

# African Research Review

---

*An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal, Ethiopia*

*Vol. 4 (3b) July, 2010*

ISSN 1994-9057 (Print)

ISSN 2070-0083 (Online)

---

## **Print Media and ICT Access and Use among Female Academics in University of Jos, Nigeria** (Pp. 289-300)

**Gowon, Rahila Plangnan** - Division of General Studies, University of Jos,  
Nigeria  
E-mail: [naplang2000@yahoo.com](mailto:naplang2000@yahoo.com)

### **Abstract**

*Literacy for women in the academics requires constant access and use of current and quality information from the media and their associated technologies. This paper discusses the challenges to functional literacy for women academics in the University of Jos and explains how their academic literacy can be enhanced to bring about their empowerment in the system.*

### **Introduction**

The university system is saddled with the largest responsibility of creating knowledge and producing the human resource of a nation. These two are both a function of effective and aggressive information and communication acquisition and dissemination, which is further dependent on both the print and electronic media. Whereas both media types have enormous potential for communicating information interaction and distribution of content, the new information technology generally known as ICT has the added advantage of increasing access to education, information and knowledge creation and creating materials as part of the learning environment. Nevertheless, this new media presents a danger of increasing the social disparity between population groups, increasing social exclusion and isolation in the workplace.

This social disparity and isolation is likely to be more pronounced against female academics arising from the gender inequalities against women because of the inherited historical, cultural, political and institutional practices which discriminate against women and put them in a marginalized position. This paper - a research report of 2006 discusses the interaction of University of Jos female academics with the media types, their challenges in this interaction and suggests how these could be overcome with the aim to bring about their empowerment within the academic environment.

### **Background**

Background of the research was hinged on the premise that female academics in the University of Jos are likely to suffer some degree of disadvantage in the use of both old and new information technologies because of their dual roles in reproduction and production. This is in spite of the fact that their advancement in the system is dependent on their effective and efficient use of these technologies. The ICT's component of the Second Cycle Strategic Plan of the University of the University of Jos has four clauses concerning the training, provision and acquisition of ICT's services and software to all staff of the University and 'the fostering of increased participation of women in ICT's activities'. Nevertheless, the policy and its implementation have not taken care of the peculiarities of females (both staff and students), especially for the 300 female academic staff. This stems from the systematic social and cultural stereotypes that believes men and women should have the same experiences for conditions and situations. However, studies have shown that men and women tend to experience things (media, technology and communication inclusive) differently. Hence if these experiences are not analyzed and addressed, women and indeed female academics in University of Jos, might not adequately participate in and maximize the use of both media and ICT facilities provided by the University.

### **Purpose of Study**

The study set out to achieve the following objectives;

1. Determined patterns of media and ICT access by female academics.
2. Identify patterns of media and ICT use by female academics.
3. Determine the factors that hinder media and ICT access and use among female academics.
4. Provide workable suggestions for enhancing the access and use of ICT and media among female academics.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the patterns of ICT and print media access by female academics of University of Jos?
2. What are the contents of ICT and print media used by female academics of University of Jos?
3. What factors affect female academics of the University of Jos in the access and use of ICT and the print media?

### **Literature Review**

Literature reviewed has confirmed the background that women are not likely to access and use ICT & media the same as men. In advocating the provision of space for expression for women and their inclusion in technologies that enhance expression, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action called for increase in participation and access of women to expression and decision –making in and through the media and new technologies of communication. These include the issues of access, employment and decision –making in the old and emerging media, the negative and positive impact of the new information and communication technologies and key issues that women need to address in the sector.

Furthermore, in providing a women’s agenda for information and communication technologies; the Association for Progressive Communication- Africa – Women in 2003 highlighted that, globalization and the emerging information society will either advance the status of women in society or reinforce their marginalization. The association posits that if women do not engage and harness the tools which ICTs offer them, their concerns will be further marginalized. Therefore, it advanced that it is essential to engage more women in accessing and using information and communication technologies for equality and development in Africa, especially in the educational sector.

The question of communication and technology depends largely on quality and quantity of access and ownership; as access, ownership and the creation of knowledge is the key and central for effective academic functioning in a University. The need to access, control and create knowledge within the context of the emerging technology is essential to the development and progression for women academics. This is because knowledge production, a key function of the University and, which also is within the realm of ICT, is controlled by unequal power dynamics of socio-economic realities of globalization with gender affecting the form. Thus, women must not only

access and use the media and ICTs, but must also produce and control the knowledge, which they access from the media and ICTs.

Important as owning these media and ICT's are to women, especially women academics, Huyer (1999) and Robin (2000) note that most of the positive effects of the information revolution has so far bypassed women, because the information highway is predominantly male-oriented and often a forum for gender discrimination, intimidation and even harassment. In a similar vein, Fontaine (2000) highlights that there are psychological, educational and economic barriers relating to the perception of technology as a male domain. Hence there is an overall lack of confidence in training, usage and mastery of these technologies including information technologies, resulting in women feeling intimidated and, thus, resisting the learning and usage of same.

While discussing barriers to access and use of the new technologies to both men and women, Huyer (1999) advanced that the cost of equipment, online access, lack of training, technical information and computer parts and repairs affect both gender. Nevertheless, she pinpointed that the situation is worse for women because of their lower economic and social status, lack of training and autonomy and time. This is likely to be the position of women academics in the University of Jos, as these inhibiting factors are very much part of women in the system.

In spite of access and connectivity problems, and the expense of the new technologies; the online sharing of information and the creation of new cyber communities where women academics can actively engage in is seen as crucial and key to functional higher level literacy, which is the basis for the development and progression for all academics and indeed women academic. Since the media and new technologies have the power to bring profound change in influencing how people know and understand the world and how they change the way work is done, the ways people communicate, access and share information; it is indeed an important source of power, which is a source that women academic must avail themselves of.

### **Methodology**

The research used the baseline survey in conducting the study, utilizing the stratified random sample to select the sample from the population. The population for the study consisted of 100 junior and senior female academics from the 9 faculties and 2 academic units of the University. Junior academics were drawn from the cadres of Graduate Assistants to Lecturers 1, while senior academics were drawn from Senior Lecturers to Professors. 50 of the

population were chosen from the humanities, while 50 were chosen from science – based disciplines.

A twenty –four structured item questionnaire made up of four sections was used for data collection. Section A focused on demographic data; B on the accessibility patterns; C the nature of information accessed, section D required data on how such information was used. Data collected was analyzed using simple percentages. Frequency and mean tables were used to analysed the data obtained from the questionnaire and bar charts were also used to graphically present data.

Note: The tables give just the percentages by number of the sample population and the bar charts representing these means. They do not go into the details of intersections of multiple usages or deprivations of the media and ICT types for want of space. It will follow therefore that only the critical areas will be explained without those details in this paper.

### **Presentation of Results**

Question one which states that; “what are the patterns of ICT and print media access by female academics of University of Jos?” was answered using tables 1 & 2.

The critical issue in this table is the finding that none of the women in the sample population has access to the Internet at home. Only 47% have access to it in their offices, while the largest access is in commercial cafes, which is unsuitable for women in the context under study because the distraction of cafes will not allow for intensive reading that they need. This avenue can only be productive if they print materials from the internet and study same at home or in their offices. Only 20% of the population have access to the TV, video and the Radio, and 30% to Newspapers, journals and magazines in their offices, where critical and analytical listening and reading could take place more than in the home where domestic chores and responsibility distract attention.

From tables 1 and 2, even though everybody has access to the most critical ICT component- the Internet, the fact that militate against its proper use as indicated in tables one above is it access in the commercial cafes, which limits its use by the women. Access to and ownership of the computer is very low in the junior and senior cadre, yet this component of the ICT is necessary for production and processing of research materials.

Question two was answered using table 3. The question is; what are the contents of ICT and print media used by female academics of University of Jos?

Table 3 reveal that the most use to which the Internet is put by women is for emails. Even though an appreciable level of its use for teaching and research is seen, there is still more dependence on print media, especially for publishing which is 97%, allowing for overlap of use in this area.

Question three which was formulated as “what factors affect female academics of the University of Jos in the access and use of ICT and the print media?” was answered using tables 4 & 5.

The link between the lack of electric power and usage of the ICT as shown in the table, coupled with such factors as server breakdowns and lack of funds are more likely to affect women more than the male counterpart as time is of the essence to women, who combine their home keeping roles with their careers.

The two critical issues that are evident in these tables are inability to access current, reputable and international publications in spite of the fact that over 97% of the sample population depend on them for publishing and a good percentage also for teaching and research as shown in table 5.

### **Discussion of Results**

Results of the study indicate that time management, especially the allocation of time to the use of media and ICT in research is a big challenge that female academics face in the University of Jos. In their bid to combine their tripartite roles and excel, one or two of these roles suffer, especially for those in their child bearing ages and whose spouses are unsympathetic towards the rigours and exercises of academic career.

Interacting with these mode of communication to have meaningful insights for teaching and research require lots of time, which they do not enjoy as their male counterparts. This affects their proper functioning in the University set up.

Lack of adequate and higher ICT skills by female academics affect their ability to access current literature on research and knowledge, information on research funds, speedy processing of research data and research outcomes, including documents for network. And even where such facilities may be available the demands of motherhood does not allow for their maximum

utilization. The lack of higher ICT skills reduces women academics to using simpler technologies for teaching and administrative service (typing results, lecture notes and correspondences) rather than for research and (except for literature search) and for simple publishing. In addition, the use of vast technological aid for making presentation at seminars, workshop and conferences scare some women from making input into the information highway of the University. Male domination of academic journals and publishing, including their 'Gate-keeping' role of intellectual production has to a large extent perpetuated the silencing of women in the system.

Important as publishing is to promotions and appointments are in the University system, many University of Jos women academics cannot access renowned publishers nor publish online due to cost, lack of network and higher ICT skills. They are thus left with no option than to publish with less – known publishers and journals, as well as largely publishing in internal journals. Since the more one writes or speaks, is seen as evidence of success in the system, this invariably amount to silencing women and making them powerless in the system.

Power outage, server breakdown repairs and congestions are critical challenges that not only female academics but male ones also contend with in Nigeria. The challenge is worse for women because most of them use facilities in government organizations and offices and cheaper business centres, due to lack of funds and cost of procurement of personal materials. When this happens, the male academics can usually afford to go to expensive cyber cafes or wait to go to these cafes at night, a time when most 'dutiful wives are supposed to be at home. In the case of the radio and the television the content is not controlled as that of the internet, hence their use becomes secondary and sometimes not necessary.

Limited funds either by the University to acquire more media and ICT resources or by individual female academics limit their access and use of these facilities and the derivable benefits. Though the University and some associations within the systems have provided avenues for acquiring laptops on loan, the question of controlling salaries by women limit their access to these facilities, since some of them have to confer with their husbands before accessing these facilities. In addition lack of media and ICT Networking skills affect the ability of female academics to source and gather information even on the net and media might only be accessed through networks and platforms. And since women have to be around the family after office hours,

they miss out on some of these physical and web networks which are vital aspects of information sharing and knowledge creation. Most women fear being individually taught and mentored by men in the access and use of the media and ICT because of the hazards that could arise from the misinterpretation society might give such a relationship, hence a viable option of helping women acquire skills on the use of ICT and the probable acquisition of various media types and ICT accessories in incapacitated.

### **Suggestions for Overcoming Challenges**

Before embarking on preferring suggestions to help enhance the access and use of media and ICT by female academics, in University of Jos; there is the need to acquaint ourselves with the definition of empowerment and explaining how adequate and proper access and use of these are means to empowering the female academics. Empowerment is the strengthening of individuals and collective capabilities to bring about an increase of consciousness, which emanates from awareness and conscientization of the oppressed that enables a plan of action. Empowerment is both a process and a product. As a process, it brings about awareness and consciousness about a condition of helplessness, powerlessness or lack that exist to the degree of how the condition has come to be and how it can be addressed. As a product, it enables people or individuals have a voice to challenge existing power relations between individuals or organization and systems in terms of the ability to control resources and opportunities to make decisions.

In our context thus, empowering the female academics in the quest for adequate access and use of the two media types entails understanding the power and social relations of the University environment by analyzing the current position of male and female academics in such relations *visa –a-vis* the use of the two media types for the benefit of the development of the human resources of the system. This will entail mainstream gender in the University's ICT policy through the following:

- Measure the rate and current status of gender equity and access and use of media and ICT
- Measure and rate improvement in gender equity and access and use of media and ICT.
- Use gender equity status for allocation of media and ICT resources to faculties, departments and individual academics and selection for training in media and ICT skills knowledge.



- Engender the content and pedagogies of ICT training in the University. This will require a flexible period and time of training individuals and providing funding to accommodate female academics and their peculiar needs.

For these measures to be implemented and sustained there has to be a political willingness on the part of the management of the University to ensure that these measures became part of the routine institutional practice (culture) of the University, rather than being periodic statements and actions.

### **Conclusion**

It is worth of note that even though female academics face lots of hurdles in the access and use of ICT and the media, they have been able to operate within the constraints they find themselves in. This operation is not an optimal productivity, hence the need for university administrators to deliberately direct efforts and resources in ensuring that female academics maximize the opportunities provided for interacting with both ICT and the media. Finally, it is essential to sound a note of caution that the empowerment process and its results or advantages cannot be achieved for someone else. Even as organizational institutions and agencies play a significant role in the cause of empowering women (female academics) to access and use the media and ICT effectively; it is the responsibility of individual female academics to take advantage of opportunities provided to empower themselves in this regard.

Table 1a: Pattern of Access by Media Type and Location (Homes, Offices and Cafes)

Media Types	Home		Office		Commercial Cafes	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Computer	21	21	36	36	23	23
Internet	-	0	47	47	63	63
TV Video and Radio	80	80	20	20	-	0
Overhead projector/ slides	-	0	93	93	7	7
Newspapers journal magazines	60	60	30	30	10	10

Table 1b: Pattern of Access by Media Types and Location (Homes, Offices and Cafes).

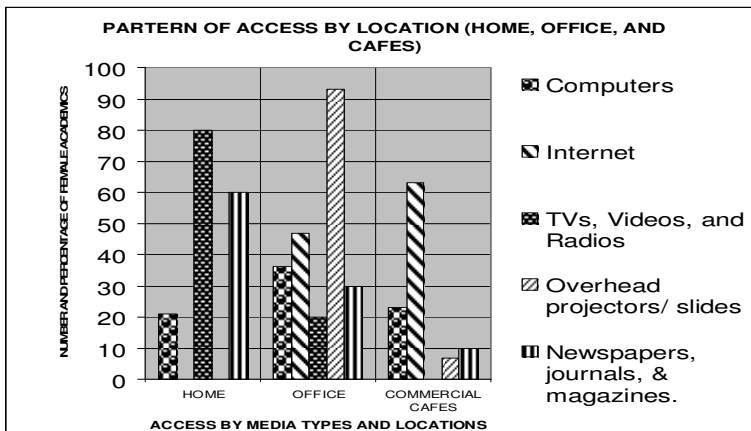


Table 2: Pattern of Access by Cadre

Media Types	JUNIOR(50)		SENIOR(50)	
	N	%	N	%
Computer	20	40	30	60
Internet	50	100	50	100
TV Radio Video	30	60	45	90
Overhead Projectors/ Slides	7	14	25	50
Newspaper journal magazines	34	68	45	90

Table3a: Media and ICT Content and Use

ACTIVITY	ICT		PRINT	
	N	%	N	%
Word processing	65	65	N/A	N/A
Check emails	80	80	N/A	N/A
Entertainment	30	30	50	50
General Information	50	50	58	58
To check materials for teaching	60	60	69	69
To check literature for research	70	70	75	75
For publishing	20	20	97	97

Table 3b: Media and ICT Content and Use

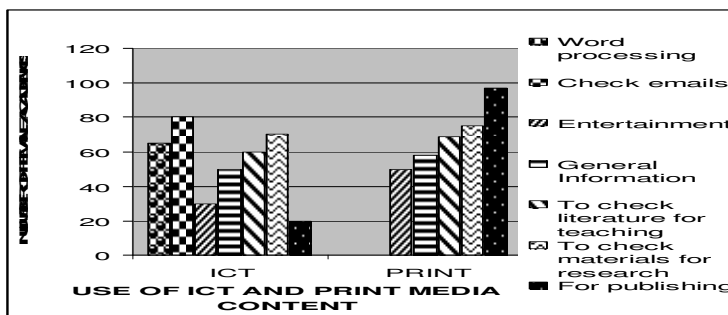
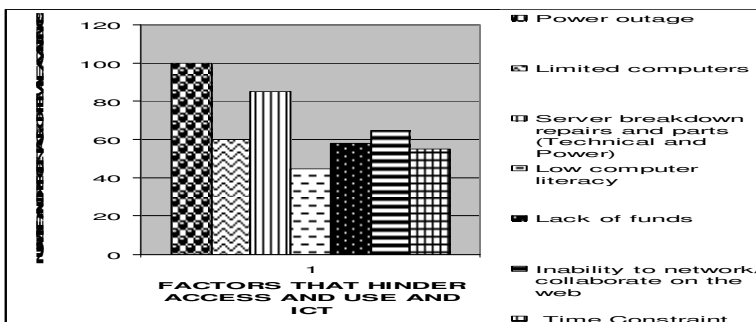


Table 4a: Factors That Hinder ICT Access and Use

FACTORS	N	%
Power outage	100	100
Limited computers	60	60
Server breakdown repairs and parts (Technical and Power)	85	85
Low computer literacy	45	45
Lack of funds	58	58
Inability to network collaborate on the web	65	65
Lack of time	55	55

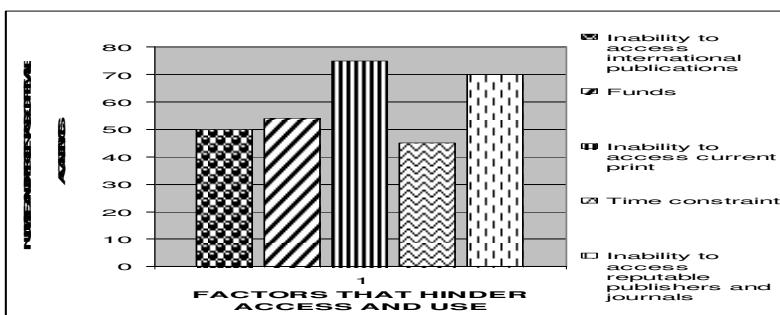
Table 4b: Factors That Hinder ICT Access and Use



**Table 5: Factors That Hinder Print Media Access and Use**

FACTORS	N	%
Inability to access international publications	50	50
Funds	54	54
Inability to access current print	75	75
Time constraint	45	45
Inability to access reputable publishers and journals	70	70

**Table 5b: Factors that Hinder Print Media Access and Use**



**References**

“Africa Women/Africa’s Women Journalist”. Presented at the South eastern Regional Seminar in African Studies (SERSAB) meeting, 14 -15 April 2000. In Western Carolina University.

Fontaine M. (2000). “A High-tech Twist ICT Access and the Gender Divide”.In Techknowlogia March/AprilTechnowLogia.org.

Huyer, S. (1999). “Supporting Women’s use of Information technologies for sustainable Development”.Drc. Ca/index.html.

Robins, M.B and Hilliard, R. (2004). Beyond Boundaries. Africa and the internet. London: Heinemann.

Salami, I. (2006). *Women Playwrights in the Theatre of Men*. Ibadan: Rainbow Publishers.

The Beijing Platform of Action.

*The Second Cycle Strategic Plan of The University of Jos* . Vol 1 2004 – 2008.