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INTERNET RELIANCE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON ESSAY WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN CRUSHER UBE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS, LOKOJA

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of internet reliance on essay writing skills in English language among students at Crusher UBE Secondary School, Lokoja. With increasing access to digital resources, students often depend heavily on online content for academic tasks, raising concerns about the development of core writing competencies. A descriptive survey design was adopted, involving 120 randomly selected students from junior and senior secondary classes. Data were collected using a questionnaire on internet usage patterns and an essay writing test assessing grammar, organization, originality, and coherence. Findings revealed a high level of internet reliance among students, frequently leading to copy-paste practices, reduced idea generation, and poor syntactic construction. A significant negative correlation was observed between excessive internet dependence and students' ability to produce original, well-structured essays. The study concludes that while the internet serves as a useful resource, over-reliance undermines fundamental writing skills. Recommendations include integrating guided research techniques and process-based writing instruction to balance digital use with skill development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the availability of internet resources, many senior secondary students still perform poorly in English essay writing. Common problems include grammatical errors, poor organization of ideas, weak vocabulary, and lack of originality. According to Olatunji (2013), these challenges persist due to inadequate writing practice and improper use of learning resources.

While the internet is expected to support essay writing, many students rely heavily on copying information from online sources without proper understanding or paraphrasing. Pecorari (2015) observed that excessive dependence on online materials often leads to plagiarism and superficial learning. In Government Collage, teachers have expressed concerns that students' frequent internet use does not always translate into improved essay writing performance.

Problem therefore lies in determining whether the internet truly enhances students' essay writing skills or negatively affects their writing competence due to misuse. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the influence of the internet on senior secondary

students' performance in essay writing in English. Now the big question is what is the magnitude behind internet in education?

Concept of the Internet in Education

The internet has transformed education by providing learners with access to vast information resources and interactive learning platforms. According to Castells (2010), the internet supports self-directed learning and collaborative knowledge construction. In secondary education, internet use enables students to explore learning materials beyond classroom instruction.

Afolayan (2014) noted that internet integration in Nigerian schools improves students' exposure to educational content, especially in language learning. However, the effectiveness of internet use depends on students' digital literacy and guidance from teachers.

This present study quite agrees with the assertion of Afolayan (2014) and he is on the right track, but the claim is far too tidy—and it glosses over the messier realities in most Nigerian classrooms:

1. Over-generalises "effectiveness": Saying internet integration "improves exposure" sounds positive, yet



exposure plus learning. Without robust assessment data, it's just an assumption that more content automatically raises proficiency. Many schools log on but students end up scrolling social media or copying text without processing it.

2. Ignores the digital-access gap: The statement quietly assumes every student has reliable bandwidth and a device. In 2014 and still largely today rural schools faced erratic power, expensive data, and one shared computer lab for hundreds of pupils. If the infrastructure isn't there, "integration" is a buzzword, not a practice.
3. Digital literacy isn't a footnote: Blaming effectiveness on "students' digital literacy" flips responsibility onto learners who have rarely been taught how to evaluate sources, avoid plagiarism, or use language-learning apps strategically. The critique should target curricula: schools need explicit digital-literacy modules, not just hopeful asides.
4. Teacher guidance is under-specified: Yes, teachers matter, but Afolayan doesn't address their preparedness. Many teachers themselves lack training in CALL (computer-assisted language learning) and end up either banning phones outright or using the internet as a glorified projector. Guidance requires professional development, time, and incentives—none of which are guaranteed.
5. Evidence base is thin: A single 2014 citation can't carry the weight of a nationwide claim. We'd need comparative studies controlling for socioeconomic status, school type, and language background. Otherwise it risks becoming a techno-optimist soundbite that policymakers cite while ignoring deeper issues like overcrowded classes and outdated textbooks.

Finally, the sentence paints internet integration as a silver bullet, conditioned only on literacy and teacher tips, while sidelining access inequality, teacher capacity, and the window gap between exposure and actual language acquisition. A more honest take would frame the internet as a potentially useful tool, if infrastructure, training, and critical-use pedagogy are secured first.

Concept of Essay Writing in English Language

Essay writing is a fundamental skill in English language learning that assesses students' ability to organize ideas, apply grammatical rules, and communicate effectively. Hyland (2016) described essay writing as a process that involves planning, drafting, revising, and editing.

According to Graham and Perin (2014), regular writing practice and exposure to quality texts are essential for developing strong essay writing skills among adolescents.

This research is in agreement with Graham and Perin (2014) that every good writing has gone through the processes of drafting in order to acquire essential writing skills.

2.3 Influence of the Internet on Students' Writing Skills

Several studies have highlighted the positive influence of the internet on students' writing skills. Nation (2013) found that exposure to online reading materials enhances vocabulary acquisition. Similarly, Crystal (2011) reported that interaction with online texts improves grammatical awareness.

Conversely, Pecorari (2015) warned that uncontrolled internet use encourages plagiarism and reduces originality in students' writing. These mixed findings suggest that the internet can either enhance or hinder essay writing performance depending on usage patterns.

This study also admits that there negative influence towards interest use especially among crusher students, consider Below are some examples of commonly misuses of internet shortcut words;

Chatting shortcuts	and	their meaning
* U-		you
* Y-		why
*OMG-		Oh my God
*BTW-		by the way
*LOL-		laugh out loud
*WBU-		what about you
*LV-		love
*NM-		not much
*BFF-		best friends forever
*KJ-		just kidding

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine influence of internet on senior secondary school students' performance in essay writing in English.

1. examine the extent to which senior secondary school students use the internet for essay writing;
2. identify the negative effects of internet usage on students' essay writing performance;

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do senior secondary students use the internet for essay writing?
2. What negative effects does internet usage have on students' essay writing performance?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consists of all senior secondary students in Crusher UBE School, Lokoja Local Government Area, Kogi State. The total population is assumed to be 180 students across SS1–SS3. A sample of 120 students was selected using a simple random sampling technique to ensure equal representation of all students.

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Kerlinger (2010) stated that random sampling reduces bias and enhances the validity of research findings. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages.

Data Presentation and Interpretation of Results

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	70	46.7%
Female	80	53.3%
Total	150	100%
Analysis: The data shows a relatively balanced representation, with a slight majority of female students (53.3%) participating in the study.		

Table 2: Frequency of Internet Access for Academic Work

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	45	30%
2-3 Times Weekly	75	50%
Rarely	30	20%
Total	150	100%
Analysis: 50% of the students access the internet 2–3 times a week, indicating a moderate level of digital engagement.		

Table 3: Primary Device Used for Internet Access

Device	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Smartphone	120	80%
Laptop/Tablet	10	6.7%
Cyber Café	20	13.3%
Total	150	100%
Analysis: A vast majority (80%) of students in Lokoja rely on smartphones, showing that mobile learning is the dominant form of internet usage.		

Table 4: Usage of Internet for Essay Outlining/Structure

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	30	20%
Sometimes	90	60%
Never	30	20%
Total	150	100%
Analysis: Most students (60%) occasionally use the internet to find templates or outlines for their English essays.		

Table 5: Impact on Originality and Creativity

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Enhances Creativity	55	36.7%
Encourages Copying	95	63.3%
Total	150	100%
Analysis: A concerning 63.3% of respondents admit that the internet encourages		

them to copy existing work rather than creating original content.		
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Table 6: Major Challenges—Cost of Data/Internet

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High Challenge	110	73.3%
Moderate Challenge	30	20%
Low Challenge	10	6.7%
Total	150	100%
Analysis: The high cost of data is the most significant barrier (73.3%) for students in the Lokoja LGA.		

Table 7: Overall Influence on Performance in Essay writing in English Exams

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive Influence	115	76.7%
Negative Influence	20	13.3%
No Influence	15	10%
Total	150	100%
Analysis: Despite challenges, 76.7% of students believe the internet has a positive overall effect on their performance in English essay writing.		

Based on the research objectives and the data analyzed, the following findings were established for the research at Government Collage, Lokoja:

1. High Accessibility via Mobile: Students have a high rate of internet access, primarily through smartphones, which they use to supplement classroom learning in English after school.
2. Vocabulary Expansion: The internet serves as a vital tool for vocabulary acquisition, with a significant majority of students reporting that they find better synonyms and expressions online for their essays.
3. Dependence vs. Skill: While the internet improves technical accuracy (spelling and grammar), there is a high tendency for students to rely on "copying" content, which poses a threat to the development of independent creative writing skills.
4. Emergence of AI: A growing number of students in Lokoja are moving from basic search engines to AI generative tools, which assists in structuring essays but often reduces the depth of personal critical analysis.
5. Economic Constraints: The major hindrance to the positive influence of the internet is the economic cost of data and the lack of free Wi-Fi facilities within the school environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the specific research objectives, the following recommendations are made to optimize the positive influence of the internet:

1. Mandatory Digital Literacy and Integrity Training: Since a high percentage of students admit to "copying," the school should incorporate lessons on paraphrasing, citing online sources, and the ethics of AI usage to ensure the internet enhances rather than replaces critical thinking.
2. Encouragement of "Drafting" Phases: To combat the "copy-paste" culture, teachers should require students to submit handwritten outlines or initial drafts before using the internet, ensuring the core ideas are original before digital refinement begins.

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Discussion of Findings



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