

## *Full Length Research Paper*

# **An Appraisal of the Use of Search Engines by Students of Auchi Polytechnic Edo State Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT:** This study evaluated Auchi Polytechnic students' use of search engines. To guide this investigation, three objectives were established. The descriptive survey method was used in the study, and a questionnaire was used to collect data. The study's population consisted of all National Diploma (ND2) and Higher National Diploma (HND2) students at Auchi Polytechnic in Auchi. The library was employed as a target location, and only students who visited the library throughout the study period were used in the study. Three thousand two hundred and seventy-eight (3278) ND2 and HND2 students registered with the polytechnic library during the 2019/2021/2022 academic session comprised the study's population. The study's sample size was considerable, with a representative

sample of one hundred and twenty-five (125) students discovered in the library during the study time. According to the report, the majority of pupils used search engines to a Very High Extent. According to the study, Auchi polytechnic students used search engines for research, exam preparation, current information, and assignment. The study advised that since a majority of the students pointed out that Information overload is one of key issues they faced in using the search engines. Teaching on advanced search choices (Boolean Operators) should be promoted.

**Keywords:** Search engines, Use, Students, Auchi Polytechnic, Nigeria

## **INTRODUCTION**

According to Ngwuchukwu (2012), search engines are linked to the internet, making them a rapid and effective way to access information on the internet. Search engines are designed to structure the avalanche of information on the web; otherwise, a searcher will be extremely perplexed when looking for information on the web.

The internet is an excellent resource for discovering research resources, and it has broadened the search technique for students, particularly undergraduates. Technology has made it easier than ever to discover information, but it has also promoted critical thinking in the development of search engines and search tactics in order to improve the authenticity of search results.

The word search engine refers to a quick and efficient method of finding information on the internet. In this day and age of information overload and explosion, search

engines are critical; otherwise, a researcher will be perplexed when searching for information on the internet. The internet provides an important opportunity to source materials for research, and it has expanded the search scheme for students to some extent. Technology has made the system of searching information easier than ever before, but it has since increased critical thought in the development of search engines and search strategies in order to improve the validity of search results (Ngwuchukwu, 2012).

Ware (2001) discovered that the availability of information on the internet is enormous and that anyone can author anything on the internet, so there is now a need to be more aware of some search engines that have information in an organized version, some engines have well organized information, and there is a need to know all

of these search engines for effective search.

According to the scholar, search engines are tools used to unlock information from the internet; it is a quick and efficient way of getting to the information that one requires on the web, just as the content page of a book, the catalogue, a book index, a journal index, and a teacher library provide guides to literature searches. They do, however, deliver services in distinct ways.

According to the Britannica Concise Encyclopedia (2012), a search engine is a tool for locating information, notably on the internet or the World Wide Web, and search engines are also defined as "massive databases that span broad portions of the internet." According to the Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, search engines are comprised of three components: a spider, crawler, or bot that crawls the internet gathering information; a database that stores the gathered data; and a search tool that allows users to search the database by typing a keyword describing the information they seek.

According to Barron's Marketing Dictionary (2012), a search engine is a computer software that can search huge amounts of text or other data for defined key phrases and then produce a list of files or documents containing the key terms. It went on to say that search engines help people locate online material on a variety of topics and are important secondary data sources.

Furthermore, search engines, according to the Gale Encyclopedia of Small Business (2012), are online services that allow users to scan the contents of the internet in order to identify websites or specific information of interest to them. It explains that when a user enters a search term, search engines look for everything comparable.

According to Kimmon (2012), a search engine is a website that links and organizes content from all over the internet. The author went on to claim that anyone seeking for something would type in a query indicating what they're looking for, and the engine would then return links to things that met their criteria. In light of these definitions, search engines may be regarded as a user's assistance in finding and retrieving information.

College libraries have developed to keep up with the ever-changing world of information and communication technology. Libraries have gotten on the bandwagon of information globalization as a repository for vast volumes of data. Many Nigerian polytechnics are preparing to understand their role in the current learning and research environment. A search engine's goal is to facilitate research, which is why postgraduate students must make extensive use of it in order to further their studies.

Accessing online information requires different tools than accessing library resources. Catalogues, bibliographies, indexes, abstracts, shelf lists, and accession registers are used to find items in libraries, whereas search engines and directories are used to find information on the internet (Oni et al., 2021).

Students in Nigerian tertiary schools must know how to

conduct a search query in order to access the information they seek on the internet. Search engines have risen to popularity as significant tools in the development of knowledge, and they are now frequently considered as unbiased methods of information gathering.

It is impossible to overestimate the value of search engines in locating material on the internet or online, in the same way that catalogues are used to find printed literature. Regardless of how useful search engines are for research and information collecting, a lack of comprehension may limit their usage. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to assess Auchi Polytechnic students' use of search engines.

### **Objectives of the study**

To examine the extent of use of search engines by Auchi Polytechnic students.

To ascertain the reasons of using search engines by Auchi Polytechnic students.

To discover the challenges militating against the use of search engines by of Auchi Polytechnic students.

### **Research questions**

The following research questions are raised for this study

- (1) What is the extent of use of search engines by Auchi Polytechnic students?
- (2) What are the reasons of using search engines by Auchi Polytechnic student?
- (3) What are the challenges militating against the use of search engines by Auchi Polytechnic students?

### **Research hypotheses**

There is no significant association between the class of students and the extent of use of search engines.

The reason students use search engines is independent on the class of the students.

### **Literature review**

The history of search engines would be incomplete if the origins of the internet were not included. This is because search engines are useless without access to the internet. Search engines were built to assist users find information on the internet. This is owing to the tremendous amount of information and knowledge available on the internet, which is frequently referred to as "information explosion" or "overload" in librarianship.

The internet is a revolution that has drastically altered how people live and work. It is described as a globally accessible network of interconnected computer networks

that transfer data utilizing packet switching and the standard Internet Protocol (IP) protocol. It is also known as a "network of networks" (Aqil and Ahmad, 2011).

In the early 1960s, ARPANET, a network built by the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), now Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), to promote simple communication and rapid access to data and programs from anywhere in the world, was the predecessor of the internet. ARPANET was initially designed for military and defense purposes. It was part of the United States military's response to the Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik, the first artificial earth satellite, and was intended to establish America's scientific and technological leadership.

By late 1969, the University of California at Los Angeles, Stanford Research Institute, University of California at Santa Barbara, and the University of Utah had established four interconnected nodes. The number of nodes had grown to 15 by the end of 1971, and email had been developed. Telnet, a commercial version of ARPANET, was introduced in 1974, while BITNET, a time network, was established in 1981.

The Internet Protocol Suite (TCP/IP) was defined in 1982, while the Domain Name System (DNS) was introduced in 1984. TCP/IP network connectivity was increased when the National Science Foundation Network (NSFNET) was formed in 1986 to provide access to supercomputer locations throughout the United States from research and education.

The ARPANET, a network that allowed computers to communicate with one another and was backed by the US military's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, grew into the global internet. Over time, the network's nodes grew to be thousands of massive computers. As a result, similar data networks sprouted up over the world, and because they were linked to a much larger, community internet, finding information became increasingly difficult. Computer scientists quickly began to develop automated methods for finding specific information on the Web, the needle in a haystack of hundreds of thousands of institutional computers and tens of millions of smaller servers and personal computers that had become part of this rapidly expanding network. For such a vast network to be usable, search tools became essential. Most algorithmic search engines operate in a similar manner: they employ software robots that "crawl" through the content of Web pages and index where specific phrases or groupings of terms appear. The internet grew more mainstream with the advent of the "World Wide Web" in the early 1990s, worsening the problem.

Previously, the internet was primarily the domain of scientists and researchers who did not regard it as a mass medium. The transition occurred when a set of standards was established and a new class of user-friendly software known as "Web browsers" was developed. These included the ability to display images in addition to text, as well as the ability to follow links between various sorts of material.

Many engines based on this technique developed in the mid-1990s, including WebCrawler, Lycos, AltaVista, and Excite, which were usually linked with directories.

In 1996, Google began as a graduate student initiative at Stanford University. It distinguished itself from other Web-indexing engines by examining how many other Web sites were linked directly to a page containing the search terms. PageRank is based on the premise that the more a page is linked to by other pages, the more relevant it is to other people. African universities have only recently begun to use technology into their operations. This is a vital instrument for improvement and growth, particularly when it comes to academic materials and ways for digitizing and storing them (Adeyinka et al., 2008).

According to Ngwuchukwu (2012), ICT literacy skills are necessary for internet use and can be obtained through seminars, lectures, and conferences, as well as self-help. Recent study, however, suggests that widely used search engines such as Google may play a larger role in the information-gathering process. Salaam and Adegboro (2010) conducted a study on the use of search engines by students at private colleges in Ogun State and discovered that 51 (45.95 percent) of the total population of 111 use search engines on a daily basis.

In a similar vein, Madhusudhan (2007) conducted an Internet use study with Delhi University research scholars, which found that the majority of respondents used search engines to find information rather than subject gateways or Web directories. Search engines have been found to outnumber all other types of electronic information seeking strategies. Despite the increased emphasis on Web search engines as important tools for information retrieval, quantitative analyses of large sets of data collected from real online searches show that search engines are not being used to their full potential, and user online searching behavior has remained relatively homogeneous in recent years, with Web users following surface strategies, appearing reluctant to build complex searches, and investing little effort.

Commercial search engines, such as Google, have been chastised for facilitating "infobesity" via their information retrieval capabilities (Bell, 2004). The bulk of Auchi polytechnic students have a vague understanding of different search engines and their principles. One of the biggest issues with search engines is that they generate a lot of information. Ngwuchukwu (2012) discovered that certain employees who are also postgraduate students lack fundamental ICT abilities that will aid in earning good university marks in a research of ICT usage for knowledge societies. The most significant is a lack of knowledge about search engines and where to find information about them. Following the issue of inconsistency in power supply, Abdullahi and Haruna (2008) observed that a lack of fundamental understanding of ICT is the second most significant impediment to the use of ICT in university libraries in Adamawa State, Nigeria. However, the authors note that the proportion is insignificant when compared to

other constraints such as unpredictability of power supply, networking, and equipment availability, to name a few.

Oni et al. (2021) investigated the usage of search engines by students at Auchi Polytechnic in Auchi, Edo State, Nigeria. Four (4) distinct aims and four (4) research questions led the investigation. In this study, a descriptive survey method was adopted. A questionnaire was used to collect data.

The total population of the study is seven thousand two hundred and seventy-eight (7278) students who enrolled at the polytechnic library during the study period. The researcher calculated the fraction that made up the sample using Yaro Yemani's sample size calculation approach. Three hundred and seventy-nine (379) persons were chosen as part of the sample size for the study. A proportional stratified random sampling strategy was employed to ensure that the entire element (stratum) that comprised the population was represented in the study. The majority of pupils utilized Google and Yahoo search on a daily basis, according to the report. The survey also discovered power outages, expensive airtime/data costs, a lack of/bad internet connection at the polytechnic library, and insufficient search engine skills/knowledge.

## METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design was used in this study. The nature of the investigation dictated the use of a survey as the research strategy for the study. This is due to the fact that survey design allows for the study of both small and big populations. It enables researchers to collect data from members of the chosen community using a questionnaire in order to determine the present state (Nworgu, 2006).

This study's population comprises of all National Diploma 2 (ND2) and Higher National Diploma 2 (HND2) students at Auchi Polytechnic in Auchi.

The Auchi Polytechnic library was the study's focal center, and only students who visit the library during the study period were considered. Three thousand two hundred and seventy-eight (3278) ND2 and HND2 students who have registered with the polytechnic library during the 2019/2021/2022 academic session are the study population.

The study's population is large, and available sampling techniques were used to find representative samples of one hundred and twenty-five (125) students in the library during the study time. The questionnaire was constructed by the researchers. The questionnaire entitled "An Appraisal of the Use of Search Engines by Auchi Polytechnic Students Questionnaire" (AUSEAPSQ) was used in this study.

The data obtained from the copies of the questionnaire retrieved from the respondents were analyzed using simple statistic of frequency counts, percentage and mean and chi-square for the formulated hypotheses.

## RESULTS

A total of one hundred and twenty-five (125) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents and one hundred and fifteen (115) (92.0%) were returned completed and subsequently used in this study. Table 1 reveals the gender distribution of the respondents with female 69(60.0%) and male 46(40.0%). This implies that the majority of the respondents in this study are females. On the level of the respondents, HND11 has the highest number of respondents with 63(54.8%) while ND11 52 (45.2%). The high usage of search engines by the students could be attributed to the fact that they are final year students that uses search engines to source for materials for their research or project work. Table 2 shows the extent of use of search engines by Auchi Polytechnic students. A majority student with 71(61.7%) used search engines to Very High Extent. While 44(38.3%) used search engines to Great Extent. Table 3 shows the reasons for using search engines by Auchi Polytechnic students. Research 96(83.5%), study for examination 95(82%), Browsing 90(78.3%), Current information 88(76.5%) and Assignment 64(55.7%) are the reasons for using search engines by Auchi polytechnic students. Table 4 reveals the Challenges Militating against the Use of Search Engines by Auchi Polytechnic Students. A majority of the respondents agreed the following as the challenges militating against the use of search engines. Poor search engine skills came first with 109 (94.8%). Information overload came second 102 (88.7%). Poor network/bandwidth came third with 98 (85.2%). On fourth position is Poor ICT Knowledge with 96 (83.55%). Incessant power failure came last with 76 (66.1%). This simply implies that Poor search engine skills, Information overload, Poor network/bandwidth, Poor ICT Knowledge and Incessant power failure are some of the challenges facing the use of search engine by Auchi Polytechnic students.

### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant association between the class of students and the extent of use of search engines. The result of the Chi-square analysis shows that there is calculated value of approximately 4.0 with an asymptotic significant value of 0.047 which is less than the 5% level of significance, hence from the assumptions of chi-square for non-parametric test the null hypothesis is accepted and we could conclude that the class of students is independent on the extent of use of search engines (Table 5a and b). Table 5c indicates that there is a low positive association between the variables indicating an increase in class of students will bring about an increase in extent to which students uses search engines.

### Hypothesis 2

The reason students use search engines is independent

**Table 1:** Respondents' demographic characteristics (n =115).

	No of the respondents	%
<u>Gender</u>		
<u>Male</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>40.0</u>
<u>Female</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>60.0</u>
<u>Level of the students</u>		
<u>ND11</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>45.2</u>
<u>HND11</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>54.8</u>
Total	115	100

Source: (Fieldwork, 2022)

**Table 2:** Extent of Use of Search Engines by Auchi Polytechnic Students.

Extent	No	%
Very Little Extent (VLE)	--	--
Little Extent (LE)	--	--
Little Extent (LE)	--	--
Some Extent (SE)	--	--
Great Extent (GE)	44	38.3
Very High Extent (VHE)	71	61.7
Total	115	100

Source: (Fieldwork 2022)

**Table 3:** Reasons of Using Search Engines by Auchi Polytechnic Students.

Items	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
<u>Research</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>83.5</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>16.5</u>	<u>--</u>	<u>--</u>	<u>115</u>	<u>100</u>
<u>Assignment</u>	<u>64</u>	<u>55.7</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>9.6</u>	<u>115</u>	<u>100</u>
<u>Current Information</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>76.5</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>10.4</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>13.0</u>	<u>115</u>	<u>100</u>
<u>Browsing</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>78.3</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>10.4</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>11.3</u>	<u>115</u>	<u>100</u>
<u>Study for examination</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>82.6</u>	<u>--</u>	<u>--</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>17.4</u>	<u>115</u>	<u>100</u>

on the class of the students.

Table 6b shows the result of the Chi-square analysis. It shows that there is calculated value of approximately 18.2 with an asymptotic significant value of 0.01 which is less than the 5% level of significance, hence from the assumptions of chi-square for non-parametric test the null hypothesis is accepted and we could conclude that the class of students is independent on the reason for use of search engines (Table 6a and b). The linear-by linear association indicates that there is evidence that there might exist a linear relationship between the variables and a likelihood that the variables can occur. Table 6c of symmetric measure indicates that there is a low positive association between the variables indicating an increase in class of students will bring about an increase in reason for the use of search engines. The Pearson product moment correlation shows that there is a 26.6% association between the variables while the spearman rank correlation shows a 27.1% association in the variable.

## DISCUSSION

According to the findings of this study, the majority of students used search engines to a Very High Extent. This

finding is consistent with Ngwuchukwu (2012), who noted that the word search engine refers to a quick and efficient way of discovering information on the internet. In this day and age of information overload and explosion, search engines are critical; otherwise, a researcher will be perplexed when searching for information on the internet. The internet provides an important opportunity to source materials for research, and it has helped to broaden the search scheme for students. Technology has made the system of searching information easier than ever before, but it has also increased critical thought in the development of search engines and search strategies in order to improve the validity of search results.

The study also found that Auchi polytechnic students used search engines for research, exam preparation, current information, and assignment purposes. This conclusion supports the findings of Madhusudhan (2007), who performed an Internet use survey among research academics at Delhi University and discovered that most respondents utilized search engines to seek material rather than subject gateways or Web directories. Search engines have been demonstrated to outperform all other sorts of Electronic Information Seeking techniques.

The study discovered that poor search engine skills, information overload, poor network/bandwidth, poor ICT

**Table 4:** Challenges militating against the use of search engines by Auchi Polytechnic students.

Items	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Poor search engine skills	109	94.8	6	5.2	--	--	115	100
Incessant power failure	76	66.1	30	26.1	9	7.8	115	100
Poor ICT Knowledge	96	83.5	12	10.4	7	6.1	115	100
Poor network/bandwidth	98	85.2	15	13.0	2	1.7	115	100
Information overload	102	88.7	5	4.4	8	7.0	115	100

**Table 5a:** Extent of use of search engines.

Class	ND II	extent of use of search engines		Total
		Great extent	Very Great extent	
		26	26	52
	HND II	20	43	63
Total		46	69	115

**Table 5b:** Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.955 <sup>a</sup>	1	0.047		
Continuity Correction	3.231	1	0.072		
Likelihood Ratio	3.963	1	0.047		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.057	0.036
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.921	1	0.048		
N of Valid Cases	115				

**Table 5c:** Symmetric measures

	Value	Asymptotic	Standardized Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval Pearson's R	.185		.092	2.006	.047 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal Spearman Correlation	.185		.092	2.006	.047 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases	115				

**Table 6a:** Reasons of using search engines

Class	Research	Reasons of using search engines				Total
		Assignment	Up-to-date information	Browsing	Study for Examination	
	ND II	4	16	20	6	52
	HND II	4	13	8	21	63
Total		8	29	28	27	115

**Table 6b:** Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.161 <sup>a</sup>	4	0.001
Likelihood Ratio	18.878	4	0.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.047	1	0.005
N of Valid Cases	115		

knowledge, and frequent power outages are some of the issues that Auchi Polytechnic students face when using search engines. This finding is consistent with the findings of Oni, Eshiemokhai, and Momoh (2021), who studied the usage of search engines by students at Auchi Polytechnic in Auchi, Edo State, Nigeria. To steer the study, four (4) precise objectives and four (4) research questions were established.

A descriptive survey method was used in the investigation. The data gathering instrument was a questionnaire. The total population for the study is seven thousand two and seven hundred and eight (7278) students who registered with the polytechnic library during the study period. Using Yaro Yemani's sample size determination formula, the researcher determined the fraction that comprised the sample.

Table 6c: Symmetric measures

		Asymptotic Standardized		Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
		Value	Error <sup>a</sup>		
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.266	.088	2.929	.004 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.271	.089	2.996	.003 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		115			

A sample size of three hundred and seventy-nine (379) was thus chosen and used in the study. To ensure that the entire element (stratum) that comprised the population was represented in the study, a proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used. According to the study, the majority of students utilized Google and Yahoo search on a daily basis. The investigation also discovered power outages, high airtime/data costs, a lack of/bad internet access in the polytechnic library, and insufficient search engine skills/knowledge.

## Conclusion

By allowing people to interact from anywhere on the planet, the Internet has broken down communication barriers. It is fast, dependable, and has no restrictions on content or format; it also has an almost infinite number of capabilities that allow users to access virtually unlimited amounts of information on the internet. It gives users access to the most recent research findings and expertise from around the world. As a result, it has become an important part of the internet offerings of academic institutions. As a result, the Internet has evolved into an essential resource for learning, teaching, and research. A search engine, on the other hand, is an Internet tool that assists users in finding the information they require on the ever-expanding Internet. Auchu Polytechnic students depended extensively on search engines to find information from the large amount of information available on the internet for research, test preparation, current information demands, and assignments. Auchu Polytechnic students, however, face inadequate search engine skills, information overload, low network/bandwidth, and insufficient ICT expertise, as well as frequent power outages, when attempting to use internet search engines.

## Recommendations

1. The polytechnic management should introduce a compulsory course on internet use to all the students of the polytechnic to enable them develop search engine skill and ICT knowledge.
2. A majority of the students pointed out that Information overload is one of major challenges they faced in using the search engines. Teaching on advanced

search options (Boolean Operators) should be encouraged.

3. To cope with the problem of poor network, the polytechnic management should ensure that the e-library section of the polytechnic library is functioning properly by upgrading internet facilities available and regular internet subscriptions for fast and easy access to e- resources through search engine by the students.

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