

**PROBLEMS OF GSM PHONE USE IN NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY LAW  
LIBRARY, AWKA BY THE STUDENTS**

**BY**

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***Abstract***

*The study traced the history of GSM phone in Nigeria and examined the pattern of use in the Faculty of Law Library, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka by the students. It revealed that all the students' population had GSM phones, and that they used cell phone mainly for communication and academic purposes. It was also discovered that the use created some distractions in the library, and not minding the disturbance students would not want a ban placed on the use of cell phone in the library. Suggestions and recommendations were made as to the best way to use GSM phone in the library.*

**Introduction**

The history of GSM in Nigeria cannot be told without mention of the inauguration in July 1993 of the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) which made it possible for the liberalization of the telecommunication sector. Since 1999, several new operators of phone popularly known as Global System of Mobile Communication (GSM) have been licensed to operate in Nigeria. Prior to this time, Nigeria and indeed Africa had lagged behind in telephony for according to Ajayi (2003), "Africa has about 2% of the World's telephone lines, which is less than those of Tokyo". Nigeria has since experienced great strides in GSM communication revolution with prices progressively coming down and making GSM phones more accessible to the public.

Aragbu-Akpor, (2004) notes that by 2001 two GSM companies MTN Nigeria and Econet Wireless Nigeria, now Zain were initially licensed and they started operations that same year. According to Onu, "there is no gainsaying the fact that the GSM Network became operational in Nigeria in 2001 when Econet launched her first network services on August 7, 2001 and the Mobil Telecommunication Network (MTN) launching hers the next day August 8, 2001 followed by NITEL, the national carrier and then, Globacom". Recently, the GSM phone industry has gained popularity among Nigerians especially the youths. The use of cell phone has permeated all nooks and cranny that even the petty market women now make use of cell phones. The use of cell phone

in Nigeria now has come to be so notorious that it now contradicts Amkpa's (2006) statement that GSM phones have come to be associated with social class.

As a result of the tremendous growth in the GSM phone industry which was accompanied by a decrease in prices of GSM phones, Amkpa and Okon, (2006) were of the opinion that this has made it possible for about 40% of the Nigerian population, which is estimated at 118 million to own GSM phones by 2004. Today, it is estimated that over 85% of Nigerians own GSM phones, especially the youths.

GSM phones offer a wide range of services such as the short message services (SMS), international calls, voice mail, weather forecast, call forwarding and waiting, internet services, E-banking, news, exchange rates, games, video, music, etc. According to Amkpa and Okon (2006), and Ayodeji (2005) the advent of GSM has made many people happy, a breakthrough in technological advancement, and a big relief from the NITEL "wahala". In his views, Agu (2001) opines that "the telephone is a very powerful means of communication and information seeking". Onu, supporting this assertion said that "someone can be many thousand kilometers away and talk to you on the telephone and you will hear him instantly, recognize his voice and obtain information that would have necessitated your traveling to the origin of the information with the attendant costs and risks.

Garuba and Ujuanbi, (2005) citing Brender (2001) reported that cell phones media is the norm among students in Japan as 90% own cell phones. Brender's study revealed that students in Japan use cell phones in the class for sending e-mail messages, surfing the web, shopping online, listening to and down loading music and even watching videos. According to Mutala, Komanyene and Grand (2005) a study by Brender (2001) of 915 university students at seven universities in Japan in June 2001, revealed that 90% of the students owned cell phones capable of sending and receiving e-main messages. They further said that 65% of the students in the survey also admitted receiving or sending at least one e-mail message during class, 30% owned up to sending or receiving as many as four messages. It is not only the students but also Japanese universities that take advantage of the ubiquity of cell phones on campus to inform students of cancelled classes and nagging those who are behind in their tuition payments (Brender, 2001).

Mutula, Komaanyane and Grand, (2005) noted that students used cell phones mostly for short message communication because this service is cheap, convenient and provides the flexibility of communicating from anywhere any time. They also reported that majority of the students of the University of Botswana (715) owned cell phones and 93% of these were mainly used for communication. Garuba and Ujuanbi, (2005) said that 'in the University of Benin, this ubiquitous technology has become a part of students daily lives and is definitely shaping their identities and public behavior". According to them, students seem to have forgotten old social rules to be courteous towards others especially in confined environments, such as the bank, library, public transport, etc, thus causing distractions. In the University of Benin library, the need to make the place a quiet and conducive environment for academic purpose informed the library management

to place a ban on the use of cell phones in the library (Garuba and Ujuanbi, 2005). They said that not minding the ban, students still smuggle them into the library and receive calls while others are reading. This behavior according to them led to the security being intensified at the check point, and students carrying cell phones into the library had them confiscated for a period of two days to one week. This also led to students with cell phones being refused entry into the library and notices were displayed informing them that cell phones confiscated would be kept for one month. They also reported the negative result of the refusal of entry to students with their cell phones. Reports have been received at the Reader's Services Division about cell phone theft at the cloakroom where students keep their bags at their own risk. Students have also reported that the cell phones seized by the security staff have been tampered with, as such security staff made calls with the seized phones thereby exhausting the credit they had in their phones. The study by Amkpa and Okon, (2006) revealed that before the advent of GSM phone at the University of Uyo, students relied ostensibly on the internet-based free E-mail services as their main means of communication.

Until recently, students of the Faculty of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka relied solely on the internet-based e-mail services as their main means of communication. The internet access to students is provided by the University through the Afri-Hub (internet provider) though the location to access the internet facilities is not adequate for all the students as it is not centrally located and also outside the residential area of the students, and more often than not, the internet services is down. For the above reasons coupled with the fact that the use of cell phones is cheaper and more accessible, students find the use of cell phones for communication purposes a better option. The widespread use of cell phones by the students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka might reflect the pattern of use nationally.

In an attempt to find solution to cell phone nuisance in the libraries, some institutions, including Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka have placed one form of restrictions on its use or outright ban. In the Law library of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, there was need to place a ban on the use of cell phones in the library, not even on silent mode or vibration. This is to check the nuisance occasionally caused by the use of cell phones and to return the library to its normal place of quiet and conducive environment for academic purposes.

Notices were strategically placed banning the use of cell phones in the library. But no matter how you enact laws and regulations, some students still find ways of circumventing the laws or outright breaking of such. Some students still sneak into the library with their phones and even receive or make calls when others are reading. Some conscientious ones put their phones on silent mode or vibration and move out of the library to answer calls when they come.

### **Objectives of the study:**

This study was motivated by the increasing and indiscriminate use of cell phones in the Law Library of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka by the students. The objectives of the study were therefore to:

1. Determine the level of cell phone ownership among the students of the Faculty of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
2. Examine the use of cell phones by students while in the library and the extent to which they are used productively to enhance the learning process.
3. Find out the challenges occasioned by the indiscriminate use of cell phone by students in the library.
4. Find the solution to the problem caused by the use of cell phone in the Library.

### **Methodology**

The study sets out to examine the use of cell phone in the Faculty of Law library of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The researchers mainly collected primary data in order to study the pattern of use of cell phone in the Law Library. The students of the Faculty of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka constituted the population of the study. A random sample design was adopted. The target population of the students was 1120. This is made up of the first degree and diploma students. About 10% of this population was used as sample size, and the sample size of 120 was drawn from those who registered to use the library. The questionnaire was randomly administered to the sample respondents. Administrations of questionnaires were carried out randomly to every 3<sup>rd</sup> student while entering the library. One hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires were administered in one day, ten days to the commencement of 2<sup>nd</sup> semester examinations. The questionnaires were administered and collected by the researchers on the spot. The instrument of data collection was considered appropriate because of its convenience, simplicity and ease of collection. Data analysis was based on frequency count and percentages displayed in the tables.

## **Findings and Discussion**

Out of the 120 administered questionnaires, 114 were completed and returned giving a return rate of 95% while 6 (5%) were recorded as non-response rate.

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**Table 1: Faculty distribution of respondents:**

<b>Level</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
100	27	23.6
200	18	15.7
300	11	9.6
400	9	7.8
500	15	13.1
Diploma 100	21	18.4
Diploma 200	13	11.4
Total	114	100%

**Table 2: Respondents gender and GSM Ownership**

<b>Respondent's gender</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	54	47.4
Female	60	52.6
Total	114	100%

<b>GSM Ownership</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
GSM Owners	114	100
Non-GSM owners	0	0

Total	114	100%
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Out of the 114 respondents, 60 (52.6%) were females while 54 (47.4%) were males. This indicates that there were more females in the study than males. This result did not have any gender significance in the use pattern of GSM phones and it does not mean that women use GSM phones more than men. This could do with the students' male/female ratio in the Faculty of Law. The findings also revealed that all the 114 respondents that returned their questionnaires had GSM phones, and this indicates 100% ownership of cell phones. The respondents were asked to indicate the features of the cell phones they used as this will enable us determine the facilities they often used.

**Table 3: Features of GSM phones students preferred to use:**

Features	No of respondents	% Response
Features	No of respondents	% Response
Short Message Services (SMS)	114	100
Games	44	38.6
Voice mail	20	17.5
E-mail facility	31	27.1
Music	40	35.1
Internet browsing	44	38.6
Clock (time keep)	67	58.8
Text messages	109	95.6
Calculator	61	53.5
Radio/News	50	43.9
Weather condition	10	8.8
Exchange rates	14	12.3
Football	21	18.4

Horoscope	7	6.1
E-Banking	9	7.9
Dictionary	41	35.9

As indicated in Table 3 above the features of GSM phone that students preferred to use is the short message services (SMS) with 114 (100%), text messages 109 (95.5%), clock (time keep) 67 (58.8) and calculator 61 (53.5%). There is indication that students preferred to use radio 50 (43.9%). This figure may be higher if all the cell phones had radio as one of their features.

Respondents were also asked to indicate what they used the cell phones for. This question was asked to determine whether they used the cell phones for academic related matters or for some other things.

**Table 4: The pattern of use to which students GSM phones were put:**

<b>Pattern of use</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>% of Response</b>
Leisure	47	41.2
Communication purpose	114	100
Academic purpose	90	78.9
Business	18	15.8

The result above shows that students used cell phone for communication 114 (100%) and academic purpose 90 (78.9%). However, 47 (41.2%) indicated that they also use the cell phones for leisure. This outcome partly agrees with the report of Brender (2001) that in Japan University campuses, ‘cell phone mania’ is the norm among students. It also showed some remarkable improvement in the report of Amkpa and Okon (2006) which showed 15 (6.9%) used for academic purposes as against the present 90%.

**Table 5: Disturbance and Remedy/Control of Cell phone in the Library:**

1.	Disturbance	No of Respondents	% of Responses
	Agree that cell phone disturbs in the library	92	80.7
	Disagree that cell phone disturbs in the library.	22	19.3
2.	Remedy/Control	No of Respondents	% of Responses
	Ban	17	18.4
	Confiscation	2	2.1
	Warning	16	17.4
	Room or sit out spaces for use of phones	57	61.9
		92	100%

From Table 5, 92 (80.7%) of the respondents agreed that cell phone operations in the library disturb other users, while 22 (19.3%) disagreed. The responses from the 92 respondents who agreed to the disturbance of cell phones showed that 17 (18.4%) of them agreed to the ban of cell phone in the library as a remedy, 2 (2.1%) agreed to confiscation of phones and 16 (17.4) indicated that warning could solve the problem. However, 57 (61.0%) indicated that the library management should provide a room/accommodation for use of cell phones.

From the 109 (95.6%) respondents that answered the question whether they subscribe to the ban of cell phone use in the library, 26 (23.9%) agreed while 83 (76.1%) disagreed to the ban.

**Table 6: Interference of cell phone use with students studies in the library:**

Cell phone interference	No of Respondents	% of Respondents
Agrees that use of cell phone in the library interferes with their studies	53	46.5



Disagrees that use of cell phone in the library interferes with their studies	56	49.1
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The table shows that 53 (46.5%) of the respondents agreed that cell phone use in the library interferes with their studies, while 56 (49.1%) disagreed. When asked how the use of cell phone interfered with their studies, 25 (47.2%) out of the 53 respondents said that they received calls more often even while in the library, and 3 (5.7%) said that they make calls more often while in the library; 53 (100%) of them indicated that cell phone use distract their attention every time they receive or make calls, while 7 (13.2%) said that such calls on campus run down their purse.

As there was no special section in the library where students can use their cell phones, 98 (85.9%) indicated that it will be convenient to create a room for making calls while 13 (11.4%) indicated that there was no need for such a room, while 3 (2.6%) were indifferent. Answering a question as to whether the library has a room/section where students can use their cell phones, 103 (90.4%) responded negatively while the remaining 11 (9.6%) did not give any answers. And when asked their opinion on whether it would be good to create such a section for use of cell phones, 101 (88.6%) responded positively, while the remaining 13 (11.4%) responded negatively. This goes to show that creating a section/room in any library can go a long way in solving the problems caused by the use of cell phone by students in the library.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation:**

This study has provided some vital information on the pattern of use of GSM phone by the students of the Faculty of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. It showed that students used cell phones mostly for communication, such as communicating with their parents at home, contacting their colleagues, friends, lecturers, for time keeping, using calculator facilities, etc. According to Mutula, Komanyane and Grand, (2005) using SMS for communication was quite cheap, faster, convenient and flexible compared, for example, to internet e-mail where one needs to gain access from a fixed place such as a computer laboratory. It is therefore recommended that since Nigeria is now in the ICT age, every library should endeavor to create a convenient space for the use of cell phones in the library for the users.

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