

PROMOTING
GREATER ACCESS
TO INTERNET

FOR FEMALE STUDENTS
OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS:

A POLICY BRIEF



Centre for Information Technology
and Development

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**PROMOTING GREATER ACCESS TO INTERNET
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**CENTRE FOR INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY AND
DEVELOPMENT**

JANUARY, 2017

INTRODUCTION

In May 2017, a national outcry followed the massive failure recorded in the first fully Computer Based Test run of the Unified Matriculation Examination of the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB). This massive failure was a reflection of two significant features both of which are related. First it was more in rural areas than urban areas. Secondly, it had a gender dimension in which the failure rates were more among female students than their male counterparts. It emerged that the failure was not unconnected with the lack of skills in the use of the computer and internet by the students. Indeed, many students confirmed that they were seeing the computer for the first time in the examination hall. Consequent upon this, the Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD) sought to investigate this, focusing on girls' public secondary schools in Kano State as a pilot project. The research which was supported by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and conducted between August-November, 2017 sought to provide empirical data that can drive the advocacy for greater access to the internet for female schools and generally support the advocacy for gender digital inclusion.

Although Kano State was used as a pilot, to a large extent the result is a reflection of what obtains in most of the states in the north which run separate unisex secondary school system. Discounting the regional disparities in access to and use of internet that are associated with the regional dimension of the digital divide in the country, the research also speaks to the national situation in which generally females have lower access to internet than their male counterparts.

On 18th and 19th December, 2017, CITAD convened a stakeholders meeting at which the survey results were presented and deliberated upon and solution proffered to some the problems identified. This policy brief, which drew from the survey results as well as the outcome of the stakeholders meeting, is meant to support efforts at addressing the problems identified so that females student, and indeed, students of public secondary schools would have greater access to the internet.

Although the survey was conducted in Kano State, the policy brief is not necessary directed just to Kano State only or even to the states in the northern parts of the country but as a national demand for the articulation of a clear national gender digital inclusion agenda that can promote the equitable access to and use of the internet by both genders in the country.

WHAT THE PILOT SHOWS

An extraction of the findings of the survey shows that:

- About 84.6% of the students do not know how to use internet
- About 10.8% of the students said they learnt to use the internet from their homes, and do not have access to internet in their schools

- Only 24.9% respondents said they have computer laboratory in their schools
- Only 4.7% respondents said they have internet in their schools
- Only 50 out of a total of 204 public schools have computer laboratory
- Only about 9% said they are allowed by their parents to use the internet while the rest are discouraged from using the internet for various reasons (23.3%, moral concerns 26.0%, exposure to boys and men 11.1% and waste of time 8.5%).
- Only 3.35% said they had received advice from colleagues against using the internet, showing that peer influence is low
- Only 0.12% of the respondents said they could afford to subscribe to internet access and have computer
- The schools that have computers have insignificant numbers of computers and often when they breakdown, schools have no provision to repair them
- None of the schools have sustainable internet connectivity
- Schools have no resources to provide fuel for the generators to use in the absence of grid electricity supply
- In some schools, they have Computer teachers who teach Computer Science theoretically, but they have no computer labs
- Some schools have the computer labs, but lack computer teachers

Some of the factors identified as contributing to constrain the effective use of the internet by female students include the following:

- Lack of awareness on the importance of ICT from both the parents and students' sides.
- There is ignorance and misconception about the internet among parents, especially in rural areas which create negative attitude about the internet among students
- Prevalence of gender based violence on the internet, which makes parents and children to fear the internet
- Lack of computers and insufficient qualified teachers in the school
- Poverty among parents that many girls cannot afford paying for access to internet because many of them have no jobs and no means of livelihood
- Few number of female teachers in the ICT to provide encouragement and role model for the students
- The non-implementation of the current national secondary school curriculum in full which makes computer studies compulsory
- That although the state is one of few states to have, since the mid 2000s, developed a state-level ICT policy with a section on ICTs in Education, this policy which has lasted more than 10 years is not being implemented.

IMPLICATIONS

The effective use of the internet is critical to accessing education in Nigeria. For example, people aspiring to gain admission to any tertiary institution must not only apply online but must also sit for the online unified matriculation examination. Without computer and internet skills, they cannot pass the examination. Unfortunately females, especially in the northern parts of the country, find it difficult to access and use the internet. This means that as more educational activities migrate to

online, the gap between men and women is likely to increase rather than decrease, thus making it difficult to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As we have seen from this survey, most girls' public secondary schools do not have the facilities and teachers for the students to acquire the necessary skills to sit and pass the examination. Such students are therefore more likely to fail, thus making it impossible for them to proceed to higher levels in the education ladder. But even where they are by some luck able to pass, they will find it difficult to cope in an educational environment that demands the extensive use of ICTs for learning processes.

But the research has also shown that mere availability of internet facilities in the schools does not translate to access and use. Low level awareness among both parents and students as well as teachers and school administrators has allowed misconception and misunderstanding in the use of internet to persist that many students are discouraged by their parents from using the internet. This negative attitude is more prevalent of course in the northern part of the country. In particular instance, the incidences of pornography, child abuse online and cases of gender based violence online against women are used by parents to discourage their daughters from using the internet.

Additionally, affordability is a key challenge to public schools. Many schools that have internet facilities do not have the resources for the payment of bandwidth as well as fueling generators to provide electricity in the absence of electricity supply from national grid. This makes affordability of internet extremely low.

Access to internet is thus not only constrained by lack of ICT facilities, training opportunities and low affordability but also by a number of complex social issues which shape the perception of many, including both men and women, about the internet and what it is being used for.

This digital marginalization of women, and especially young girls, hampers the effective inclusion and integration of women in economic and social processes in the country. This is because increasingly economic and social opportunities are only available to those who have high educational accomplishments which lack of access to internet significantly limits for women. It also limits women communicative spheres which are necessary for political participation to overcome their exclusion at societal decision making processes and organs of society.

POLICY DIRECTIONS

Nigeria has a National Policy on ICTs which also includes a section on education. There is also a National ICT in Education Policy. A number of states, including Kano State, have state level ICT policies, which are hardly being implemented. Some states like Jigawa and Niger States have ICTs in Education Policies, again however, implementation is doubtful.

Yet, two national major policy issues have necessitated the purposeful implementation of ICT policies with respect to education. One is the implementation of the national education curricula which make computer studies compulsory at both primary and secondary schools levels. The second is the decision of JAMB to phase out paper and

pen examinations. The JAMB examination is compulsory for those seeking admission to any higher education institutions in the country. The decision of JAMB was based on the understanding that since computer studies has been made compulsory, all prospective candidates for its examination would be computer literate.

Unfortunately this is not the case. For one thing, many states dithered for long on the implementation of the new curricula, giving two excuses for deferring the implementation. First, many said they could not get enough teachers to teach computer studies in the schools, a fact that is still glaring today. The second is that they have argued they did not have the resources to equip the schools with computers and other related ICT facilities. Consequently today, many years since the official commencement of the implementation of the curricula, only small percentage of public schools are properly equipped to teach computer studies. As the survey in Kano State has indicated, there are just about 4% of public girls' secondary schools that have full complement of computer labs and teachers to provide students with appropriate ICT skills.

Although the decision of JAMB is progressive, unfortunately state governments which own the majority of secondary schools in the country have not been forthcoming in terms of ensuring that their schools are properly equipped for the full implementation of the curricula and to prepare their students to sit the national tertiary pre-qualifying examination. Advocacy must therefore focus at ensuring the full and effective implementation of the national secondary schools education curricula as well as addressing the key factors that delimit access to and use of the internet by female students of secondary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Government

1. Governments at all levels should as a matter of urgency equip female schools with ICT facilities and internet access as well as recruit sufficient number of qualified ICT teachers
2. State governments should encourage female indigenes of their states to study computer related courses at tertiary level so as to provide the states with both sufficient number of female ICT teachers and role models for the students to emulate
3. Government, especially at the federal level, should articulate and implement a digital inclusion agenda that will seek to bridge the gender digital divide, among others aspects of the digital divide
4. Federal ministry of education should enforce the full implementation of the national secondary school education curricula with respect to making computer studies compulsory
5. Government should employ qualified ICT teachers, train them and make them up-to-date on how to use and teach ICT in schools.
7. The Kano State government should review its ICT Policy with a view to update and implement it, especially as it affects the education sector, given the demand for ICT knowledge and skills in the educational pursuit.

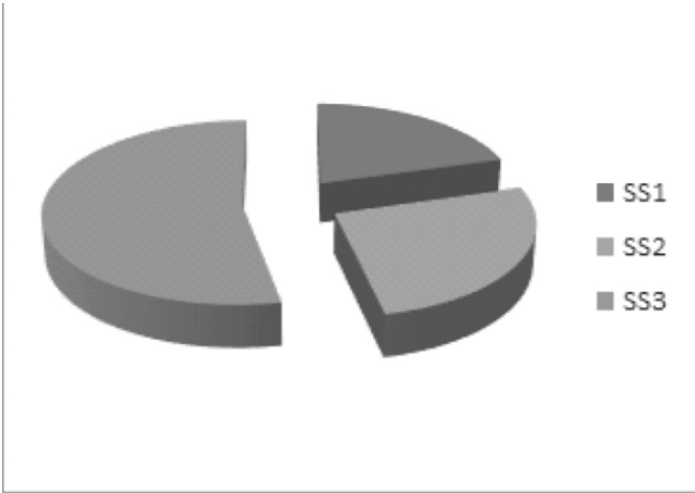
School Proprietors and Administrators

1. Schools should be supported by their proprietors and other stakeholders to have resources to repair, maintain and upgrade their systems as well as pay for internet connectivity
2. The school managements should, out of their PTA/School fees and other sources of incomes, try to pay Internet services and provide ICT facilities
3. Principals and other school administrators should be creative in the efficient and effective use of the available ICT facilities in their schools to ensure that all students have access to and use these facilities
4. Proprietors of schools must meet their obligation of providing adequate ICT facilities given that computer studies is now compulsory and the fact that the Unified Matriculation Examination is computer-based
5. Proprietors and schools managers must ensure that computer studies and ICTs are not taught just theoretically but has full complement of practicals, so that all students shall have opportunity to practice and learn the needed skills to enable them engage with ICT-mediated education system

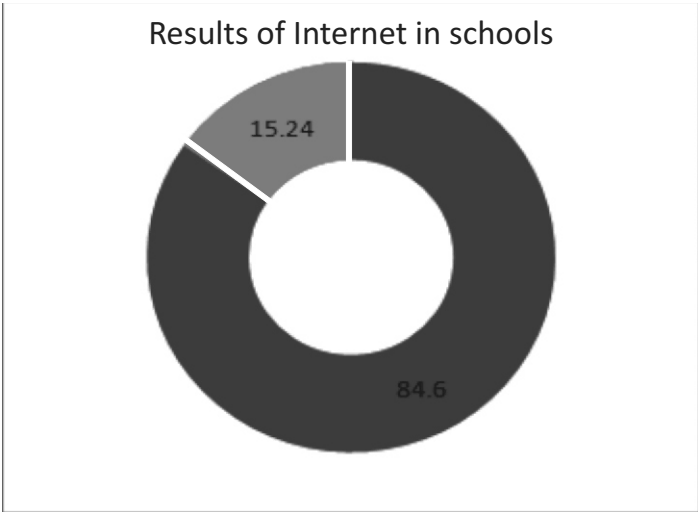
Other Stakeholders

1. Stakeholders should sustain high level of advocacy to government, philanthropists, donor agencies and other stakeholders to support the provision of ICTs facilities to girl's secondary schools.
2. There should be massive sensitization to parents, traditional and religious leaders and CBOs etc, to encourage positive use of Internet among female students.
3. As part of their Community Social Responsibility (CSR), Internet Service Providers (ISP) should support digital inclusion by subsidizing Internet access to public secondary schools.
4. Parents and teachers should educate and monitor the usage of the internet by the students and make them aware on how to protect themselves from cyber bullying.
5. Parent-Teachers Associations (PTA), School Based Management Committees (SBMC) and other educational authorities/stakeholders should develop a zeal to ensure that schools have adequate ICT facilities and teachers.
6. Security agencies and other law enforcement agents should be vigilant and respond to distress signals from victims of gender-based violence online promptly and proactively so as to help curb the trend in the country.

INFOGRAPHICS ON THE THE SURVEY CONDUCTED IN THE THREE GEO-POLITICAL ZONES OF KANO STATE. FOUR SCHOOLS FROM EACH ZONE WERE SELECTED

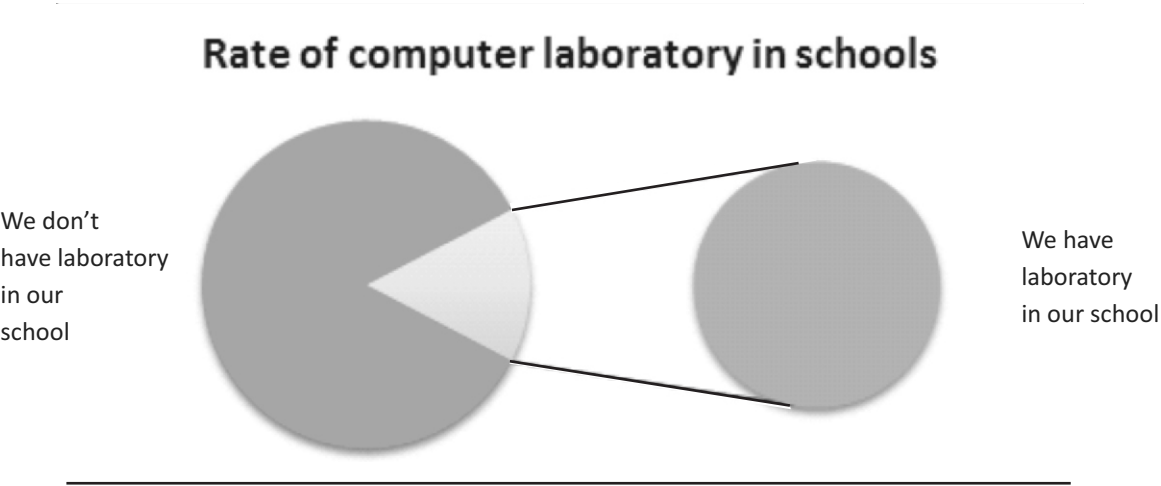


Distribution of respondents

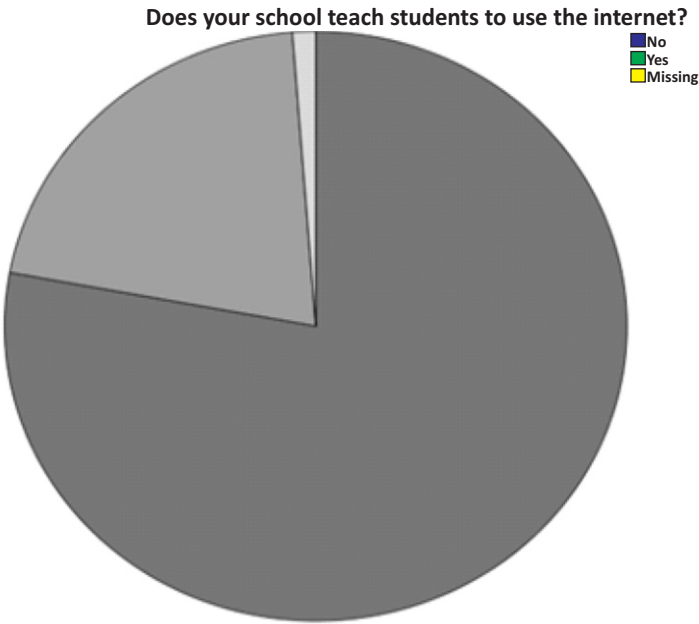
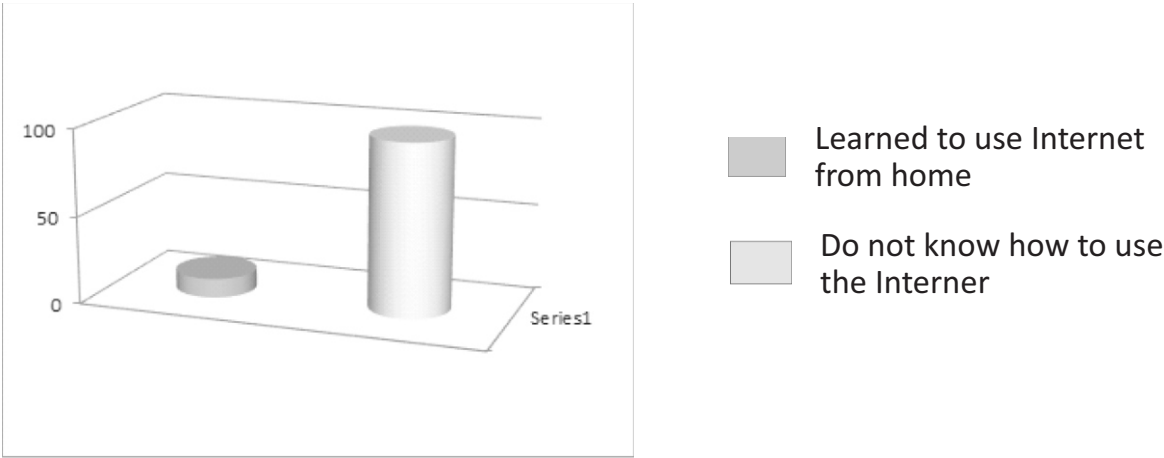


- Students who do not know how to use computer
- Students who know how to use the Internet

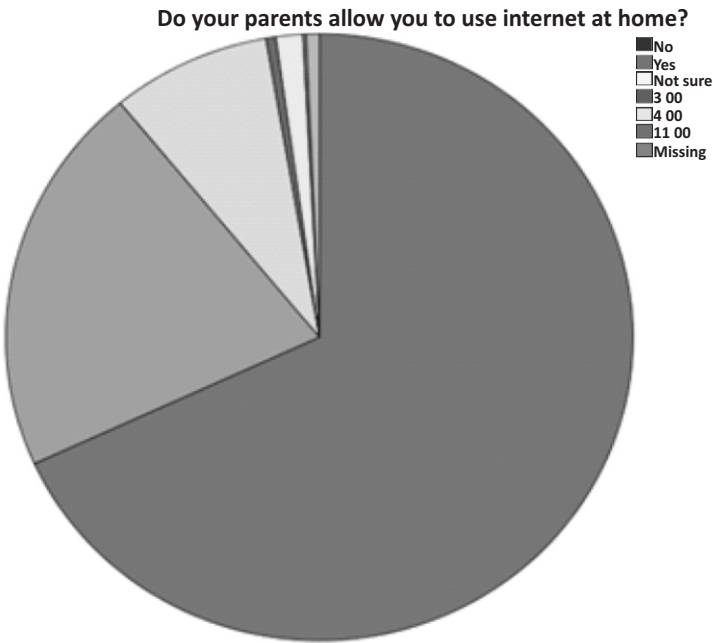
Students response on Computer Laboratory in Schools

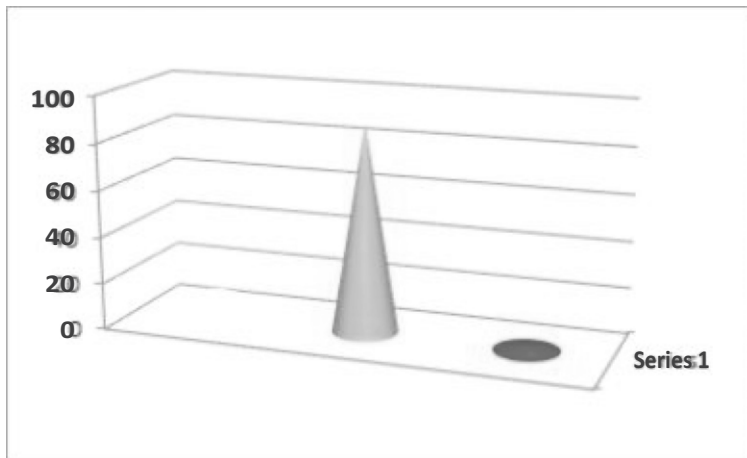


Access to Internet

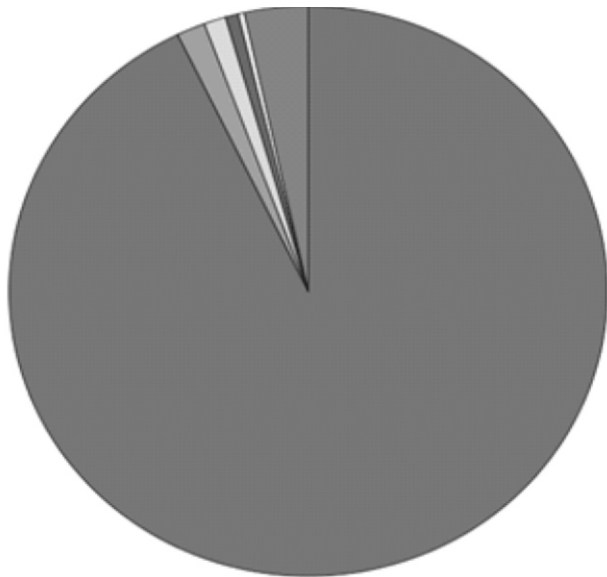


Parents issue on use of Internet





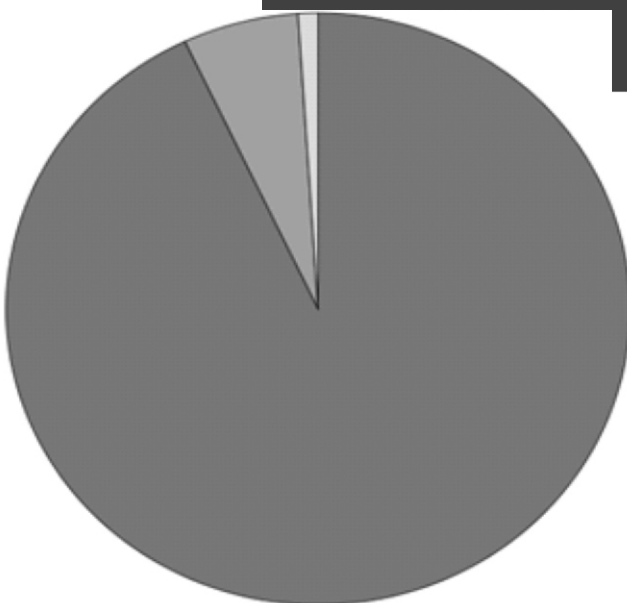
Advise from colleagues against using the internet
 96.7% Respondents answered were 'No' to the question asked, both respondents and their colleague are not using internet.



If "Yes", what reasons did the students give?

- Skip
- Insecurity
- Moral Concern
- Exposure to boys and men
- Waste of time
- Missing

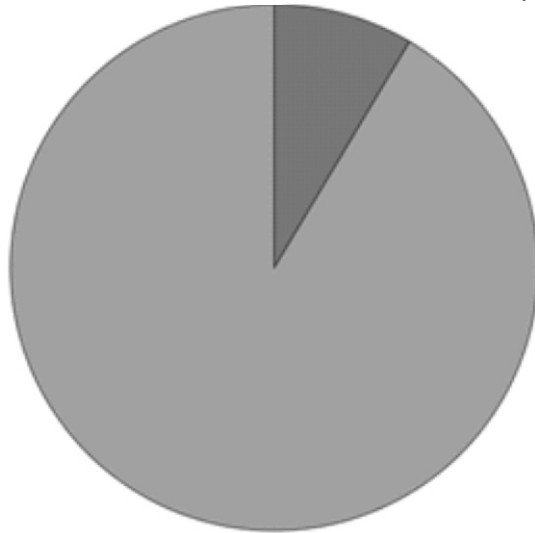
Student do not have access to Internet that don't read books on internet



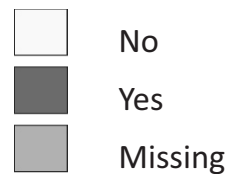
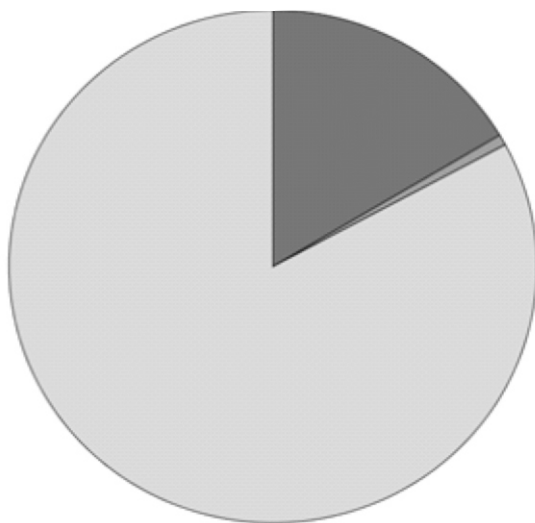
- No
- Yes
- Missing

Experience of Online Harassment

Student don't have access to internet, they are not participating on Social Media.



Have you personally experienced any form of harrassment online?



Result shown

- Only 50 out of a total 204 schools have computer laboratory
- The schools that have computers have insignificant numbers of the computers and often when they breakdown, schools have no provision to repair them
- None of the schools have sustainable internet connectivity
- Schools have no resources to provide fuel for the generators to use in the absence of grid electricity supply
- In some schools, they have Computer teachers who teach Computer Science theoretically, but they have no computer labs
- Some schools have the computer labs, but lack computer teachers

580 out of 12 Girls SEC SCH

ANALYSIS ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR
SURVEY OF ACCESS AND USE OF INTERNET
IN GIRLS PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
KANO STATE



Source: A reliable source of statistics.

ABOUT CITAD

Centre for Information Technology and Development (www.citad.org) is a capacity building civil society organization whose activities covers research, advocacy, training and publicity in all areas of ICTs. Its vision is: a knowledge-based democratic society free of hunger while its mission is: using ICTs to empower citizens for a just and knowledge-based society that is anchored on sustainable development

MAIN OFFICE

3rd Floor, NSITF Building, No 1A, Social Insurance road, behind Trade Fair Complex, Zaria road, Kano.

P.O. Box 10210, Kano, Nigeria.

Tel. +2348068078282, +2348065429784.

Email. Info@citad.org

website: www.citad.org, www.citad4peace.org.ng

Facebook: Centre for Information Technology and Development

Twitter: @ICTAdvocates

ABUJA OFFICE

No. 8 Accra Street, Wuse Zone 5, FCT Abuja

JIGAWA OFFICE

Flat B, Aduwa House, behind old market, Dutse, Jigawa state

BAUCHI OFFICE

NUJ Complex, Ahmadu Bello Way, Bauchi, Bauchi state

AZARE OFFICE

Central Office Building, Emir's Drive, opposite Emir's palace, Azare, Bauchi state

JAMA'ARE OFFICE

Harafai Road, Jama'are LGA Secretariat, Jama'are, Bauchi state

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