

**JPUA**

Media Informasi dan Komunikasi Kepustakawanan

**Jurnal Perpustakaan Universitas Airlangga:  
Media Informasi dan Komunikasi Kepustakawanan**  
<https://e-journal.unair.ac.id/JPERPUS>

**INTERNET USE FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES: A STUDY OF  
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN GOMBE STATE  
UNIVERSITY, NIGERIA.**

**Research Paper  
Penelitian**

**PENGUNAAN INTERNET UNTUK TUJUAN AKADEMIK:  
STUDI PADA MAHASISWA SARJANA DI UNIVERSITAS  
NEGERI GOMBE, NIGERIA**

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## ABSTRACT

**Background of the study:** Uses of the Internet by undergraduate Students of Gombe State University is a survey meant to determine the behavior of GSU undergraduates toward the Internet and the purpose for which they use it.

**Purpose:** The study has five specific objectives, among which are to find out the behavior of GSU undergraduates regarding the Internet, identify the purpose for which the undergraduates of GSU use the Internet, and determine the respondents' frequency of surfing the Internet.

**Method:** Data was gathered using 167 questionnaires in the eight faculties of the University. A systematic random sampling method was used to select the respondents from the faculty. The questionnaire was administered to the undergraduates at each of the faculties, and the results were collated and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

**Findings:** The study's major findings revealed that most students have a positive attitude towards using the internet. However, many students complain of the university's slow and irregular internet connectivity.

**Conclusion:** The study recommended that the university improve the quality of its Internet services and properly educate students on the importance of good Internet use, among other things, for improved academic performance.

**Keywords:** internet use, undergraduate, students, Gombe State University, academic performance.

## INFO ARTICLE

Received: 6 May 2025

Accepted: 2 June 2025

Published: 30 June 2025

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### How to cite this article:

Muhammad, J. S., Mannan, E. F., Hindatu, A., & Ahmed, S. (2025). Internet Use for Academic Purposes: A Study of Undergraduate Students in Gombe State University, Nigeria. *JPUA: Jurnal Perpustakaan Universitas Airlangga: Media Informasi Dan Komunikasi Kepustakawanan*, 15(1), 54–64. <https://doi.org/10.20473/jpua.v15i1.2025.54-64>



## ABSTRAK

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**Latar Belakang Penelitian:** Penggunaan Internet oleh mahasiswa sarjana Universitas Negeri Gombe (GSU) merupakan suatu survei yang bertujuan untuk mengetahui perilaku mahasiswa sarjana di GSU terhadap internet serta tujuan mereka dalam menggunakan internet tersebut.

**Tujuan Penelitian:** Penelitian ini memiliki lima tujuan spesifik, di antaranya: mengetahui perilaku mahasiswa sarjana GSU terhadap internet; Mengidentifikasi tujuan penggunaan internet oleh mahasiswa sarjana GSU; Menentukan frekuensi akses internet oleh responden.

**Metode Penelitian:** Data dikumpulkan melalui penyebaran 167 kuesioner pada delapan fakultas di universitas tersebut. Metode pengambilan sampel secara acak sistematis digunakan untuk memilih responden dari tiap fakultas. Kuesioner dibagikan kepada mahasiswa sarjana di masing-masing fakultas, dan hasilnya dikumpulkan serta dianalisis menggunakan perangkat lunak Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

**Temuan Penelitian:** Hasil utama dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa mayoritas mahasiswa memiliki minat dan sikap positif terhadap penggunaan internet. Namun demikian, terdapat keluhan luas mengenai koneksi internet di universitas yang lambat dan tidak stabil.

**Kesimpulan:** Penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar pihak universitas meningkatkan kualitas layanan internet; memberikan orientasi yang tepat mengenai pentingnya penggunaan internet secara positif; dan langkah-langkah lainnya guna meningkatkan prestasi akademik mahasiswa.

**Kata Kunci:** penggunaan internet, mahasiswa sarjana, Universitas Negeri Gombe, kinerja akademik.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Internet is a network of hundreds of thousands of computers worldwide, connected to let other computers access information from them. Therefore, if a computer is connected to the Internet, it can, in principle, be connected to any other computer on the network. Today, the Internet comprises more than 45,000 regional, national, and international networks, connecting more than 5 billion people worldwide.

Due to an increase in world population and globalization, higher education is growing amazingly at a tremendous pace in Nigeria and other countries, and the world at large has witnessed rapid growth in its educational sector ([Griffin, 2004](#)). [Griffin \(2015\)](#) found that Student enrollment in higher education in Nigeria has increased since 2000, when the establishment of many state and private Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education relatively increased. However, developing countries are trying to improve the quality of their higher education programmes and face more challenges in providing quality higher education programmes than their counterparts in the developed world. Hence, most institutions of higher learning are adopting information and communication technology, as embodied in the Internet, as a source of information acquisition and a medium of disseminating knowledge to their students. Hence, this study seeks to examine the use of the Internet facilities in the university selected for this study and undergraduate students' response to the utilization of the vast arrays of resources available on the Internet for their research and academic work. The history of the Internet has long been linked to university education. This is because adopting the Internet in the university system has intensified access to information and communication by providing unrestricted access to e-mail messages, web boards, online services, and e-publications.

The increasing reliance on internet facilities among undergraduate students has raised concerns about their usage patterns, benefits, and challenges because, despite the proliferation of internet services in universities, there are concerns over how effectively students use the internet for academic purposes. While it can potentially improve academic performance and learning outcomes, there are reports of underutilization and misuse, such as focusing more on entertainment and social media. Previous studies in some universities and tertiary institutions revealed a widespread assumption that undergraduate students use the internet for communication purposes, for fashion and shopping reasons, and that they are less frequent or intense internet users. In addition, there is a controversy in the findings of studies related to the undergraduate students' attitudes and behavior towards the internet. Some assert that undergraduate students exhibit less favorable or negative attitudes towards the internet, while others posit that undergraduate students possess positive attitudes towards the internet. Some claim students use the internet for non-academic purposes, while others affirm academic utility. These discrepancies necessitate a

closer examination of GSU students' internet behaviors, usage purposes, and the constraints they encounter to recommend appropriate interventions.

**Purpose of the Study.** Recognizing the growing significance of computers and the Internet in education, many Nigerian universities, including Gombe State University, have enhanced their Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure. As part of this initiative, GSU has implemented an electronic library system and wireless internet access across its campuses primarily for academic enrichment. While access to internet facilities is crucial, examining how students interact with these technologies is equally important. This study, therefore, focuses on evaluating student behavior, motivations, and challenges associated with internet use for academic purposes at GSU.

The following research questions were set out to generate data for the study. What are the behaviors of Gombe State University undergraduates towards using the Internet in the library?. For what purpose do the undergraduates of Gombe State University use the Internet in the library?. What are the constraints faced by the undergraduates of Gombe State University using the Internet in the library?, What are the possible solutions/remedies to the constraints faced by the undergraduate students of GSU when using the internet in the library? Research Objectives: his study aims to determine the behaviors of Gombe State University Library undergraduates towards the Internet and the purpose for which they use it. The specific objectives are as follows: To find out the behaviors of undergraduates of the Gombe State University Library towards the Internet usage in the library. To identify the purpose for which Gombe State University Library undergraduates use the Internet in the library. To find out the constraints faced by undergraduates of the Gombe State University Library using the Internet in the library. To find out possible solutions to the challenges faced by undergraduate students of GSU when using the internet in the library?

This section examines literature on the behavior of undergraduate students toward internet usage, the purposes for which they use it, the challenges they face, and potential solutions to those challenges. Several studies have shown that the internet is vital to students' academic life. [Dahlstrom and Bichsel \(2014\)](#) reported that students use the internet to access course-related materials and collaborate with peers. [Junco \(2012\)](#) found a positive relationship between social media use and academic performance when used moderately. Conversely, excessive use may reduce academic effectiveness ([Karpinski, A. C., & Duberstein, 2009](#)). A study conducted in Indonesia states that internet addiction can lead to behavioral tendencies in individuals to spend time, procrastinate, or intentionally avoid doing something that should be completed ([Gultom, S. A., Wardani, N. D., & Fitrikasari, A., 2018](#)). [Griffin \(2015\)](#) emphasizes that the availability of research through open-access platforms democratizes learning.

Moreover, the investigation results at Karachi University suggest that university supervisors and institutions should properly guide students regarding appropriate internet use to enhance their performance ([Jahan, S., Ali, S. A., & Hussaini, T., 2021](#)). [Jahan et al. \(2021\)](#) understand that student behavior toward internet use is vital to assessing its academic effectiveness. Internet behavior among undergraduates varies from academic to recreational use, with preferences shaped by personal attitudes, institutional support, and digital skills. Studies have shown that most undergraduates have a generally positive attitude toward internet use, viewing it as a vital tool for academic success ([Salem & Alamer, 2022](#)). At Gombe State University (GSU), similar to findings by [Alhassan \(2023\)](#) in northern Nigeria, students frequently access online platforms like Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and institutional e-libraries to complement their course materials.

However, internet behavior is also influenced by demographic variables such as gender, age, and academic discipline. For instance, [Nwachukwu and Okafor \(2021\)](#) noted that female students use internet resources more cautiously, while male students are more explorative in their browsing patterns, sometimes including non-academic activities. Attitude toward internet use is also shaped by previous exposure, digital literacy, and the perceived reliability of online resources. Writing on the purposes of internet use among undergraduates, the primary purposes for which undergraduates use the internet include academic research, assignment completion, exam preparation, and accessing e-books and journal articles. According to a 2021 study by Adeoye and Musa, over 75% of Nigerian undergraduates use the internet daily for educational tasks. Similarly, [Dung and Dadi \(2022\)](#) found that students at Nigerian public universities rely heavily on the internet for literature review, referencing, downloading lecture slides, and checking academic updates from portals.

Despite this academic orientation, distractions persist. Social networking sites like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram compete for students' attention, sometimes leading to time mismanagement ([Okonkwo, J., & Eze, 2023](#)). Still, when guided appropriately, the internet significantly enhances learning

outcomes. A recent study by [Usman and Hassan \(2025\)](#) affirms that blended use of academic tools like Google Docs, Coursera, and institutional LMS platforms increases students' research engagement and performance, especially when integrated with coursework.

Regarding the constraints undergraduate students face in using the internet, several obstacles hinder effective use among undergraduates in Nigerian universities. First, infrastructural limitations such as slow internet speed, network downtime, and insufficient bandwidth are frequently cited issues ([Onuoha & Suleiman, 2021](#)). At GSU, anecdotal reports and institutional assessments highlight that irregular connectivity and limited Wi-Fi coverage often disrupt students' research activities.

Another major constraint is the lack of digital literacy. According to [Ibrahim and Oche \(2020\)](#), many undergraduates lack adequate training in advanced internet search strategies, leading to over-reliance on superficial or non-scholarly content. In some cases, students are unaware of the academic databases available through university subscriptions. Additionally, socio-economic barriers such as the cost of devices, inability to afford mobile data, and limited access to premium academic content prevent equitable internet usage. [Yusuf and Garba \(2022\)](#) found that over 40% of students in northeastern Nigeria depend on cybercafés or shared mobile hotspots due to financial constraints, affecting internet engagement consistency and depth.

Finally, to address these constraints, several solutions have been proposed and implemented with varying levels of success. Enhancing campus-wide broadband connectivity and expanding e-learning infrastructure have been shown to increase access and satisfaction ([Edeh & Dangana, 2023](#)). As piloted by some universities in southern Nigeria, GSU and other institutions can benefit from partnerships with telecommunication providers to subsidize student data plans ([Ogundele & Nwachukwu, 2024](#)). Moreover, capacity-building programs in digital literacy are crucial. Workshops, library orientation sessions, and peer-led tech tutorials have effectively increased awareness and confidence in using academic databases and citation tools ([Lawal & Jatau, 2021](#)). Additionally, integrating digital skill training into general studies or ICT courses would further institutionalize these competencies. Institutions can also promote open-access platforms, such as DOAJ, PubMed Central, and CORE, reducing reliance on expensive subscriptions. Creating awareness about these resources helps bridge the knowledge gap, especially among first-year students ([Umar & Ibrahim, 2025](#)).

## RESEARCH METHOD

The methodology section of this study outlines the strategies employed for conducting the research, including the design, target population, sampling method, data collection instruments, and data analysis methods. The study utilized a survey research design, selected due to the nature of the topic, which required efficiently collecting a significant volume of data from a broad population. The population comprised 17,184 undergraduate students from eight faculties within the university. These include the faculties of Medicine, Arts and Social Sciences, Science, Education, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Law, Basic Clinical Sciences, and Clinical Sciences. The distribution of students by faculty is shown below:

Table 1. Undergraduate Students of Gombe State University

No	FACULTY	POPULATION
1	Medicine	2,577
2	Arts And Social Sciences	4,296
3	Science	3,437
4	Education	3,437
5	Pharmaceutical Sciences	859
6	Law	859
7	Basic Clinical Sciences	860
8	Clinical Sciences	859
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17,184</b>

Source(s): Prepared by the authors

This part of the work presents the data resulting from the study, which was processed and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Hence, the data was presented using the SPSS computer statistical package, tables, bar charts, pie charts, and histograms.

Table 2. Attitude of Students towards the Internet

Attitude of Students towards the Internet	S/Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		S/Disagree	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
I browse the Internet myself	80	8.0	30	3.0	37	3.7	20	2.0	00	0.0
My friend assisted me in browsing the Internet	00	0.0	20	2.0	30	30.0	80	8.0	37	3.0
Knowledge of the Internet is essential to students.	86	8.6	47	4.7	14	1.4	10	0.8	10	0.8
The Internet is important, like other research tools	90	9.0	30	3.0	27	2.7	10	0.8	10	0.8
The Internet is easier to use than the Library	40	4.0	90	9.0	20	2.0	10	1.0	7	0.7
The Internet is more informative than my lecturers	10	1.0	50	5.0	80	8.0	10	1.0	17	1.7
I do not use the Internet for academic work	17	1.7	10	1.0	20	2.0	70	7.0	50	5.0
I enjoy getting information from books than from the Internet	17	1.7	10	1.0	20	2.0	70	7.0	50	5.0
I feel overwhelmed using the Internet for my studies	27	2.7	90	9.0	20	2.0	20	2.0	10	1.0
The Internet does not particularly interest me	00	0.0	20	2.0	20	2.0	100	10.0	27	2.7
Using the Internet makes learning fun	30	3.0	100	10.0	10	1.0	10	1.0	17	1.7
The Internet is an integral part of the educational process	20	2.0	97	9.7	30	3.0	10	1.0	00	0.0
I access the Internet more at school than at home	20	2.0	90	9.0	20	2.0	10	1.0	27	2.7
The Internet does not contain useful and relevant educational information	20	2.0	37	3.7	20	2.0	60	6.0	30	3.0
The Internet is difficult to use for academic activities	10	1.0	10	1.0	20	2.0	97	9.7	30	3.0
I have security concerns about using the Internet for academic purposes	10	1.0	27	2.7	20	2.0	80	8.0	20	2.0
Surfing/browsing the Internet confuses me	10	1.0	10	1.0	20	2.0	97	9.7	30	3.0
Information from the Internet is unreliable	30	3.0	77	7.7	20	2.0	30	3.0	17	1.7
	27	2.7	80	8.0	10	1.0	30	3.0	10	1.0

Source(s): Prepared by the authors

The data above shows that undergraduates have a largely positive attitude towards the Internet. Most (92.5%) can browse independently, and a majority see it as essential for students (95.9%) and as important as other research tools (94.1%). Many prefer it over traditional resources—81.7% find it easier to use than the library, and 56.7% say it provides more information than their lecturers. Despite this, some face challenges: 74.1% feel overwhelmed, 76.6% feel confused, and 60% have security concerns. Views on information reliability are split. Still, 87.5% are interested in Internet-based courses, confirming their overall positive engagement with the Internet for academic purposes.

Table 3. Purpose of Using the Internet

PURPOSE OF USING THE INTERNET	NEVER FREQ %		SOMETIMES FREQ %		OFTEN FREQ %		V. OFTEN FREQ %	
For my online registration	00	0.0	10	1.0	107	10.7	50	5.0
For the Seminar/Assignment	00	0.0	17	1.7	90	9.0	60	6.0
For my course-related information,	17	1.7	50	5.0	50	5.0	50	5.0
For communication, e.g., e-mail	37	3.7	30	3.0	60	6.0	40	4.0
For social networking	20	2.0	27	2.7	80	8.0	40	4.0
For news and information	27	2.7	30	3.0	20	2.0	90	9.0
For entertainment (games, music, and movies)	20	2.0	37	3.7	90	9.0	20	2.0
For downloading software	27	2.7	20	2.0	30	3.0	90	9.0
For downloading e-books, journals	37	3.7	40	4.0	30	3.0	80	8.0
For uploading documents	100	10.0	20	2.0	30	3.0	1.7	1.7

Source(s): Prepared by the authors

Table 3 above shows that undergraduates primarily use the Internet for academic and personal purposes. A vast majority (98.3%) use it frequently for online registration, reflecting the university's digital registration system. Many also use it to source materials for seminars and assignments (85%) and course-related information (62.5%). The Internet is also widely used for communication via social media and email (over 70%), and for accessing news (65.9%). A large portion (69.1%) use it for entertainment, including games, music, and movies. Additionally, 75% often download software, while 28.3% and 46.7% download e-books and journals. However, 91.9% have never uploaded materials online, indicating limited content contribution.

Table 4. Constraints of using the Internet

Constraints of using the Internet	S/Agree Freq %		Agree Freq%		Neutral Freq %		Disagree Freq %		S/Disagree Freq %	
Slow Internet access	60	6.0	60	6.0	20	2.0	20	2.0	7	0.7
Too long to download materials	40	40.0	100	10.0	10	1.0	10	1.0	7	0.7
The problem of electricity	17	1.7	20	2.0	10	1.0	80	8.0	40	4.0
Difficulty in finding relevant information	20	2.0	90	9.0	20	2.0	20	2.0	17	1.7
I do not know websites in my subject area.	30	3.0	90	9.0	20	2.0	20	2.0	7	0.7
Internet costs are too expensive	20	2.0	110	11.0	20	2.0	10	1.0	7	0.7
Irregularity of Internet connectivity	20	2.0	100	10.0	30	3.0	17	1.7	00	0.0
I have poor Internet skills	20	2.0	30	3.0	50	5.0	40	4.0	27	2.7

Source(s): Prepared by the authors

Table 4 highlights several key constraints faced by undergraduates when using the Internet. The most common issues include slow Internet speed (88.5%) and long download times (84.2%). Although 26.5% cited poor electricity, over half (52.5%) did not see it as a major problem. A significant number (65.1%) admitted



not knowing key subject-related websites, which contributed to difficulty finding relevant information (55.8%).

High cost of data/airtime was another challenge for 46.6% of respondents, particularly affecting users of cyber cafes (74.2%), subscription modems (74.2%), and mobile Internet (92.1%). Additionally, irregular connectivity was a concern for 54.7%. While only 25.9% reported poor Internet skills, a larger portion (45.8%) made no claim, suggesting varying levels of digital literacy. The findings align with the Uses and Gratification Theory, showing that students use the Internet to meet diverse needs—academic, social, emotional, and entertainment—despite facing notable barriers.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study found that most Gombe State University (GSU) undergraduates have a positive perception and attitude towards Internet usage. They use it not only for entertainment and communication but also for academic purposes, confirming earlier findings that the internet plays a vital role in students' academic lives ([Dahlstrom & Bichsel, 2014](#); [Salem & Alamer, 2022](#)). Many students find the Internet easier to use than the library and even more informative than their lecturers, which is consistent with the findings of [Alhassan \(2023\)](#), who observed similar patterns in northern Nigeria. Thus, a study suggests using IoT in libraries for user comfort ([Natalia & Maryatun, 2024](#)).

Popular platforms used include Google, Yahoo, and social media networks, accessed via mobile phones, cybercafés, and subscription modems, supporting observations by [Yusuf and Garba \(2022\)](#) that many students in northeastern Nigeria rely on mobile hotspots and public access points for internet access. While usage is frequent, most students rarely upload content, focusing more on downloading and aligning with the trend of consumption rather than content creation, as also noted ([Usman & Hassan, 2025](#)).

The study linked students' Internet usage to the gratification of various needs, including cognitive, social, and affective needs. This affirms the uses and gratification framework observed by [Dung and Dadi \(2022\)](#), which underlines how the internet serves multiple purposes in students' academic and personal lives. The Internet plays an essential role in their academic and social lives, often supplementing lecture notes and preferred over traditional library use, as supported by findings ([Adeoye & Musa, 2021](#)).

### *Behavior of Undergraduates of GSU towards Internet Use*

The study found that undergraduates at Gombe State University (GSU) exhibit a strong interest and positive attitude towards using the Internet. Most students can browse independently and believe the Internet is essential for academic success, equating its value with traditional research tools. These findings are consistent with previous reports that students generally have a positive attitude towards internet use and view it as crucial for academic success ([Ogunbodede & Sawyerr-George, 2022](#)).

Most students find the Internet easier to use than the library and more informative than their lecturers, echoing the sentiments shared by [Alhassan \(2023\)](#). While the majority access the Internet more on campus than at home, opinions were evenly split regarding the reliability of online information, consistent with [Abubakar and Bala's \(2024\)](#) note on the influence of students' perceptions of online resources. These positive attitudes are attributed to the convenience, accessibility, and vast Internet resources. However, this contradicts earlier claims by [Nwachukwu and Okafor \(2021\)](#) that female students are less inclined to use the internet compared to their male counterparts.

### *Purpose of Internet Use among GSU Undergraduates*

GSU undergraduates primarily use the Internet for academic purposes, including online registration, assignments, downloading course materials, e-books, and journals. These findings align with the results of [Adeoye and Musa \(2021\)](#) and [Dung and Dadi \(2022\)](#), who reported that over 75% of Nigerian undergraduates, use the Internet daily for educational tasks.

They also use it extensively for communication through email, social networking, and to stay informed about local and global events. Supporting [Okonkwo and Eze's \(2023\)](#) observations about the dual use of the internet for academic and social purposes. Entertainment is another significant use, with students streaming music, movies, and games. Many download software, although very few upload materials online, indicating a trend of information consumption rather than contribution, a trend also noted ([Usman & Hassan, 2025](#)).

These usage patterns align with the uses and gratification theory, showing that students use the Internet to satisfy cognitive, affective, personal, and social needs ([Dahlstrom, E., & Bichsel, 2014](#)). The findings also reinforce the literature emphasizing the importance of the Internet in academic, personal, and entertainment-related activities ([Salem & Alamer, 2022](#)).

### *Constraints Faced by GSU Undergraduates in Using the Internet*

Despite their active Internet use, GSU students face several constraints. The most common issues include slow and unreliable Internet connectivity and the excessive time required to download materials. These findings mirror those of [Onuoha and Suleiman \(2021\)](#), who identified infrastructural deficiencies such as slow speed and poor coverage as major impediments. Poor electricity was not widely considered a major challenge, possibly due to increased use of mobile devices with rechargeable batteries. Many students admitted to lacking knowledge of subject-specific websites and experienced difficulty finding relevant information, an observation consistent with [Ibrahim and Oche \(2020\)](#), who found that inadequate digital literacy limits effective academic engagement online. Furthermore, the most common obstacles Indonesian students encounter include internet connection issues, limited data quota, and inadequate devices ([Indrianti et al., 2022](#)).

High data costs were another concern, especially for those relying on cyber cafés, modems, or mobile Internet, confirming [Yusuf and Garba's \(2022\)](#) findings that socio-economic factors affect equitable internet use. Although only a minority admitted to having poor Internet skills, some were undecided or declined to comment, suggesting that confidence levels may not always reflect actual digital competencies. These challenges affirm that technical limitations, cost barriers, and skill gaps hinder effective Internet use among students, despite their strong interest and frequent engagement online ([Edeh & Dangana, 2023](#); [Umar & Ibrahim, 2025](#)).

## CONCLUSION

The study concluded that undergraduate students at Gombe State University have strong interest, positive perceptions, and favorable attitudes toward Internet use. They primarily utilize the Internet for academic activities, communication, social networking, information gathering, and entertainment. However, despite their active engagement, most students do not upload content, indicating a one-sided interaction with the Internet focused on consumption rather than contribution.

Key constraints identified include slow and unstable Internet connectivity, high data costs, and a lack of awareness about relevant academic websites. To address these challenges, the study recommends that the university develop a student-friendly website and leverage popular social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Yahoo. By uploading academic content in engaging formats, such as visual animations and simplified designs, the university can better capture students' attention and enhance their learning experience. Finally, digital literacy materials are very important to be added for students.

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**How to cite this article:**

Muhammad, J. S., Mannan, E. F., Hindatu, A., & Ahmed, S. (2025). Internet Use for Academic Purposes: A Study of Undergraduate Students in Gombe State University, Nigeria. *JPUA: Jurnal Perpustakaan Universitas Airlangga: Media Informasi Dan Komunikasi Kepustakawanan*, 15(1), 54–62. <https://doi.org/10.20473/jpua.v15i1.2025.54-62>