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**PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE STUDENTS' USE OF CELL PHONES IN  
UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA.**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study sought information from respondents on the problems caused by the students use of cell phones in university libraries in Anambra State of Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research design, that traced the history of cell phones in Nigeria. The population of 3000 registered student's library users was studied. Sample size of 100 respondents was used. Accidental sampling technique was used to collect data. A self-constructed questionnaire, validated by two experts from the university library was used for data collection from the sampled students. The reliability of the instrument was tasted in Imo State University Library using Cronbach Alpha formula. Reliability coefficient of 0.88 was obtained. Simple percentages and frequency was used for data analysis. The results of the findings revealed that all the student's population had cell phone, and they use cell phone mainly for communication. It was also discovered that the use of cell phone actually causes distractions in the library. Finally, students do not want a ban placed on the use of cell phones in the library. Based on the findings, recommendations include among others that the library authorities should place instructions on notice boards and some strategic places within the library banning cell phone use by students when the library is in session.

**Keywords:** Cell phone, Library, Academic library, Adverse effects.

## **INTRODUCTION**

It is conventionally indisputable that all youths and adults in Nigeria own one or more cell phones. Cell phones have become an almost essential part of daily life since their rapid growth in popularity in the early 2000s. Cell phones are the most necessary medium of communication for adolescents, youths and even adults. It has virtually affected the society's accessibility, security, safety and coordination of business and social activities, even the students reading habit and has hence become a part of culture of the whole world (Rabiu, Mohammed, Umaru & Ahmed, 2016). Synonymously, one can choose to refer to cell phones as, handset or mobile phone. Telecommunication activities have been in the rapid increase in Nigeria, as in most other developing countries, because of cell phone.

### **Evolution of mobile phones in Nigeria**

Digital cell phone was introduced in Nigeria in the year 2001. Before then, the country had less than five hundred thousand (500,000) telephone land lines. Today, the story is different with the number of telephone lines in Nigeria put at more than 30 million (Omeruo, 2009). Previously, only analogue phones (land-line) were available in Nigeria. They were dispensed and managed by Nigerian Telecommunications Ltd (NITEL). Phones were very expensive; it was only the rich that could afford it. Thus, they were seen as status symbols rather than as necessity.

However, in 2001 the Global System of Mobile Communication (GSM) otherwise known as cell phone was launched in Nigeria. GSM was then one of the second generation (2G) mobile technologies in the world. GSM in Nigeria proved to be an instant success immediately dominating the digital cellular market. Econet Wireless was the first GSM mobile phone network to go live in Nigeria specifically on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2001. It later had a lot of metamorphosis changing from Econet to Vmobile, Celtel and now Airtel. Mobile Telecommunications Network

(MTN) was launched on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the same August 2001. It was soon after joined by, GLO mobile (otherwise called Globacom) and Mtel (Onwudinjo, Ilorah, & Nwofor, 2010). However, the story of mobile telecommunication in Nigeria is not just about GSM, as the Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) has also contributed its own quarter. Companies like Starcomms, Visafone and Bourdex are leaders in CDMA technology. In many ways, the mobile phone has contributed a lot to the development of Nigeria. The blessings of mobile communication in Nigeria have impacted directly or indirectly on the populace, the corporate world, the business world, and the society at large. Job creation and employment is one of the good things that GSM brought to Nigeria as it is the sector that has employed the highest number of both skilled and unskilled manpower in recent times.

Akpabio (2005) notes that there is no better way to talk about GSM in Nigeria than to recall the pre-GSM era where telephones were the preserve of the rich and when Nigeria's tele density ranked among the worst in the world. An overwhelming majority of Nigerians had to make do with phone booths and business centers where the long queues and waste of time were clearly inhibiting factors. To make an international call, one had to travel long distances to NITEL call centers which were mainly in capital and commercial cities. Today, the story has changed for good. Nowadays, it has virtually affected the society's accessibility, security, safety and coordination of business and social activities and has hence become a part of culture of the whole world (Haruna & Rabi, 2016). However, there are places where indiscriminate and unguarded use of mobile phones should be unacceptable because of the adverse effects. One example of such places is the library.

To many, the library is a place of reading and studying; where examination-writing candidates make their second homes to read their textbooks and notebooks in preparation. This explains

why many libraries have seasonal uses as their patrons have a well-known pattern of visits and usage, which are at the designated examination periods. Only a few others conceive the library as an organization of information resources meant for use (Agbanu, 2004). Libraries are collection of print and non-print materials selected, acquired, processed, organized, and stored in a place by a trained librarian for easy retrieval and use of a clientele. Libraries are usually located in a noiseless area so as to enable conducive reading environment. For effective private study to be enabled, it has to take place in a quiet zone - the library. Libraries are of different types; national library, public library, school library, special library, private library, and academic library. This study centers on a type of library called academic library.

Academic libraries are located, established, maintained and administered by a university or any higher institution to meet the needs of its students, members of the staff, researchers, for academic, administrative and executive responsibilities (Akinlade, 2000). As a result, the library provides a "gateway" for students and researchers to access various resources, both print/physical and digital (Ugwu, 2008). The academic library is the brain center of any academic institution on which all academic activities are linked to. Readers, especially students and researchers use the academic libraries for personal or private studies.

Students are central to the learning process, the ability of academic libraries in ensuring that opportunities are created for students to acquire the needed competencies is pertinent to developing lifelong learning abilities. It is obvious that the use of cell phone in schools by students is problematic, let alone using it in the library. As Ling (2004) states, the cell phone is at cross purpose with the mission of the school. While in school students are supposed to take on their prescribed roles as students with full concentration on their studies and free from contact

with the outside world. However, the cell phone gives room to blending students' roles with other roles such as communicating with friends and relations, watching films, playing games, thus distracting and disrupting the students' academic work. Thus, the cell phone has the power to undermine the schools' authority and weaken their control over students, cause distractions to the students that study in the library as well as negatively affects their concentration and level of academic performances.

However, in highlighting the constraints of students use of cell phone in the library to effective learning, Park (2005) listed inattentiveness, disruption and distraction. The use of cell phones by students causes noise and distraction during library sessions. Take for instance, when a phone rings in a library which is supposedly a quiet place, other readers are distracted by the sound of the ring tone at that instance. The student that owns the phone would try to rush outside the library to receive his call, on the process, he bangs on chairs of other students studying and as such causing more distractions. Sometimes a student is caught answering a phone call in the library, though trying as much as possible to reduce his voice. That notwithstanding causes distraction to the library users sitting close to him. As a way to prevent noise from ringing phones, some students put their phones on vibration mode which causes some kind of noise each time the phone vibrates. Some students use earphones and watch films with their android phones, iPad and even laptops. There is a tendency that the students sitting closer to such a person sometimes steals some glimpse of the film which blue film or some sort of pornography may be. They try charging their mobile phones in the library thereby causing damages to the wall sockets in the reading rooms. This is usually because, the students secretly plug their phone chargers direct to the wall sockets without using adapter or extension.

A study carried out at Ball State's Hanley Institute for mobile media research on students' use of cell phones, revealed that students not only use mobile phone for voice calls, but they also use it to send and receive e-mail, send text, download pictures and other files, listen to music, watch videos and access social media sites during library and teaching sessions, such students end up wasting precious time that would have been used for serious study (Parks as cited in Egbodo, et al... 2016). To cap it all, students use cell phones to cheat during examinations. However, Tindell & Bohlander (2011) enumerated some of the adverse effects of mobile phone usage amongst students as follows: classroom distraction, reduced cognitive ability, cheating, cyber Bullying, health hazards, psychological disorder, poor writing skills, eating disorders, addiction, pornography, yahoo yahoo (419) and above all, noise. That notwithstanding, Morgan, (2012) identified some of the positive effects of cell phone usage amongst students as easy information access, learning tools, and more convenience.

In academic libraries in Anambra State, restrictions were placed on the students use of cell phones as an attempt to find solution to cell phone nuisance in the library. The library management placed a ban on cell phone use in order to return sanity to the academic libraries. Notices were placed in strategic positions banning the use of cell phones in the libraries. Defaulting students' phones are seized by the library staff which is usually returned to the students whenever they decide to leave the libraries after studying. Many students still go out of their ways breaking the law by sneaking phones into the library thereby receiving calls where others are reading. Consequently, the library management provide cabinets with keys where the students are instructed to drop their bags and other valuables like cell phones which should not be taking into the libraries. In some cases, the library provides extension wires in some

designated spots like the security posts where the students can charge their phones. This is usually done at the owner's risk.

This study is significant in that its findings would reveal the problems of cell phone use by the students in the academic libraries in Anambra State of Nigeria. It is hoped that these would assist the students to make profitable use of their private study time in the library. It will equally help the library management to check cell phone nuisance in the library thereby assuring maximum students concentration and quality service delivery. It is against this background that the researchers tend to; determine the level of cell phone ownership among the students in universities in Anambra State, find out cell phone activities students engage themselves in the library, establish problems caused by the students use of cell phones in the libraries, and proffer solutions to the problem of cell phone use in the library by the students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is quite obvious that increasing number of both graduates and postgraduate students in universities in Anambra State, make use of cell phones. The problem is that the use of cell phones among students has become habitual thus negatively impacting on conscious efforts required to achieve effective teaching and learning. Attempt has been made to investigate the problems caused by student's use of cell phones in the university libraries. The researchers observed that no effort has been made to investigate these problems academic libraries in Anambra State. This research which is on the problems caused by students use of cellphones in university libraries in Anambra State of Nigeria sets to fill the gap to a large extent. Therefore, this survey tends to ascertain the negative effect of students' cell phones use in the academic libraries.



### **Research questions**

1. What is the level of cell phone ownership among university students in Anambra State?
2. What cell phone activities do students engage themselves in the libraries?
3. How does cell phone use interfere with student's studies in the academic libraries?
4. How could cell phone use in the academic libraries in Anambra State be controlled?

### **Literature review**

Egbodo, B. A. et al... (2016) conducted a research in College of Education (COE), Oju, located in the North central part of Nigeria. They examined the effect of GSM gazette on student's learning performance in science education. A total of 200 respondents were randomly selected out of a population of about 3,500 NCE II students. The study revealed that all the students both males and females, possess GSM gazette and they used it during lessons. They also discovered that the use of GSM gazette distracts the students' attention in lectures.

Obiadazie, & Obijiofor (2015), carried out a research work titled 'Use of Mobile Phone Technology in Education for Easy Accessibility of Information: Challenges and Prospects' It was a descriptive survey research which studied all the teachers in public secondary schools in Anambra State Nigeria. The study revealed that services obtained from the use of mobile phone technology include: Making and receiving of voice calls; Sending and receiving short text messages, browsing the Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) sites; Provision of voice mail, short message service (SMS), interactive SMS and prepaid subscriptions; Taking photos and recording video; among others.

Brender (2001) reported that cell phone media is the norm among students in Japan as 90% of the students own cell phones. The study further revealed that students in Japan use cell phones in

the class for sending e-mail messages, surfing the web, shopping online, listening to and downloading music, watching videos besides making and answering calls. 65% of the students send at least one SMS during class, while, about 30%, admitted sending or receiving as much as four messages during class.

Eruvwe, Sambo, & Salami, (2014) examined the utilization of cell phone for research among postgraduate students of the University of Nigerian Nsukka. Findings of the study revealed that majority of the postgraduate students in the University of Nigeria Nsukka made use of their mobile phones for research. The study also reveals most of the student library users are males.

Onwudinjo, Ilorah, & Nwofor (2010) in a research on the problems of GSM use in NAU law library, Awka by students, revealed that all the student's population have cellphones. They discovered that the use of cell phones by students created some distractions in the library. Students use cell phones for communication and academic purposes. 100% of the students use cell phones for communication, 78.9% for academic purposes, 41.2% for leisure, and 15% for business.

Palumbo, L. (2014) in his work titled 'Mobile phones in Africa: opportunities and challenges for academic librarians' asserted that mobile phones serve as leverage to further education and information dissemination through academic libraries. He recommended that mobile phone usage should be officially introduced in both secondary and tertiary schools in Africa.

Mutula, Komaanyane, & Grand (2005) reported that majority of the students in university of Botswana (71%) owned cell phones. 93% of the students use their cell phone for communication

purposes. They equally noted that the students use cell phones for short messages because it is cheap.

Adomi (2006) carried out a study on Mobile Phone Usage Patterns of Library and Information Science Students at Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. It was revealed that 18 (16.4%) of the students use mobile phone to discuss with/pass information about class assignment to their class mates very often, 48 (43.6%) very often and 27 (24.5%) often use mobile phones to send/receive text messages, 50% use it to call families and friends.

### **Research Methodology**

The study used survey design to explore respondents' perception of the problems of the use of cell phones in library by students. In order to ensure that relevant items were included in the questionnaire, extensive and relevant literature was consulted before the instrument for data collection was constructed; this was also in order to ensure content validity of the questionnaire. The instrument was a self-constructed questionnaire titled 'Problems of Cell Phone Questionnaire (POCPQ)'. It was a 4-scale instrument titled of Strongly Agree= SA, Agree= A, Disagree= D, Strongly Disagree= SD. The initially constructed questionnaire was given to two experts in the field to go through and criticize. This led to the deletion of some items and addition of others. This was done in order to make sure that the data collection instrument had face validity. The reliability of the instrument was tested in Imo State University library using Cronbach Alpha formula. Reliability coefficient of 0.88 was obtained. The total population from which sample was drawn is student library users of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Library Uli Campus, Anambra State. There are about 3,000 registered users for the 2017/2018 session as at when this study was being conducted. An accidental sampling technique

was used for the selection of respondents. A sample of 100 respondents were drawn from the student's population. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentage and frequency counts. Out of the 100 copies of questionnaire administered, 95 copies were adequately filled and returned.

### **Presentation of result**

The result of data analysis is presented below. Findings revealed that 95 copies of completed questionnaires were retrieved, given a return rate of 95 percent. Only about 5% were recorded as non-response rate.

**Table 1;** Level distribution of respondents

Level	No. of respondents	Percentage
100	14	14.7%
200	16	16.8%
300	10	10.5%
400	30	31.6%
500	25	26.3%
Total	95	100%

Table 1 revealed that 31.6% of the student's library users are in 400 level. 26.3% are 500 level students. 16.8% of the respondents are 200 level. 14.7% are 100 level students while 10.5% are 300 level students.

**Table 2:** Gender of respondents

Respondents Gender	Responses	Percentage
Male	61	64.2%
Female	34	35.8%
Total	95	100%

In Table 2, the results show that 64.2% of the respondents are males while 35.8% are females. The number of males among the respondents is greater than the number of females. It could be that there are more of male students in the departments in Uli campus of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University. This can equally mean that male students of the university use the library more than the female students.

**Table 3:** Respondents ownership of Cell phones

GSM Ownership	Responses	Percentages
GSM Owners	95	100%
Non- GSM Owners	0	0%
Total	95	100%

The result in Table 3 shows that 100% of the students own cell phone. Zero percentage of the students are non-GSM owners. This means that each and every student library user of COOU Uli campus has a cell phone.

**Table 4:** Features of Cell phones used by students

Features	No of Respondents	Percentage
SMS	95	100%

Games	38	40%
E-mail	40	42.1%
Music	65	68.4%
Internet/ Social network	95	100%
Clock	85	89.5%
Calculator	70	73.7%
Mobile banking	65	68.4%
Dictionary	43	45.3%
Ponzi (MMM)	45	47.4%
Calls	95	100%

As indicated in Table 4 above, the features of cell phone that the students use most are short messages (SMS) with 95(100%), clock 85(89.5%), calculator 70(73.7%), music 65(68.4%), mobile banking 65(68.4%), internet/social networking 95(100%) and phone calls 95(100%)

**Table 5:** Interference of cell phone use by students while studying in the Library.

Cell phone interference	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Use of cell phones in library interferes with my study	70	73.7%
Use of cell phone in library does not interferes with my study	20	21%
Am not sure if Use of cell phone in library interferes with my study	5	5.3%
Total	95	100%

The result in Table 5 shows that 70(73.3%) of the respondents agree that cell phone use in the library interferes with their study. This agrees with the assertion of Park (2005) which listed inattentiveness, disruption and distraction as ways mobile phones distract the studies of the students. 20(21%) of the respondents are of the opinion that cell phones use in the library do not interferes with their studies. Meanwhile 5(5.3%) of the respondents do not agree or disagree with cell phone use in the library.

**Table 6:** Remedy and control of student's cell phone use in the library

Remedy/ Control	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Responses
Ban	21	22.2%
Confiscation	9	9.5%
Warning	22	23.2%
Special space for use of phones.	20	21.1%
Silence/ vibration mode	23	24%
Total	95	100%

From the result in Table 6, 22.2% of the respondents accepted that use of mobile phones in the library should be banned. 21.1% of the respondents agreed that a space be provided in the library for making and receiving of calls. This agrees with the opinion of Onwudinjo, Ilorah, & Nwofor (2010) that there should be a convenient space designated for phone calls in the library. 9.5% agreed that defaulting students phones should be confiscated, and warning was the opinion of (23.2%). Finally, 24% of the respondents are of the opinion that the students should leave their phones in silence and vibration modes while in the library.

### **Discussion of findings**

Table 1 revealed that students of all the available levels use the academic library. Meanwhile, 400 level students use the library the most at 31.6%. On the contrary, 300 level students are the least users of the library at 10.5%.

In Table 2, the results show that greater number of the respondents that possess cellphones are males while only 35.8% are females. The number of males among the respondents is greater than the number of females. It could be that there are more of male students in the departments in Uli campus of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University. This can equally mean that male students of the university actually use the library more than the female students. This discovery however differs from the assertion of Egbodo, et al... (2016), they found out that female students receive calls more often than male students during lectures. The difference in the findings could

be that Egbodo, et al... studied students of a college of education, while the present study took place in a university.

The result in Table 3 shows that all the student library users of COOU library own cell phone. Zero percentage of the students are non-GSM owners. This means that each and every student library user of COOU Uli campus has a cell phone. This is in line with the discovery of Mutula, Komaanyane, & Grand (2005) who reported that majority of the students in university of Botswana owned cell phones.

As indicated in Table 4 above, the features of cell phone that the students use most in the library are short messages (SMS), clock, calculator, music, mobile banking and internet browsing, social networking. This is in line with the assertion of Brender (2001) who discovered and enumerated the features of cell phones mostly used by the students. He reiterated that cell phone media is the norm among students in Japan as 90% of the students own cell phones.

The result in Table 5 shows that cell phone use in the library interferes with the students studies. This agrees with the assertion of Park (2005) who listed inattentiveness, disruption and distraction as ways mobile phones distract the studies of the students. Moreso, Adomi (2006) also discovered that cell phone use in the library has negative impact on the library users.

From the result in Table 6, 22.2% of the respondents accepted that use of mobile phones in the library should be banned. 21.1% of the respondents agreed that a space be provided in the library for making and receiving of calls. This agrees with the opinion of Onwudinjo, Ilorah, & Nwofor (2010) that there should be a convenient space designated for phone calls in the library. However, a greater percentage of the respondents accepted silence and vibration mode as way to check cell phone nuisance in the library. This is in line with the assertion of Obiadazie &



Obijiofor (2015) that cell phone use by students is of immense advantage and as such should be encouraged.

### **Recommendation and conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, the paper recommends that special space be created in the library designated for receiving and making of phone calls during library sessions. The library authorities should place instructions on notice boards and some strategic places within the library banning cell phone use by students. The staff on duty should always look out for, and report defaulting students to the security for punishment. Students should switch off their phones or put them on silent mode while reading in the library. In conclusion, students should dedicate much of their cell phone usage time to research and academic activities. In other words, they should visit websites that pertain to areas of their academics, as against engaging in social networking and ping.

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