interesting to note that males tend to use the Internet for pleasure rather than for searching information compared to females. The way individuals spend time on the Internet affects the likelihood of developing an addiction, with different patterns observed across genders.

A recent study indicated that some online users are becoming addicted to the Internet in ways like addiction to drugs, alcohol, or gambling, leading to consequences such as academic failure, reduced work performance, and even marital discord and separation (Lu et al., 2021). Various types of online activities-such as online gaming, social networking, online gambling, online shopping, virtual sex, and information overload-are related to internet addiction, highlighting the diverse ways individuals can develop problematic Internet use.

The Internet could play a significant role in the lives of university students, as its use can complement the resources and services of the library and enhance their learning and academic performance when used with restraint, particularly for academic purposes. Despite the benefits students can gain from the Internet when used in moderation, studies have shown that many university library users engage in Internet use via their smartphones while in the library, often in a manner like addictive behaviours (Liu et al., 2024). The portability of smartphones makes the risks more insidious and pervasive, increasing the potential for problematic use.

Although Internet addiction has been reported to be associated with various personal, social, and psychological factors in the literature, this study aims to investigate the influence of resilience and demographic factors on Internet addiction among library users. Therefore, there is a pressing need to explore the prevalence of Internet addiction and resilience among university library users at the National Open University of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The widespread use of the Internet among university students, especially library users, has led to increasing concerns about the rising prevalence of Internet addiction and its negative impact on academic performance, psychological health, and social functioning. Despite these concerns, there is limited understanding of how individual resilience and demographic factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, and age influence the development and severity of Internet addiction within this population. This gap in knowledge hinders the formulation of effective interventions aimed at promoting healthy Internet habits and supporting students' mental well-being.

Consequently, there is an urgent need to explore the relationship between resilience, demographic variables, and Internet addiction among university library users. Such an investigation can provide valuable insights for developing evidence-based strategies for prevention and intervention. Therefore, the researcher aims to examine how resilience and demographic factors serve as predictors of Internet addiction among university library users in Nigeria.

Research Objectives

To achieve this, the following research objectives are formulated to guide the study:

1. To identify the extent of internet addiction among library users in National Open University of Nigeria.
2. To identify the extent of resilience among the library users in National Open University of Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the extent of internet addiction among library users in National Open University of Nigeria?

2. What is the extent of resilience among the library users in National Open University of Nigeria?

Significance of Study

This study offers important insights into the prevalence of Internet addiction among university library users, helping stakeholders understand the scope of the problem within this group. The findings can assist university administrators, policymakers, and mental health professionals in designing targeted interventions, awareness campaigns, and support systems to effectively address Internet addiction. Additionally, by examining resilience levels among users, the study highlights potential protective factors that can buffer the adverse effects of Internet addiction. This knowledge can inform students of the development of resilience-building programs aimed at promoting healthier Internet use among students.

The insights derived from this research can aid in developing initiatives that promote healthy Internet use and strengthen psychological resilience, thereby improving students' overall well-being and academic outcomes. Furthermore, the study adds to the limited body of research on Internet addiction and resilience within the Nigerian context, laying a foundation for future studies and comparative research in similar settings.

Understanding the relationship between Internet use and resilience can help cultivate a culture of digital well-being among students, encouraging responsible and balanced online behaviors. Overall, this research is significant because it addresses a pressing contemporary issue that affects students' mental health and academic success, providing valuable knowledge that can inform strategies to foster healthier Internet habits and enhance resilience among university learners.

Literature review

Internet Addiction among Library Users in Universities

Internet addiction typically refers to persistent and recurrent maladaptive behaviours related to excessive Internet use, which can cause significant distress and impair daily functioning (Wang, Liu, Chu, Wong, & Yang, 2023). It concerns the overuse or compulsive engagement with the Internet, with some researchers terming it Internet Addiction Disorder (Zhu, 2024). Other terms used include "problematic Internet use," "pathological Internet use," and "compulsive Internet use" (Zhang, 2024).

Healthy Internet use involves achieving specific objectives within a reasonable timeframe without experiencing behavioural or psychological distress. While some individuals can effectively limit their Internet use, others struggle to regulate their habits. The misuse of the Internet has become a global health concern, growing rapidly and steadily over recent years.

The concept of Internet addiction has been the subject of considerable debate among scholars. Currently, there remains uncertainty regarding its classification as a formal disorder, including issues surrounding Internet Gaming Disorder (Sserunkuuma, et al., 2025). Nonetheless, most researchers describe Internet addiction as an impulse control disorder

characterised by excessive or poorly controlled preoccupations, urges, or behaviours related to computer and Internet use that result in impairment or distress (Jemal, Adams, & Demant, 2025). Excessive Internet use also negatively impacts students' academic achievements. Many students become more involved in Internet activities than their studies, leading to poor academic performance (Li et al., 2025).

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted descriptive research design. This design was chosen because it allows the researcher to collect data or information from sampled elements and provides a generalized description of the variables of study and inferred results for quick decision-making.

Population of the Study

The study was conducted at selected university libraries across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. The total number of university students enrolled in these institutions is substantial, with millions across the country. The research was conducted at one university library from each of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, totaling six study center libraries as the study settings.

Sampling Technique

The target population for this study includes university students enrolled at these institutions. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure equal representation of students from different geopolitical zones, faculties, and levels of study.

Sample Size

A total of 400 students were selected as respondents using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination formula. This sample size provides adequate statistical power to generalise findings across university student populations. Participants were chosen to reflect a balance of ICT skill levels, library usage frequency, and access to internet resources.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected was analysed using the Statistical Product Service Solution (SPSS) version 26. The analysis comprised descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) to summarise demographic information and ICT skill levels. The results were presented in the form of tables, charts, and graphical representations to facilitate clearer interpretation and understanding on prevalence of Internet addiction and resilience among university library users at the National Open University of Nigeria

Data Presentation

Research Question One: What is the extent of internet addiction among library users in National Open University of Nigeria?

Table 1. Extent of Internet Addiction among Library Users

Items Statement	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	SD	Des.
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I stay online longer than I Intended to	0 (0.0)	1 (2.4)	18 (42.9)	23 (54.8)	3.52	0.558	A
My longer stay online affects me academic work	1 (2.4)	11 (26.2)	21 (50.0)	9 (21.4)	2.9	0.778	A
Do you prefer the excitement of the internet to intimacy with your classmates	0 (0.0)	2 (4.8)	17 (40.5)	23 (54.8)	3.5	0.595	A
I form new relationships with fellow online users.	3 (7.1)	11 (26.2)	21 (50.0)	7 (16.7)	2.76	0.821	A
People around me complain about the amount of time I spend online.	2 (4.8)	9 (21.4)	21 (50.0)	10 (23.8)	2.93	0.802	A
Support for digital preservation efforts.	2 (4.8)	16 (38.1)	16 (38.1)	8 (19.0)	2.71	0.854	A
The time I spend online affects my school grades.	1 (2.4)	4 (9.5)	18 (42.9)	19 (45.2)	3.31	0.743	A
I check my email before something else that I need to do	0 (0.0)	2 (4.8)	19 (45.2)	21 (50.0)	3.45	0.589	A
I fear that life without the internet would be boring, empty, or joyless.	3 (7.1)	8 (19.0)	20 (47.6)	11 (26.2)	2.93	0.874	A
I find myself anticipating when I will go online again.	0 (0.0)	3 (7.1)	20 (47.6)	19 (45.2)	3.38	0.636	A
Overall Mean					3.14	0.735	A

Table 1 indicates that a significant proportion of library users at the National Open University of Nigeria exhibit behaviours associated with internet addiction. The high mean scores for statements such as staying online longer than intended (mean = 3.52) and online activities negatively impacting academic performance (mean = 2.90) suggest that many students frequently struggle to regulate their internet use. Additionally, respondents tend to prioritise online engagement over face-to-face interactions, as reflected in the high agreement with preferring internet excitement to social intimacy (mean = 3.50). These patterns imply that internet use has become a dominant aspect of their daily routines, potentially at the expense of their academic and social responsibilities.

Furthermore, respondents often form new online relationships and find themselves anticipating their next online session, with mean scores of 2.76 and 3.38, respectively. Such behaviours point to a psychological dependence on the internet, where users derive emotional satisfaction from online interactions and find it difficult to disconnect. The tendency to check emails before attending to other tasks (mean = 3.45) and the feeling that life would be boring without the internet (mean = 2.93) reinforce the notion of emotional reliance, which is characteristic of problematic internet use. Overall, the analysis indicates a prevalent level of internet addiction among the students surveyed. The consistency in responses, reflected in the relatively low standard deviation, underscores that this is a widespread issue within this population.

The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to promote healthier internet habits, improve students' academic outcomes, and foster balanced social interactions. Addressing these behaviours can help mitigate the adverse effects associated with excessive internet use among university students.

Research Question Two: What is the extent of resilience among the library users in National Open University of Nigeria?

Table 2. The Extent of Resilience among Library Users

Items Statement	VGE	GE	A	SA	Mean	SD	Des.
The library provides adequate resources and support to help me achieve my academic goals.	0 (0.0)	1 (2.4)	18 (42.9)	23 (54.8)	3.52	0.558	A
I can bounce back quickly from setbacks or difficulties while using library resources	1 (2.4)	11 (26.2)	21 (50.0)	9 (21.4)	2.9	0.778	A

I feel confident in my ability to navigate and utilize library services effectively.	0 (0.0)	2 (4.8)	17 (40.5)	23 (54.8)	3.5	0.595	A
I can adapt to changes or unexpected issues while accessing library materials or services.	3 (7.1)	11 (26.2)	21 (50.0)	7 (16.7)	2.76	0.821	A
I can find alternative solutions when faced with challenges while using library resources	2 (4.8)	9 (21.4)	21 (50.0)	10 (23.8)	2.93	0.802	A
I feel supported by library staff when encountering difficulties.	2 (4.8)	16 (38.1)	16 (38.1)	8 (19.0)	2.71	0.854	A
I can effectively manage stress related to meeting deadlines or finding resources in the library.	1 (2.4)	4 (9.5)	18 (42.9)	19 (45.2)	3.31	0.743	A
I can learn from failures or setbacks when using library resources.	0 (0.0)	2 (4.8)	19 (45.2)	21 (50.0)	3.45	0.589	A
The library's online resources and tools are user-friendly and easy to navigate.	3 (7.1)	8 (19.0)	20 (47.6)	11 (26.2)	2.93	0.874	A
I feel motivated to continue learning and exploring library resources despite challenges.	0 (0.0)	3 (7.1)	20 (47.6)	19 (45.2)	3.38	0.636	A
Overall Mean					3.14	0.735	A

Table 2 illustrates respondents' perceptions of their ability to effectively utilise library resources and services. Most items received high agreement ratings, with mean scores ranging from 2.76 to 3.52, indicating generally positive confidence and adaptability in using the library. For example, the statement that the library provides adequate resources to support academic goals achieved the highest mean score of 3.52, reflecting a strong perception of support.

Additionally, respondents feel confident navigating library services (mean = 3.50) and are motivated to continue learning despite challenges (mean = 3.38), suggesting a favourable attitude toward library usage.

Overall, the average mean score of 3.14 indicates that respondents generally agree with statements related to their self-efficacy and resilience in managing library resources and overcoming challenges. The relatively low standard deviation of 0.735 suggests consistent positive perceptions among participants. These findings imply that students feel supported, confident, and motivated in their engagement with library resources, which can positively influence their academic success and the effective utilisation of library services.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the first objective, which highlight the prevalence of internet addiction among students, align with the observations of Sserunkuuma, et al. (2023), who emphasised that excessive internet use can lead to negative academic and social outcomes. The high mean scores, reflecting behaviors such as prioritising online activities over face-to-face interactions and experiencing anxiety about being offline, underscore the addictive tendencies identified in their study. Augsburger (2025) further argued that such behaviors could hinder students' overall well-being and academic performance, emphasizing the need for interventions to promote balanced internet use. The current data suggest that these issues are prevalent within the studied population, indicating a critical area for academic institutions to address.

In contrast, the second objective revealed generally positive perceptions of students' self-efficacy and resilience in using library resources, with most items rated favorably. This aligns with the findings of Sserunkuuma, et al. (2023), who noted that students' confidence in navigating academic resources significantly contributes to their academic success. The high mean scores suggest that students feel supported and capable of overcoming challenges related to library use, which is essential for effective learning. Similarly, Augsburger (2025) highlighted the importance of resource accessibility and user-friendliness in fostering student engagement and motivation. The positive perceptions reflected in this table support their assertion that well-designed academic support systems can enhance students' learning experiences and resilience in academic environments.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the comprehensive analysis of the data reveals a dual narrative within the student population: on the one hand, a significant proportion face challenges related to internet addiction, which can negatively impact their academic performance and social well-being; on the other hand, there is a notable sense of self-efficacy and resilience in utilizing library resources. The high levels of confidence in navigating library services and the motivation to continue learning highlight opportunities for academic institutions to build on students' positive attitudes towards resource use. These findings emphasize the need for a balanced approach- addressing the adverse effects of internet overuse through targeted interventions, such as awareness campaigns and

digital literacy programs, while simultaneously fostering and strengthening students' confidence and support systems within the academic environment. An integrated strategy that combines these elements is crucial for promoting holistic student development, ensuring that technological challenges do not impede academic success but are effectively managed. Ultimately, this approach can cultivate resilient, resourceful, and well-supported learners poised to thrive academically and socially.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations were made:

1. National Open University of Nigeria should implement targeted interventions to address internet addiction while simultaneously promoting students' self-efficacy and positive engagement with library resources.
2. Furthermore, incorporating digital literacy and responsible internet use initiatives can help balance students' dependence on technology and support the overall academic success of students at the National Open University of Nigeria.

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