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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
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SCIENCE

RESEARCH IN DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS (LIS 4014)

REPORT

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TOPIC: Students usage and satisfaction with the University of Lusaka's portal.

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ABSTRACT

Adoption of e-portals in the Zambian higher education sector is a step in the right direction considering the potentials of the technology in connecting the university with students, potential students, staff, parents and the global community. Student assessment of the usefulness, ease of use and reliability of e-portals is however critical in determining the relevance and success of the technology. This study therefore surveyed undergraduate students' assessment of university portal at university of Lusaka. The simple random sampling technique was used to randomly select 60 undergraduate students from the faculties of Economics and finance, Law, Development studies and Public health at the university. Data was collected with a self-structured questionnaire and analyzed using statistical packaging for social sciences. The findings showed that the portal is used mainly for information purposes and rarely for core academic activities such as accessing e-learning programs, lecture notes or library materials. The major challenge students face in using the portals was unstable internet connection. Information currency and accuracy is perceived to be low and some of the students had concern about the security of their transactions via the portal. Furthermore, the respondents find the portals complex and needed technical assistance to use them effectively. The study therefore recommends that the university administration should provide more reliable internet service, ensure adequate user training and support services for students, regularly update the information on their portal and expand the usefulness of their portals to support core academic activities.

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DEDICATION

We dedicate this research paper to our beloved parents and guardians for the love and support given to us during our studies.

KEY WORDS

Satisfaction: is the perception of pleasurable fulfillment of a service, and loyalty as deep commitment to the service provider.

E: means electronic

Internet: is the computer network which allows computer users to connect with computers all over the world, and which carries e-mail.

Student: is a person who is studying at a university or college.

Lecturer: is a teacher at a university or college

Institution: is a large important organization such as a university, church or bank.

Portal – presents information from diverse sources in a unified way. Apart from the standard search engine feature, web portals offer other services such as e-mail, announcements, discussion board, registration, inquiry, information, databases and entertainment.

Courses – is a series of lessons or lectures on a particular subject.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter serves as an introduction to this study by discussing the following issues: background, statement of the problem, significance of the study, objectives of the study as well as the research questions, limitations of the study, ethical issues and lastly but not least operational definition of terms.

1.1 Background of the study

Student portals have become a common feature in most, if not all, institutions of higher learning. Most universities are implementing the student portal because it enables them to streamline information and services, improve service to students and staff, offer personalized, customized or targeted services and improved administration at the same time ensuring efficiency and effectiveness (Englert 2005).

The University of Lusaka is a modern university established in 2007. Its parent campus is located in Mass Media area, next to Alliance François, off Alick Nkhata Road in Lusaka. In the year 2007, the institution operated under the title 'Institute for Corporate Training and Applied Research' (ICTAR) and in January 2008 the institution was registered as a university hence acquiring the name University of Lusaka. In the same year the University of Lusaka introduced its Bachelor's Degree programs in partnership with the Copperbelt University and in 2009 began offering its own programs. The University of Lusaka was officially opened by Hon. Dr. John N.T. Phiri, then Minister of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education, on Thursday 18th October, 2012. Currently the University offers a wide range of programs at Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral levels. Some notable courses include: business and management, law and health sciences and education and social sciences and technology. The University of Lusaka currently has over 5000 students, with over 1000 masters students and over 60 phd students from various parts of the country. Since inception this institution of higher education has been working in collaboration with other universities, some of the notable ones include The Copperbelt University, The University of Zambia and The University of KwaZulu Natal.

At its inception the University of Lusaka did not have any electronic system put in place to manage both students and management records; hence all activities were done manually. This

implies that student and lecturer interaction was done physically. This included physically giving of assignments and other materials to students by lecturers and physically handing in of assignments by students. In 2013 the institution adopted a home grown electronic system called students portal. This system was designed by an information and technology scientist currently working with The University of Lusaka: The student portal is designed in such a way that it allows for the interaction between lecturers and students among other things. This electronic system therefore enables lecturers to administer assignments to students and also enables them to circulate other materials such as notes and announcements using the following links, upload assignment and upload other materials respectively. On the other hand students are able to submit their assignments or other required material by the lecturers using a component called assignments, the student's portal does not yet provide for the direct electronic interaction among students and between students and lecturers. This means that it does not give the students an opportunity to ask their lecturers questions and also receive feedback on their questions; instead it just allows for the students to receive assignments and other materials such as notes and students are able to submit their assignments. The university is currently developing another component to the student's portal called the chat module; this will enable a more interactive culture among students and between students and the lecturers as it will offer a provision to ask questions and also hold online academic discussions among other things. This component is due for completion in October of 2018.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In today's world, e-learning is transforming much of society, and that higher education in the 21st century is not to be an exception (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004). University portals are an example of e-learning in higher education. The University of Lusaka student's portal on the other hand possesses a number of unique features such as the upload assignment, upload material, and assignment which are used for student and lecturer interaction. Not only that, it also provides students with financial information such as tuition fees, examination fees and any financial balance. Students are also able to get information on available courses and the lecturers in charge. Improved communication between students and faculty, easy access to online grades, available courses and financial information and easy course management tools, and the ability to access this portal in their various locations are notable significances of The University of Lusaka student's portal. It is unknown what the University of Lusaka student's use regarding the usage

of the portal; hence this study. This was an assessment of student's perception regarding the usage of the student portal.

1.3 The objective of the study

The main objective of this study is to assess students' usage of the university of Lusaka student's portal.

The specific objectives:

1. To investigate the technologies students commonly use to access the student's portal at the University of Lusaka.
2. To establish the extent to which students find it easy to use the student's portal at the University of Lusaka.
3. To establish students perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the student's portal at the University of Lusaka.
4. To determine Student satisfaction with the Lusaka university portal.
5. To determine the challenges students face when using the student's portal at the University of Lusaka

1.3.1 Research questions

The following questions are a guide to this study:

1. What technologies do students commonly use to access the student's portal?
2. To what extent do students find it easy to use the student's portal?
3. What are the students perceptions regarding the use of the student's portal?
4. What are the challenges students face when using the student's portal?

1.4 Significance of the study

The study had notable significances which included; the study highlighted the importance of considering students views before adopting a student's electronic system and, and most importantly it is the responsibility of the University to ensure that the chosen electronic system is user friendly, effective and efficient in terms of its use to students. With this being said, this study provided information that will assist information and technology scientists or university administration in designing or adopting an electronic system that is in line with students required standards, at the same time ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in the running of the institution.

This study will help other scholars interested in this field as well as researchers in ground breaking research to make reference to other related studies. Lastly, the study is significant in acquiring my Bachelor of Arts degree in Library and Information Science.

1.5 Limitations of the study

Shortcomings associated with this study is that: being a purposive sampling it was a challenge and an inconvenience when distributing the questionnaires as most respondents are students with possible tight school schedules and most importantly it was very costly considering that questionnaires were printed. The nature of this case study is that it cannot be generalized, because factors affecting the results of the research may differ from one student to another but however if conducted correctly, the results can be used to solve problems by researchers and concerned stakeholders.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Student portal: An electronic system for learning, student's interaction and study administration that is used by lecturers and administrators in higher learning institutions. (Key variable)

Administration – can access and controls the whole system (dependent variable)

Database - a collection of data neatly organized which stores the operational records. (dependent variable)

Portal – presents information from diverse sources in a unified way. Apart from the standard search engine feature, web portals offer other services such as e-mail, announcements, discussion board, registration, inquiry, information, databases and entertainment. (Key variable)

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

This chapter will involve the main item of the study which is the literature review or the work that has been done by various researchers with regards to student's portals in relation to student's usage. The chapter starts with a critical understanding of the portal, then give its functions, it further looks at the university portal and previous studies, thereafter a summary will be drawn.

2.1 Portals and their functions

What is a portal? An Internet portal is "a single integrated, ubiquitous, and useful access to information (data), applications, and people" (IBM, 2000). More than simply an archive of information, portals facilitate a dynamic exchange of knowledge, data and information. By compiling content from multiple sources, they limit redundancy and efficiently increase the dissemination of information.

Web portals can serve as powerful tools to help knowledge organizations such as Universities improve their collaborative activities. They can facilitate knowledge acquisition, sharing and discovery by allowing people to publish documents, share ideas, work collaboratively and store information and knowledge in easily searchable repositories. Portals are becoming an increasingly important part of the information technology infrastructure of universities as they seek to integrate the vast intellectual resources within a central virtual space that is easily accessible via a web interface.

This paper explores the process of understanding university knowledge needs in the research arena and transforming those needs into a web-based research knowledge portal. The paper describes the development process, lessons learned from the experience and future directions to make this portal a valuable knowledge management tool for the university.

The main goal for university portal is make it easy for student to find university information and services targeted specifically at them. Daigle and Cuocco (2002) believe that a major reason for deploying portals is "to improve productivity by increasing the speed and customizing the content of information provided to internal and external constituencies." They also suggest that

portals serve a knowledge management function by “dealing with information glut in an organized fashion.”

Web portals have been used to streamline and automate administrative functions in higher education. The most recent application of portals in higher education has been to create a point of access for administrative functions for students, such as registration, financial aid and academic records, or for staff, such as timesheets, leave balances among other things (Anderson, 2002). In this way, use of portals maximizes efficient use of staff and students’ time (Pickett and Hamre, 2002).

A university portal potentially offers other stakeholders a vital link into the university. Parents are eager to see what their children are experiencing. Citizens and state legislators are very interested in what their tax dollars are being used for and how the university can contribute to the state’s well-being and economic improvement. Katz et al (2000) contend, “The new, wonderful, and challenging aspect of Web management posed by portals is the idea of creating and managing information systems whose primary purpose is to sustain positive relationships between an institution’s stakeholders and the institution”. They further suggest that portals represent new strategic means of increasing a university’s competitive position by fostering innovation and research activities that can lead to greater acquisition of grants and improved prestige for the university. By harnessing the ability of portals to create learning and research communities, portals can further leverage the huge intellectual capital base contained within the organization through collaborative.

Information about students is stored in many different databases at a University. This includes student information, course information, and library information, calendaring and scheduling software, and so on. The role of a portal is to put a consistent "face" to this information so that students don't have to interact with many different web interfaces to get their information. Even if the concept of portal is generally associated with mass market website systems like Yahoo or Google, campus portals can also be understood as a comprehensive system providing education functions including educational registration, scores, and scholarship education financing (Roach and Ronald, 2000). Students in institutions of higher education need to access and manage electronic data. They need to use computers and have access to networks to retrieve training materials, databases, financial data, etc. (Mansourvar and Yasin, 2010). Today, most universities

use the web portal for many educational goals such as monitoring and enhancing knowledge, controlling educational processes such as providing access to educational resources and providing search database.

2.2 University portals

A University Portal or Institution Portal is a one-stop client-oriented web site that personalizes the portal's tools and information to the specific needs and characteristics of the person visiting the site, using information from the faculty databases (Abdulhamid & Ismaila, 2010). The main goal for university portal is make it easy for student to find university information and services targeted specifically at them. The portal use a single consistent web-based front end to present information from a variety of back-end data sources. The concept of university information services has been expanded and generalized to include internet portal services, and the increase in interest regarding web-based campus portal services has compelled each university to invest vast resources on the purchase of campus-wide information systems, their development, and their practice (Bajec, 2005). Campus portal services can be considered a comprehensive information service by which searching function can be provided for the modern university's variety of information resources and specific external information, including many customized communities and personal e-mail accounts (Lee et.al, 2009).

2.3 Previous Studies

Portals also serve to empower individuals within a more broadly defined university community. By providing easy accessibility to both explicit and tacit knowledge as well as communities of practice, people are not constrained by geographic or other physical barriers in terms of communicating and exploring new knowledge. "The portal will improve the efficiency of knowledge exchange and deliver a set of shared business objectives that include communications around best practices, a gateway to research on the use of teaching and learning through technology, professional development, policy development and review and resource development" (Kidwell, 2000). Portals facilitate knowledge transfer through the inclusion of multiple communication channels, such as message boards and directories; moving beyond the one-sided information exchange found in traditional web sites.

The portals use a single consistent web-based front end to present information from a variety of back-end data sources. The concept of university information services has been expanded and generalized to include internet portal services, and the increase in interest regarding web-based

campus portal services has compelled each university to invest vast resources on the purchase of campus-wide information systems, their development, and their practice (Bajec, 2005). Campus portal services can be considered a comprehensive information service by which searching function can be provided for the modern university's variety of information resources and specific external information, including many customized communities and personal e-mail accounts (Lee et.al, 2009).

Information about students is stored in many different databases at a University. This includes student information, course information, and library information, calendaring and scheduling software, and so on. The use of a student's portal is to put a consistent "face" to this information so that students don't have to interact with many different web interfaces to get their information. Even if the concept of portal is generally associated with mass market website systems like Yahoo or Google, student's portals can also be understood as a comprehensive system providing education functions including educational registration, scores, and scholarship education financing (Roach and Ronald, 2000). Students in institutions of higher education need to access and manage electronic data. They need to use computers and have access to networks to retrieve training materials, databases, financial data, etc. (Mansourvar and Yasin, 2010). Today, most universities use the web portal for many educational goals such as monitoring and enhancing knowledge, controlling educational processes such as providing access to educational resources, providing search database and etc.

2.4 Summary

Adoption of student's portal in higher learning institutions is very important as it fosters efficiency and effectiveness to both students and the university administration, as it can be accessed from a person's place of convenience and provides all necessary information saving on time and finances that has to spent if one had to physically travel from their location to the location of the University. Hence it is necessary to determine what The University of Lusaka students' usage and perception is, regarding the use of the student portal at their institution.

3.0 CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter outlines the progression approach of the research which was taken to make it scientific as much as possible. The chapter contains the methodology that was used in this study. It presents the research design, the total population, sample size and sampling procedure, data collection instruments and data analysis. According to Chilisa and Preece, (2005) research methodology is a broad term involving all strategies that describe how, when and where data is to be collected and analyzed.

3.2 Research design

According to Ogula (2005) research design is the set of methods and procedures used in collecting and analyzing measures of the variables specified in the research problem. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), a research design can be thought of as the structure of the research. It is the “glue” that holds all of the elements in a research project together. Orodho (2003) defines it as the scheme, outline or plan that is used to generate answers to research problems. In this study the research design that was used is a case study. The research was about the usage of student’s portal at the University of Lusaka, Since there are a lot of students at the university, a case study was drawn from undergraduates students. For this, the research design that was employed was quantitative method. This is because quantitative methods are less time intensive, easy to administer and analyze.

3.3 Target population

According to Leedy (1997) the population of a study refers to a set of objects whether animate or inanimate which is the focus of the research and about which the researcher wants to determine some characteristics. For example a set of records, or an event, or institution, or people could constitute a study population. Depending on the size of the population and the purpose of the study a researcher can study the whole universe or subset of the population, which is referred to as a sample. Although it is desirable to study the whole population, at times cost and time consideration make it impossible. The target population for this study was undergraduate students at the University of Lusaka.

3.3.1 Sample size

A sample is defined as the smaller group of examples chosen from the population that you actually measure. There is no one rule of deriving the most representative sample. It is argued that there is little point in sampling populations that are less than 100. The total sample size for this study was 60 students. This consisted of 60 questionnaires which were administered randomly to students.

3.3.2 Sampling Procedures

The sampling procedure that was used is a probability sampling simple random sampling in order to accord each student a fair chance of being chosen. This was because the researchers intended to give each member/student a chance of being part of the study and because it was relatively representative. Structured questionnaires were administered to students randomly who were scattered doing various programs and in different years of study.

3.4 Data Collection instruments

It is important to mention here that this research used primary data. This data was directly collected by a researcher. Primary data was collected using self-administered questionnaires. The research used quantitative data, it's important to mention that the questionnaires consisted of both open ended and closed ended questions. In order to collect primary data which comprises of both quantitative and qualitative features. With regards to the quantitative data collection tool, most of the questions had alternative responses from which the respondent had to make a choice.

3.4.1 Data Collection Tools

The instruments used in the collection of data were structured self-administered questionnaires because the students are literate and administering of questionnaires is time efficient considering the fact that most students were busy and analysis of a questionnaire is easy. Structured questionnaires which combined both open and closed ended questions were used to collect data from respondents. These questionnaires were administered by the researchers, to the students.

3.5 Data Analysis

Since the study was quantitative the analysis of data was done with the help of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). This software is user friendly and helps in clear representation in terms of charts and other necessary diagrams.

3.6 Ethical consideration

Ethics is the study of standards of conducts of values and in research how this impacts both the researcher and research subjects (Gray 2005). Research ethics usually involve the aspect of maintaining ones confidentiality, privacy, informed consent anonymity of the respondents, protection from any form of abuse and the conduct of the interviewer during the research. During interview the central ethical issue surrounding data collection is that participants will not be harmed or damaged in anyway by the research. Interviewees will have the right not to answer individual questions or terminate the interview before its completion (Gray 2009). In the study of assessing student's usage and perception of the students portal at the University of Lusaka, integrity and confidentiality was guaranteed, ensured to the participants. This was done by ensuring that participants did not give their personal details such as name or position during this exercise.

Participants in the questionnaire exercise were randomly selected and therefore utmost confidentiality and anonymity was assured because they did not give personal information that can enable them to be identified. A research is obliged to protect the participants' identity, places and location of the research.

3.7 Summary

In summary the methodology has taken into account the limitations to the study in chapter one as well as ethical issues that were likely to be encountered. Finally the researcher analyzed the data collected through the structured questionnaires. From the total population our sample was 60 who were chosen using simple random sampling technique. SPSS software was used to analyze the data that was collected using a questionnaire.

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter deals with the empirical part of the study. The analysis of the findings will be divided in different parts, however, before the analysis of data is presented, the research questions are outlined below so as to see what kind of data was being looked for in this study.

1. What technologies do students commonly use to access the student's portal?
2. To what extent do students find it easy to use the student's portal?
3. What are the students perceptions regarding the use of the student's portal?
4. What are the challenges students face when using the student's portal?

Answers obtained from the designed questionnaire answered all questions stated in the problem statement. Moreover, we had to ask the respondents some related questions which we believed would help us in making our analysis and come up with a meaningful conclusion

Out of the 60 questionnaires distributed, 55 responses were received. Given the likelihood that students at university of Lusaka, especially freshman (first years), might not take the issue of filling up a survey seriously, a screening process was conducted to improve results quality; this included removing incomplete response and those who provided similar answers to the majority of questions, the result was 55 usable responses. Demographic findings showed a good representation of the sample in terms of gender, years of study, age, devices used to access the portal and the program of study, computer and internet usage. With regards to educational level, the overwhelming majority was studying for bachelor's degree; details are provided in Table I below.

4.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Demographic characteristics	Category	frequency	percentage
gender	Male	24	43%
	female	31	56%
age	15-25	36	65%
	26-30	15	27%
	Above 31	4	0.07%
Program of study	Economics and finance	20	52%
	Law	8	14%
	Development studies	10	18%
	Public healthy	9	16%
Year of study	First year	11	20%
	Second year	9	17%
	Third year	20	36%
	Fourth year	15	27%
	Fifth year	0	0%
Devices used to access the portal	Smart phone	36	65%
	Laptop	40	72%
	Personal computer	8	14%
	Library computer lab	3	5%
	Others please specify	5	9%
Access to the student's portal?	Daily	28	50%
	Weekly	15	27%
	Occasionally	9	16%
	Once per week	3	5%
	Once per month		
	Not at all		

Table I

More than 60% (36) of the respondents were below 25years and most were female (31, 56%) This shows that most of the respondents were relatively young. Majority of the respondents were from the economics and finance department (20, 52%). It was also found that majority were undergraduates pursuing the bachelors' degree. Respondents were aware of the web portal since all of them had been using the web portal. Notably, majority had been using the web portal for four semesters and they perceived that their skill level in using the portal as intermediate. The majority (40, 72%) use laptops to access the portal followed by 36, 65% who use smart phones, and 9% came from those who use other gadgets that include iPad and tablets while the east figure came from those who use the library computer lab (5%).

The frequency of using students' portals among UNILAS students showed that 50% access the portal on a daily basis. The percentage of UNILAS students who use their student portal in a weekly basis is 27% which is quite higher than that of occasionally students who have a percentage of 16% only. Results show that the school does not have students who actually refer to their student portal once per month.

4.2 USES OF THE STUDENT PORTAL

Communicating	Very often	often	rarely	never
How often do you access discussion boards for your course or modules?	20(36%)	21(38%)	14(25%)	
How often do you access general discussion boards?	10(18%)	15(27%)	30(54%)	
How often do you access the institutional calendar, keeping track of university events?	30(54%)	15(27%)	10(18%)	
How often do you access the university email account?	4(7%)	5(9%)	40(72%)	6(10%)
Do you have a personal email account, if yes how often do you access it?	10(18%)	40(72%)	5(9%)	

Table II

Table II above shows the distribution of the students' assessment of usefulness of their university portal. Usefulness here refers to what the students can do through their university portal. The result shows that most of the respondents use their university portals to access the institutional calendar, keeping track of university events (45, 81%). More than 74% use them to access discussion boards for their courses or modules and over 45% are able access general discussion boards. Few less than (20%) however agreed that they use the university account, the majority 90% have personal accounts and they find it easy to use their personal accounts unlike the university account.

4.3 SATISFACTION WITH THE UNIVERSITY PORTAL.

	Yes	Not sure	No
Is the University of Lusaka portal easy to use?	50(90%)	3(5%)	2(3%)
The Lusaka university portal provides quality information?	40(72%)	10(18%)	5(9%)
I am satisfied with the speed of the web portal?	36(65%)	3(5%)	16(29%)
Information provided on the Lusaka university portal is always timely?	50(90%)	2(3%)	3(%)
The staff of university of Lusaka attend to students complaints quickly?	38(69%)	10(18%)	7(12%)

Table III

Table 3 above shows the satisfaction of the students with the university portal. 90% of the respondents agreed that the portal is easy to use and the majority 72% agreed that the portal provides quality information. 65% of the respondents are satisfied with the speed of the web portal and only 29% are not satisfied while 18% are not sure. The results shows that the information provided on the university portal is always timely and the staff attends to the students complaints quickly.

4.4 ASSESSMENT OF THE USE OF THE UNIVERSITY PORTAL

	Agree	Not sure	Disagree
The university portal has a single layout of content.	5(9%)	35(63%)	15(27%)
I need technical assistance to be able to use the portal.	40(72%)		15(27%)
Terminologies offered are easy to understand.	40(72%)	4(7%)	11(20%)
it is easy for me to remember how to perform tasks using the web portal	40(72%)		15(27%)
I find it easy to use the university portal for various functions.	42(76%)		13(23%)
It is easy to navigate between the web portal pages.	30(54%)	10(18%)	15(27%)
Adequate training was given on how to use the portal.	10 (18%)	5(9%)	40(72%)
The university portal is cumbersome to use.	10(18%)		45(81%)

Table IV

From the results on table IV, the majority of the respondents 63% neither agreed nor disagreed that their university portals have a single layout of content and more than 70% consider the terminologies easy to understand and most of them 72% are able to remember how to perform tasks using the web portal and that it is easy to use. However, 45 (81%) of the respondents think the portal site is not cumbersome to use and more than half of the respondents 54% agreed that it is easy to navigate between the web portal pages. Only 10 (18%) said they were given adequate training on how to use the portal. This result implies that although most of the students can use their university portals with ease, a considerable number still have difficulties using them. This is probably due to the fact that they were not trained on how to use the system effectively or that the students are not aware that technical support is available.

4.5 STUDENT PORTAL CHALLENGES

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Insufficient internet facilities around the university limits user satisfaction.	20(36%)	15(27%)	5(9%)	5(9%)	10(18%)
Slow internet connectivity	20(36%)	30(54%)		3(5%)	2(3%)
The University of Lusaka has adequate technologies to use the student's portal.		5(9%)		15(27%)	35(63%)
Unstable power supply is a major challenge to user satisfaction.			5(9%)	10(18%)	40(72%)

Table V

The table 5 above reveals challenges often faced by students using the portal. Majority (50, 90%) of the respondents agreed that unstable slow internet connectivity is the most common challenge they face in using the portal. 90% of the respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed that unstable power supply is a major challenge to user satisfaction. Other challenges experienced by students are log in difficulty, inaccurate information and for a few students, portal complexity. However, only few students said they have challenges with internet access point

4.6 CONCLUSION

Quality of student portal services provided to UNILAS students have a significant impact on how students perceive their educational institution at large. Technical factors such as; type of service provided as well as managerial factors such as; reacting to feedback received from students are critical in shaping students' overall perceptions on their respective institution. This is so because student portals are essential for all students to be used one time or another and the experiences they go through when using them usually lasts for long. It is important for UNILAS to better their understanding of the services needed by their students, creating an encouraging system for feedback to be given by students and finally making use of received feedback the most effective and efficient way possible and most of all improving the speed of the internet connectivity.

5.0 CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examined undergraduate uses of the student portal, satisfaction with the university portal, assessment of the use of the university portal and student portal challenges. With respect to the use of the student portals, the findings showed that most of the students (81%) use their university portals to access their school calendar, register courses and learn their institutional history. Whereas, less than 50% use them for core academic activities such as e-learning, downloading of course materials, accessing discussion boards and interacting with lecturers.

This shows that most of the university web portals under study serve the informational purposes very well but might not be adapted to support core academic activities. This finding affirms that of Abuhamdieh and Sehwal (2007) that facilities that enable information access and sharing such as emails, announcement and the Black Board modules were the most used portal features among the students they studied. The finding is not surprising considering that e-portal is a recent innovation at Lusaka University, hence they are less likely to have incorporated academic programs into their portals.

In terms of ease of use, more than half the respondents agreed that their portal is not complex to use, that navigation between web pages is not very difficult and that they only require technical assistance to use the portal during orientation. This finding agrees with that of Astani and Elhindi (2008). It is apparent from the high response that is more than 70% of students' lack adequate training and user support services that can enable them use the portal effectively. Lack of training and technical support are factors that can negatively influence users' perception of information systems (Looney & Lyman, 2000). The findings further reveal that in terms of reliability, most of the respondents agreed that their portals are free from grammatical errors and that the information is clear and the terminologies used are easy to understand.

The study showed that university of Lusaka students got more satisfied with the university portal because it helped them to more improve and increase their study productivity and performance. Students in general do not concern about instruments being used to achieve their requirements as much as they concern about getting things achieved. The strongest element of having students satisfied in School of law is the good perception that students had toward the academic staff who

is interested in helping their students throughout their learning progress. Achieving student needs increase their satisfaction level as well as their productivity (Smith and Rogers, 2011).

The findings also indicate that low poor internet service is the most challenging problem that hinders undergraduates' use of university portals at Lusaka university. The findings show that the speed of internet service is a major constraint to effective use of ICTs in developing countries. However, they were highly skilled in using the computer and the Internet. These findings disclosed that the respondents had a certain level of familiarity with the system. Furthermore, their basic computer and Internet skills showed that they had the capabilities of using the web portal despite the speed of the internet.

It is worthy to note that age has a positive relationship with online library resources. This reveals that as the respondents of this study get older, their online library usage increases. It can be argued that older respondents, that is those who are in third and fourth years, tend to appreciate the convenience brought by the technology in the context of online library resources. In the past, lecturers had to go to the library and search for voluminous records of materials just to find a suitable content for their class. Nowadays, lecturers search these materials in just one click of the mouse. However, as the respondents become more skilled in using computers, they tend to get frustrated with the design of the online library resources. In return, the usability of the online web resources and its usage are compromised.

Finally, findings from this study reveal that they have challenges with information security, accuracy and currency. This finding contradicts that of Sander Spek and Jaap vanden Herik (2007); it however corroborates the findings of Astani and Elhindi (2008) that most of the websites studied were rated poorly by users in terms of the information currency, ease of navigation, customization and security even though they got high ratings for access speed and information content. They identified several main problems which embodied in the very limited number of computers and having very poor IT infrastructure. Lacking to provide the required basic electronic needs had led to have students much less capable to access the student portal. The consequences of the above mentioned factors have made some students unwilling and unsatisfied to use the information sources (Ahmed, 2013).

5.1 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

E-portal usability is critical to the ranking of universities and university ranking contributes to ability of higher institutions to attract quality students. For universities, ability to compete favorably, both locally and internationally is essential for their sustainability. Therefore, it is imperative that Lusaka University pay close attention to usability of their web portals by:

- i. Increasing their bandwidth to provide speedy and reliable internet service on their campuses.
- ii. Ensuring adequate training and user support services for students rather than assuming that students are deft with technologies.
- iii. Regularly updating the information on their portals.
- iv. Addressing the navigation and security problems of their portals in order to reduce the frustration that students experience with the system and.
- v. Expanding the usefulness of their portals to support core academic activities as this would not only justify the investment in the technology but also increase students' patronage.

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The University of Zambia

School Of Education

Department of library and information science

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

RESEARCH TOPIC: *Students usage of the University of Lusaka's portal.*

Dear respondent,

We are fourth year students at the University of Zambia, Great East Road Campus in the school of education. We are carrying out a research project on the topic mentioned above for purely academic purposes.

You have been selected to help in the research. Be guaranteed that the information being solicited will be treated with maximum confidentiality.

Your cooperation will highly be appreciated.

INSTRUCTION

-Please answer all the questions and if you are in doubt, feel free to seek clarity from the interviewer;

-Tick the answer that express your view in the box provided as shown here; [✓]

-Do not indicate your name on the questionnaire;

-Fill in the spaces where applicable.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. What is your age?

- a. 15-25 []
- b. 26-30 []
- c. Above 31 []

2. What is your gender?

- a. Male []
- b. Female []

3. What is your year of study?

- a. First year []
- b. Second year []
- c. Third year []
- d. Fourth year []
- e. Fifth year []

4. What is your program of study?.....

5. Do you use the University of Lusaka's portal?

- 1. Yes []
- 2. No []

6. If yes to question 5, what digital devices do you often use to access the portal? Tick all the options that are applicable

- 1. Smart phone []
- 2. Laptop []
- 3. Personal computer []
- 4. Library computer lab []
- 5. Others please specify.....

7. How often do you usually access the student's portal?

- 1. Daily []
- 2. Weekly []
- 3. Occasionally []
- 4. Once per week []
- 5. Once per month []
- 6. Not at all []

SECTION B: USES OF THE STUDENT PORTAL

Communicating	Very often	often	rarely	never
How often do you access discussion boards for your course or modules?				
How often do you access general discussion boards?				
How often do you access the institutional calendar, keeping track of university events?				
How often do you access the university email account?				
Do you have a personal email account, if yes how often do you access it?				

SECTION C: SATISFACTION WITH THE UNIVERSITY PORTAL.

	Yes	Not sure	No
Is the University of Lusaka portal easy to use?			
The Lusaka university portal provides quality information?			
I am satisfied with the speed of the web portal?			
Information provided on the Lusaka university portal is always timely?			
The staff of university of Lusaka attend to students complaints quickly?			

SECTION D: ASSESSMENT OF THE USE OF THE UNIVERSITY PORTAL

	Agree	Not agree	Disagree
The university portal has a single layout of content.			
I need technical assistance to be able to use the portal.			
Terminologies offered are easy to understand.			
it is easy for me to remember how to perform tasks using the web portal			
I find it easy to use the university portal for various functions.			
It is easy to navigate between the web portal pages.			
Adequate training was given on how to use the portal.			
The university portal is cumbersome to use.			

SECTION E: STUDENT PORTAL CHALLENGES

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Insufficient internet facilities around the university limits user satisfaction.					
Slow internet connectivity					
The University of Lusaka has adequate technologies to use the student's portal.					
Unstable power supply is a major challenge to user satisfaction.					

What other challenges do you encounter when using the University students portal

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Appendix A: Work Plan: Operational work plan that will guide the study

MONTHS	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
ACTIVITY										
Submission of study topic										
Proposal writing and submission										
Proposal defence										
Drafting and testing of the questionnaire										
Data collection										
Data presentation analysis and entry										
Presentation of final report										

Appendix B: Budget

Literature Review

Internet fee charged at 50n per minute.....	K100.00
Food	K300.00
Subtotal	K400.00

Stationary

1 ream of paper	K50	Printing
questionnaire at K1.0 per page x 7 pages	K7	
3 Pens at K2.00 each	K6	
2 Pencils at K0.5 each	K1	
1 Note-books at K10.00.....	K6	
Subtotal	K70	

Data collection, Data Analysis and Report Writing and Presentation

Printing 60 questionnaires for primary data collection at K6 per copy	K360
Transport for going and coming back K15 per person	K450
Printing out of the Report at k1 per page	K100
Binding one copy of the research at K100	K100
Subtotal	K1,120
GRAND TOTAL.....	K1, 390