

# Hausa in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Internet Environment: From Easy Access to Documentation

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## Abstract

The research is geared towards investigation on one hand the extent to which Hausa is found on the internet, and utilizing the internet for documenting Hausa materials on the other. The most active internet search engines (i.e. AOL, Ask, Baidu, Bing, DuckDuckGo, Google, Internet Archive, WolframAlpha, Yandex. and Yahoo) were utilized to determine the number of existing and functioning Hausa websites. The activities and contents of the websites were studied to ascertain if they help matters by providing the needed materials for the 'Hausa academic world'. The areas and forms of weaknesses of the sites were studied accordingly. It has been observed that the Hausa websites are dominated by several challenges ranging from socio-political to environmental. Finally, suggestions are offered as panaceas for the observed problems, one of which is the need for a collaborative effort between departments and centers for the studies in the Hausa language and the enthusiastic Hausa bloggers for the attainment of common documentation and improvement goals.

**Keywords:** Hausa Language, Internet, Documentation.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Almost all fields of study have embraced the use of the internet for their diverse academic activities. Nowadays, it's challenging to find a university without its own website, serving as a platform for the display of pertinent information and notices. The widespread acceptance of the concept of websites is a testament to the rapid increase in the number of launched and active websites globally. According to Armstrong (2019, p. 1), the first website was launched in 1991. However, by the year 2016, the number of existing websites had surpassed one billion (1,000,000,000).

On the other hand, there are various online journals. Publishing books online is also possible today. There are different organizations and or companies that specialize in online book publications. They include Amazon (<https://kdp.amazon.com>), Lambert (<https://www.lap-publishing.com>), Research Publisher (<https://reachpublishers.org>), and Book Share (<https://www.bookshare.org/cms>) among others. In fact, there are many online universities today. They include Golden Gate University (<https://www.ggu.edu>), Grand Canyon University (<https://explore.gcu.edu>), William Carey University (<https://www.wmcarey.edu>), Regent University (<https://www.regent.edu>), and Concordia University - Chicago (<https://www.cuchicago.edu>).

Today, research and reading materials are at the fingertips of users.

However, the Hausa academia lags behind in this development. The approximate number of active Hausa websites today is 43. This figure is notably insignificant when compared to the total number of websites globally, which amounted to 1.72 billion as of 2019. Conversely, there are around 7,000 languages in the world (Bunza, 2019, p. 7). If we were to distribute the total number of websites across these 7,000 languages, the result would be 24.27. In contrast, the 43 Hausa websites represent only 0.0000000025% of the total available websites as of 2019.

Even among the active Hausa websites, very few are academically based. They include Amsoshi: <https://www.amsoshi.com>, Bakandamiya: <https://www.bakandamiya.com>, Gidan Novels: <https://gidannovels.guidetricks.com>, and Hausa Dictionary: <http://hausadictionary.com>. That is to say, the academic Hausa websites are too insufficient. Accordingly, that calls for research on how to improve the existing Hausa academic websites as well as launch new ones.

The research concentrates on determining step-by-step procedures to improve the visibility of the Hausa materials on the internet. That includes articles both published and unpublished, books, as well as theses and research reports. They also include information on various Hausa journals as well as information on departments that offer Hausa in universities and colleges both within Nigeria and overseas. The result of this research should serve as a masterpiece that explains - in detail - the processes of improving the visibility of Hausa materials on the internet thereby simplifying research and studies by bringing such materials down to the fingertips of students, researchers, and scholars.

It should also serve as a basis upon which further research and studies will be conducted on Hausa and the internet. Specifically, the research strives to achieve two main objectives, thus: (i) to determine the extent to which Hausa materials and other information relevant to the Hausa academia are accessible online, and (ii) to propose a step-by-step procedure for improving the online presence of Hausa materials and other information related to Hausa academia.

## 1.1 METHODOLOGY

The current Hausa online presence was determined through a set of strategic procedures. Existing Hausa websites were identified using search engines. Active websites with regularly updated content were able to:

- i. Appear on the first twenty (20) pages when a key term in either of its contents is searched, or
- ii. Have a picture from relevant content(s) appear on the first five (5) pages on Google Pictures when a relevant key term is searched.

Some selected key terms that are very relevant to the Hausa academia were utilized. They are:

- a. Hausa (the language), Hausawa (the Hausa people), Bahausha (a male Hausa person), Bahaushiya (a female Hausa person)
- b. Kasar Hausa (Hausa land)
- c. Abinci (food/diet), Abincin Hausawa (the foods of the Hausa people)
- d. Tufafi (cloth), Tufafin Hausawa (the clothing of the Hausa people)
- e. Sutura (cloth), Suturu (clothes), Suturun Hausawa (the clothing of the Hausa people)
- f. Gini (building), Gine-Gine (buildings)
- g. Waƙa (poem/song), Waƙoƙi (poems/songs)
- h. Adabi (Literature)
- i. Al'ada (culture), Al'adu (cultures)
- j. Harshe (language), Harsuna (languages)

The existing websites were categorized as active and inactive. The active websites underwent a thorough examination to assess their level of commitment, reliability, and readability in displaying relevant Hausa content. In determining the current status

of the Hausa websites, the research was particularly focused on finding answers to the following questions:

- a. What is the level of commitment of the current active Hausa websites?
- b. How reliable are the pieces of information found on the various Hausa websites?
- c. To what extent are academic articles, books, and research reports available on the websites?
- d. How relevant are the websites in documenting Hausa cultural heritage, literary writings, and language materials?
- e. Are the websites documenting and making accessible relevant information about Hausa resource persons, departments, and Hausa research centers?

Responses to the aforementioned questions were employed in the analysis, helping determine the extent to which the existing Hausa websites adequately serve the needs of the Hausa academia or fall short.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Mukoshy, (2015: 19) has described the word "internet" as new in the Hausa lexicography. Different scholars attempted to explain the term in different ways. Some of them are Amfani, (2010); Umar, (2012 p. 48); Mukoshy, (2015 p. 20). On the other hand, many scholars have researched various aspects of the internet. Some of them are: Barlow, (1995); Wellman, (2001); Nie, (2001); Nie, Hillygus, & Erbring, (2002); Wellman, *et al.*, (2002); Gerf, (2004); Romualdo & Alessandro (2007); Baruah, (2012); Jayasekara, (2015); Siddiqui & Singh, (2016); 'Yartsakuwa, (2017); Clement, (2020).

Almajir, (2009) researched the influence of modernity on the lives of the Hausas. In the research, he discussed how the Hausas interact with the internet thereby being influenced by it. Other Hausa works studied the influence of the internet on the socio-cultural being of the Hausas. They include Shehu & Aliyu, (2019) and Shehu & Rambo, (2019).

Other research studies that are related to Hausa and the internet include the work of Makuwana, (2011). He studied the spread of Hausa on the internet. Ashiru, (2012) conducted similar research. He studied Hausa content on the internet including data, audios, and videos. Almost similarly, Almajir, (2008) wrote about the Hausas' usage of the internet in communication. Other relevant research studies included the works of Akibu, (2001); Adamu, (2004); Guiƙi, (2006); Sambo, (2009); Amfani, (2010); Mukoshy da Umar, (2014).

### 2.1 Conceptualization of "Internet" from the Hausa Point of View

The term "internet" remains unfamiliar within Hausa studies (Mukoshy, 2015: 19). Scholars and analysts have made attempts to define its meaning.

Umar, in particular, articulated the meaning of the internet by stating:

*Intanet kafa ce wadda ta hada bayanai daban-daban, kuma an saukaƙa hanyoyin amfani da wadannan bayanai yadda kowa zai iya mika hannayensa a kowane lokaci a ko'ina.* (Umar, 2012: 48)

Translation

*The Internet serves as a platform connecting diverse information, offering simplified methods for universal accessibility at any time and from anywhere.*

Mukoshy, (2015) scrutinized various scholarly and analyst definitions of the internet [1]. Finally, he elucidated his interpretation by stating:

*Intanet kafar sadarwa ce ta na'urorin zamani wadda ta game duk duniya. Tana ba da damar sadar da bayanai kowadanne iri, kuma zuwa ko'ina a duniya cikin dan kankanin lokaci.* (Mukoshy, 2015: 20).

Translation

*The internet serves as a global communication platform facilitated by modern devices. It enables the rapid transmission of diverse information types across the world, irrespective of geographical boundaries.*

Mukoshy seems to have drawn inspiration from Umar (2012) in defining the internet. Both definitions underscore the accessibility of the internet to everyone, regardless of location.

These definitions illuminate the essence of the internet, yet there's an essential element about the nature of information transmitted through this medium. This pertains to the underlying infrastructure that operates in the unseen realm of airwaves. Since 2010, this aspect has been emphasized in definitions saying that:

*The internet is a global system interlinking computers via web systems, operating over air channels, to cater to the diverse needs of billions of users worldwide.* (Amfani, 2010 in Umar, 2012: 48).

Upon examining these definitions and their parallels, it becomes apparent that several crucial factors underpin the essence of the internet, forming its foundational elements. These facets collectively shape the fabric of the internet. Regardless of which interpretation an analyst finds more resonant, certain aspects remain essential to grasp:

- a. The internet is a contemporary phenomenon, born of modernity.
- b. It's an expansive and remarkable construct encompassing various facets mirrored in daily life worldwide.
- c. The internet relies on memory devices (various types of computers) for its functioning [2].
- d. Internet connectivity operates invisibly, yet its effects manifest through computers.
- e. The internet speaks diverse languages; messages are decoded for internet comprehension and then retranslated for user understanding.
- f. Although the internet doesn't create itself - everything visible on it is programmed by individuals - events and content within the internet domain can replicate or adapt to various parameters.
- g. The internet's impact is transformative; it shortens distances [3], condenses vastness [4], makes less more [5], and compresses distances globally.
- h. It's a complex amalgamation of different phenomena, comprising the internet's language, architecture, and the network facilitating access.

Attempting a comprehensive definition that encapsulates all facets of the internet proves to be a daunting task. However, drawing from predecessors' steps in defining the internet, it could be stated:

*The Internet is a modern technological marvel, a complex synthesis of languages, devices, and services converging to create an experience that mirrors and integrates elements from everyday life, encompassing various realms such as communication, education, banking, and interactions with diverse entities, including humans and others.*

### 3.1 Existing Hausa Websites and Blogs

The research has discovered forty-four (44) Hausa blogs. They are:

<sup>1</sup> They encompass definitions provided by Almajir (2008), Muhammad (2011), and Umar (2012).

<sup>2</sup> It's worth noting that computers come in various forms and specifications, with mobile phones being among the most widely used types of computers available.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, an individual residing in a Hausa-speaking region can engage in conversation with someone from China while seeing each other through the internet. Furthermore, it aids in facilitating ongoing work being conducted on the internet.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, an internet server has the capacity to contain tens of millions of significant books. If these were to be housed in a library, one might wonder at the scale it would entail.

<sup>5</sup> When delivering information through a newspaper or letter, numerous copies need to be printed for wide distribution or public display. However, the internet addresses this requirement efficiently by delivering the same content without repetition.

1. Abincin Hausawa (Hausa Food): <https://abinci.com/>
2. Al'ummar Hausa (The Hausa People): <https://www.alummarhaus.com.ng/>
3. Amsoshi (Answers) [6]: <https://www.amsoshi.com/>
4. Arewa Fresh (Fresh North): <https://www.arewafresh.com.ng/>
5. Arewa Nishadi (North Entertainment): <https://www.arewanishadi.com/>
6. Arewa Swag (Northern Swag): <https://www.arewaswag.com.ng/>
7. Arewarmu (Our North): <https://www.arewarmu.com.ng/>
8. Azare Online: <http://azareonline.com/>
9. Baban Sadik (Sadik's Father): <https://www.babansadik.com/>
10. Bakandamiya (Masterpiece) [7]: <https://www.bakandamiya.com/>
11. Batsa Post (Obscene Post): <https://www.batsapost.com/>
12. Dandali (Platform): <http://www.dandali.com/>
13. Duniyarso (The World of Love): <http://duniyarso.blogspot.com/>
14. Gidan Karatu (Reading House) [8]: <https://www.gidankaratu.com>
15. Gidan Novels (Novel House): <https://gidannovels.guidetricks.com/>
16. Gobir Mob: <https://gobirmob.com/ha/>
17. Gumel: <http://www.gumel.com/>
18. Haiman: <http://www.haiman.com.ng/>
19. Hausa Dictionary: <http://hausadictionary.com/>
20. Hausa Gett: <https://www.hausagett.com.ng/>
21. Hausa Loaded: <https://www.hausaloaded.com/>
22. Hausa Ng: <http://www.hausang.com/>
23. Hausa Online [9]: <https://hausasonline.wordpress.com/>
24. Hausa Top: <http://www.hausatop.com/>
25. Hausa Trust: <https://www.hausatrust.com/>
26. Hausa Weddings: <https://hausaweddings.com/>
27. Hausawa Site: <https://www.hausawasite.com.ng/>
28. Hutu Dole (Necessity to Rest) [10]: <https://hutudole.com/>
29. Isyaku: <https://www.isyaku.com/>
30. Jakadan Fasaha (Tech Ambassador): <https://www.jakadanfasaha.com/>
31. Jaridar Hausa (Hausa Newspaper): <https://jaridarhaus.com/>
32. Kalubale (Challenge): <https://qalubale.news.blog/>
33. Kano Online: <http://kanoonline.com/>
34. Katsina Post Hausa (Katsina Hausa Post): <http://katsinaposthaus.com/>
35. Madubiya (The Mirror): <https://www.madubiya.com/>
36. Makarantar Hausa (Hausa School) [11]: <https://makarantarhaus.com/>
37. Managarciya (The Heroin): <https://managarciya.com/>
38. Muryar 'Yanci (The Voice of Freedom): <https://www.muryaryanci.com/>
39. Muryar Hausa 24 (Hausa Voice 24): <https://www.muryarhaus24.com.ng/>
40. Rumbun Ilimi (Knowledge Repository) [12]: <https://www.rumbunilimi.com.ng/>
41. Teach Yourself Hausa: <http://www.teachyourselfhaus.com/>
42. Tsangayar Adabi (Literature Arena): <http://tsangayaradabi.blogspot.com/>
43. WikiHausa (Hausa Wiki): <https://www.wikihausa.com.ng/>
44. Zahra Muhammad Mahmud: <http://zahramuhammadmahmud.blogspot.com/>

### 3.2 Hausa in the Internet

Hausa has been significantly favored by extensive research conducted across various levels. Its influence has extended beyond Hausa-speaking regions; it has been a subject of study in Europe since 1885 (Sani & Umar, 2018: 24). Today, owing to its widespread popularity and sizable population, Hausa holds a significant presence in the online sphere. Several major global radio stations broadcast news in the Hausa language. Moreover, internet connectivity is crucial in this regard. These platforms produce articles, images, and videos concerning the Hausa language and culture, all presented in the Hausa language. Examples of such platforms are detailed under 3.1 above.

The landscape of Hausa on the internet is notably diverse today. Numerous websites are dedicated to Hausa culture and information about the Hausa people. For instance, *Abincin Hausawa* (Hausa Food) (<https://abinci.com>) focuses on providing comprehensive information about Hausa culinary traditions, an integral part of their material culture (Maikwari, 2020: 31-32). Meanwhile, *Amsoshi* (Answers) (<https://www.amsoshi.com>) offers a wide range of content encompassing culture, literature, and language.

The proliferation of Hausa internet sites, numbering around 44, underscores its substantial presence and influence online. Its expansion has reached

<sup>6</sup> Owned and managed by Abu-Ubaida Sani and Shehu Auwal

<sup>7</sup> Owned and managed by Dr. Lawan Dalha and his team.

<sup>8</sup> Owned and managed by Mohammed Atabo

<sup>9</sup> Owned and managed by Mr. Uwe Seibert

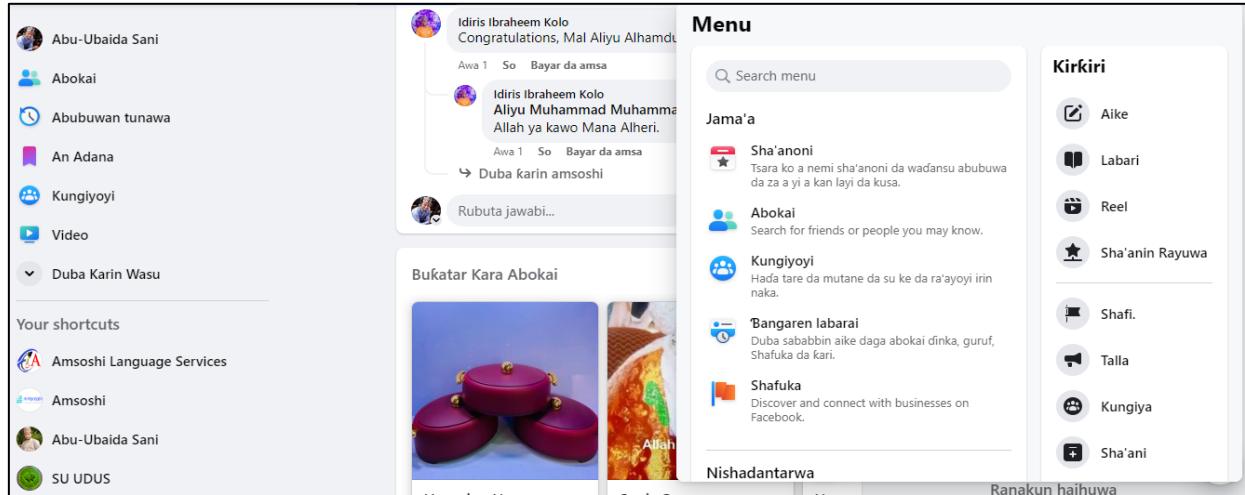
<sup>10</sup> Owned and managed by Bashir Ahmed

<sup>11</sup> Owned and managed by Bello Muhammad

<sup>12</sup> Owned and managed by Abubakar Muhammad Tsangarwa

a noteworthy milestone by being included in Facebook's list of supported languages. According to Morison in 'Yartsakuwa (2017: 26), many users now utilize the platform in Hausa. Facebook users have the option to switch their account settings to Hausa, allowing the company to translate hundreds of thousands of posts into

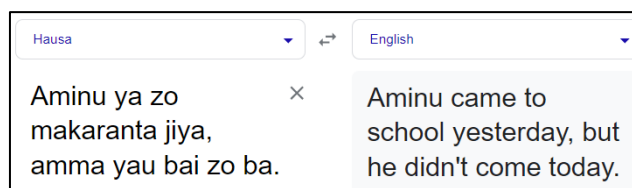
the language. This enables users to access translations of posts made in various languages, and if not initially available, Facebook's translation engine attempts to provide translations based on previous knowledge, notably known as *machine translation* or just MT.



**Pic 1: Facebook in Hausa**  
**Source:** Facebook Account of Abu-Ubaida Sani

In Picture 1 above, the Facebook account is prominently displayed in Hausa. Every segment of the account is labeled in the language, marking a significant advancement for Hausa online. It's noteworthy that Facebook offers support for fewer than 150 languages (as of March 24, 2020), whereas the world encompasses over 7,000 languages (Bunza, 2019, p. 7). Surprisingly, languages like Yoruba and Igbo, both prominent in Nigeria, do not have representation on Facebook.

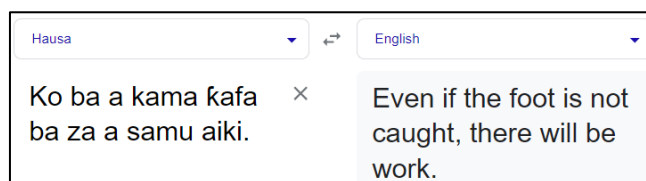
Moreover, Google has shown considerable attention to the Hausa language. Their translation engine, Google Online Translator, processes hundreds of thousands of sentences and words for translation. However, challenges persist, and inaccurate translations may occur if a specific phrase is not found in the system. In such cases, the engine uses prior translation knowledge (TM) to attempt a translation. Efforts are ongoing to enhance the accuracy of this system. Below are examples illustrating both accurate and inaccurate translations from Google's translation engine:



**Pic 2: Accurate Translated from Google Translate**  
**Source:** <https://www.google.com/search?q=english+to+hausa>

In the image labeled Picture 2 above, it's evident that the translation rendered by Google's translation

engine is accurate. An instance of an inaccurate translation is shown below (see Pic. 3):



**Pic 3: Inaccurate Translation from Google Translate**  
**Source:** <https://www.google.com/search?q=english+to+hausa>

In Picture 3 above, it's apparent that the translation offered by Google's translation engine is weak. It is a direct translation rendition that can obviously be identified as MT or GT.

Beyond Google, several other translation tools available on the internet support Hausa among their languages. These tools facilitate translations from Hausa into various languages or from other languages into Hausa. Below are a few examples:

1. Bargery Online Dictionary (Kamusun Bargery na Kan Intanet) accessible at <http://maguzawa.dyndns.ws/>.
2. Hausa Dictionary (Kamusun Hausa) accessible at [http://hausadictionary.com/Main\\_Page](http://hausadictionary.com/Main_Page).
3. Stars 21 (Taurari 21) accessible at [https://www.stars21.com/translator/english\\_to\\_hausa.html](https://www.stars21.com/translator/english_to_hausa.html).

4. Translation 2 (Fassara 2 accessible at <https://translation2.paralink.com/English-Hausa-Translator/>).
5. Translator (Mai Fassara) accessible at <https://imtranslator.net/translation/haus/to-english/translation/>.

On the other hand, Wikipedia stands as one of the internet's most prominent platforms [13]. It's rare to conduct a Google search without encountering Wikipedia on the first page of the results. This platform comprehensively covers various life aspects, encompassing politics, society, religion, history, health, languages, culture, and more. Notably, this platform has embarked on providing information in Hausa [14], a move that undoubtedly contributes to the language's popularity and global outreach. An example of this can be seen in the image on the first page of this setup.



**Pic 4: Hausa Version of Wikipedia**

**Source:** First page of Hausa version of Wikipedia ([https://ha.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babban\\_shafi](https://ha.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babban_shafi))

In the image shown above (Picture 4), it's evident that this Wikipedia page is in Hausa. At the moment the screenshot was taken (November 23, 2023), the page had a total of thirty-two thousand seven hundred and four (32,794) articles in the Hausa language.

#### 4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study confirms that virtually every facet of contemporary life hinges on internet connectivity. Even domains historically rooted in ancient traditions, like religion, have become intricately intertwined with internet technology. Religious teachings and sermons, for instance, achieve vast circulation and influence

through online channels, as asserted by Clement (2020, p. 1). Today's world is inseparable from the internet; imagining a world without it seems implausible.

For the sustained growth and cultural continuity of the Hausa language and heritage, forging a union with the digital realm is indispensable. Aligned with the Hausa concept of 'modernity as a companion,' it is crucial for scholars, analysts, and Hausa enthusiasts to actively represent and propagate Hausa culture within the digital space.

While Hausa culture's internet presence remains modest in comparison to the global online

following link:  
[https://ha.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babban\\_shafi](https://ha.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babban_shafi).

<sup>13</sup> For further details about this initiative, visit <https://wikipedia.org/>.

<sup>14</sup> The first page, known as the "gida" (home page) in Hausa on Wikipedia, can be accessed through the

landscape, Hausa language presents a few results when searched, underscoring its presence. Strengthening Hausa's internet content with valuable information is an investment that will yield meaningful returns.

To foster this connection, collaboration between computer experts and Hausa studies departments is essential. Such collaboration would facilitate the creation of robust Hausa-centric online platforms that authentically represent Hausa culture. Internet experts can dedicate efforts to develop these sites, while scholars and analysts continually update content through research. Moreover, financial support from Hausa studies centers and departments is vital to sustain these initiatives.

Each Hausa studies institution should have its dedicated internet space. This platform serves as a conduit for managing and disseminating research conducted by its members, ensuring active participation in the digital landscape. Responsibilities that institutions and agencies should consider include:

1. **Membership details:** Displaying the names and contact information of members will facilitate inquiries and connections. Visitors to the site, whether local or international, can easily reach out to the institute's administrators for collaboration on research ideas.
2. **Institutional or departmental information:** Providing comprehensive details about the institution or department aids visitors seeking collaboration or affiliation. Clear information encourages prospective students or researchers, both local and distant, to consider joining or engaging with the institution.
3. **Sharing research insights:** Posting research or excerpts from conducted research contributes to the promotion and proliferation of the Hausa language and culture. This dissemination of research helps in widening the reach and influence of Hausa studies.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

Embracing the realm of the internet is imperative for Hausa study centers and academic departments. It represents a crucial step toward enhancing the presence of the Hausa language among the global languages featured on the internet. Besides accessing materials easily, another purpose that the internet serves is documentation. Lots and lots of data are uploaded onto the internet. Such data are documented for near and far future use. If the internet is fully utilized, the Hausa academia will obviously benefit in this regard. The internet will serve the purpose of documenting the socio-cultural heritage, language, and literature of the Hausas. Accordingly, various Hausa research works will be documented.

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