Global Journal of Arts Humanity and Social Sciences ISSN: 2583-2034

GSAR PUBLISHERS
GLOBAL SCIENTIFIC AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Glob. J.Arts.Humanit.Soc.Sci
ISSN: 2583-2034
Vol-2 Iss-9, page 647-651

THE DISCIPLINARY IMPLICATIONS OF ICT AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN THEIR ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE IN ZIMBABWE

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Article History
Received: 08/09/2022
Accepted: 15/09/2022
Published: 18/09/2022

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Abstract

The introduction of the updated school curriculum in Zimbabwe has seen an advent of ICT gadgets in government run schools. This has been necessitated by the curriculum's bias towards digitalisation of education. Studies in the use of ICT in schools generally focus on ICT contribution to the teaching and learning process. However, scarce research has concentrated on the problematic use of ICT among adolescents in the school context and its disciplinary implications. The purpose of this paper is to analyse disciplinary implications of the use of ICT among secondary school students in their personal and school setting. The methodology involved administering questionnaires to 300 students aged between 14-19 years of age. The results show a close relationship between ICT and indiscipline of adolescents in both their personal and school life. This calls for contributions towards responsible use of ICT among the adolescent students in both their personal and academic life.

Keywords: ICT, adolescences, mobile devices, indiscipline

1. Introduction

Adolescent is a transition period from childhood innocence into independence and social recognition and acceptance (Jude, Sahari, Zin, and Yosuf, 2013). Information and communications technology (ICT) and in particular the internet and mobile devices (mobile phones and tablets) are part of young people's lives, both in the school context and beyond (Lenhart, 2015). With the advent of the ICT-biased updated curriculum in Zimbabwe the use of ICT gadgets in schools also came to the spotlight. The use of these gadgets naturally makes internet a justified part of the adolescents' life at school and home. ICT encompasses wide variety of devices and applications that save to ease and bring efficiency to daily life activities.

Olaoire (2013) defines ICT as computer-based tools and techniques for gathering and using information. "It encompasses the hardware and software (video, audio, and camera) that can convert information, images, and sound into common digital form (p154)." It can also include electronic applications like the computer and internet.

Any sort of information and communication appliances, hardware, or software such as smartphones, computers, televisions, and a variety of gaming, instant messaging, and social networks could involve ICT. Compared to other age groups adolescent is the largest consumer of technology. They spend more time online than adults on their chats, Facebook, and other forms of communication and entertainment. Since the introduction of the new curriculum in 2017 the use of ICT in education and training has been a key priority in Zimbabwe though the progress has been uneven. ICT has a great impact on the education, especially on organisation, teaching, and learning methods. Some schools have embedded ICT in the curriculum and demonstrate high levels of effective and appropriate ICT use to support teaching and learning in a wide range of subjects across the curriculum. These schools have also embraced e-learning made inevitable by the COVID-19 pandemic-induced lockdowns which have seen schools being closed for up to six months long. However, some schools are in the preliminary stages of adopting ICT.

ICT as a modern technology that simplifies and facilitates human activities is not only advantageous in many respects but has many limitations. Many people, in and outside the education sector, think of ICT as the most important solution to educational problems. One perplexing question concerns the effectiveness of these technologies on educational performance. Mikre (2017) points out that many points can be considered as the limitations of ICT use in education. As ICT is being increasingly used in education, the need to monitor its impact on education and justification for the funds being spent on it are needed. Research is needed to show the disciplinary implications of ICT on the adolescents in school.

1.1. Statement of the problem and objectives

More concern has been raised to promote use of ICT in developing countries in general and Zimbabwe in particular. Studies to monitor and assess the efficiency of ICT use and its impact on education have been called for. Various studies have reported positive impact of ICT on education such as enhanced learning, communication and networking, entertainment, and social, emotional, and behavioral help. Recently teachers and parents have reported worrisome trends in the adolescent's behavior as a result of ICT usage. This research is carried out to find out the disciplinary impact of ICT to adolescents.

2. Review of related literature

In as much as this study focuses on the problematic impact of ICT one can not overlook the positive side of its use in education and social life.

2.1. Positive impact of ICT on adolescents

The obvious purpose of ICT on adolescents is to enhance learning. Adolescents who have positive and responsible attitude to ICT use it to facilitate learning. They use it for research, discussing with friends, typing assignments, and consultation with teachers (Jude et al, 2013). Moore (2010) adds that ICT facilitate information access, enhance studying habits, accelerate academic success by making information readily available, and increase learner motivation to stay on the task and produce high-quality work.

Mikre (2017) adds that it is also widely used as a medium of communication and networking. Social networking platforms are so important for adolescents to interact and socialize with their peers. Studies by Show & Gant (2002) and Catton (2008) show that internet use is associated with decreased loneliness and depression and increased self-esteem and social support. In as much as adolescents claim that they use social networks for learning a survey in Malaysia (Judi et al, 2013) reflected that the most popular usage of the social sites is socializing with friends rather than learning.

A survey on 361 high school students by Mbaa (2010) show that students are more reliant on internet to access information on school life as well as entertainment. The survey results suggest that Facebook has become of great importance for these students in their adaption to school and management of peer relationships. Research on internet abuse by adolescents showed that a small portion of students become internet abusers and experience serious problems.

Guan & Subrahmanyam (2013) show that ICT helps the adolescents to be empowered and motivated particularly those in disadvantaged circumstances. The adolescents use the internet to reinforce offline relationships and to communicate. Balsa et al. (2010) add that adolescents' fast and early adoption to ICT creates important opportunities for engaging youths in preventive services via e-Health.

2.2. Negative impact of ICT on adolescents

Besides the positive impact of ICT on adolescents highlighted in section 2.1 there are many negative ones which are generally overlooked. These are discussed hereunder.

One of the major challenges of ICT use in education is that it limits students' imagination. Students seize to be critical thinkers and end up with a superficial understanding of the information they download (Mikre, 2017). They can even go to the extent of copying from the internet. Connected to this challenge is ICT addiction. This is defined by Judi et al. (2013) as excessive use of the internet despite the desire to stop. Once the students become so addicted to ICT they can easily become distracted from their learning and visit unwanted sites.

ICT can also lead to self detachment. Monnetti et al. (2011) and Ramli, (2011) agree that internet usage may create a socially isolated environment thus endangering the quality and quantity of interpersonal relationships. This has a negative impact on the health of the adolescents and social lives. One of the skill adolescents are supposed to learn at school is the social skill. Online communication, according to Judi (2013) is detrimental to social skills development and face-to-face interaction.

ICT can also lead to immoral and illegal behavior in adolescents. Being such an open and hard to control it is easy for the adolescents to access material on pornography, hate speech defamatory statements, and expose of online harassment, cyberbullying. Internet contents take over the function of reading materials thus reducing teenage interest in reading (Manawah, 2012; Guan et al., 2009 and Halam et al. (2010).

Balsa et al. (2010) state that there are critical challenges associated with adolescents' search for information on the internet. The adolescents lack the ability to discern the relevance of information retrieved by search engines and do not know which sites to trust (Gray et al. (2005); Hansen et al., 2003; Skinner et. el. 2003). Adolescents do not consider the source of content when searching for health information and scan Web pages haphazardly rather than in a systematic way. The other problem is their ability to apply identified health information to their personal health concerns and the need for privacy in accessing information technology.

Inequality in access has also been identified as a serious cause of indiscipline in schools. Balsa (2010) reports that computer use is most frequent among adolescents whose parents have higher education or socio-economic status, who come from nuclear families, and those who continue with education after the compulsory education which in the case of Zimbabwe is the primary school level. Despite disparities in access to ICT at home, access issues are deepened by the fact that there are insufficient

school computers. This has lead to so many theft-associated disciplinary problems in schools. Disadvantaged students end up stealing ICT gadgets or money to pay for gadgets owned by peers.

Use of ICT can expose adolescents to bad influence from online interaction. Because the adolescents are not able to discriminate internet webs there are high chances of them befriending wrong people and joining wrong groups. These groups can expose them to people with criminal behavior and negative influence which might lead to aggressive and deceptive behaviors (Judi et al. 2013; Halim 2012).

It has to be noted that problematic use of ICT regardless of the context, leads to consequences which go beyond specific use of ICT and affect psychological and academic growth of the young people. Overcoming the mentioned challenges and many others may help the education systems benefit the most from technology.

3. Methodology

The study was held in form of a survey in Goromonzi District of Mashonaland East Province of Zimbabwe. Ten schools were selected according to cluster sampling method from five common educational contexts in the country (boarding, farm and resettlement, mine, rural day, and urban schools). 300 students aged 14-19years were randomly chosen from each of the ten schools selected for the study.

Data was collected through a questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was composed of four parts. The first part of the questionnaire constituted six items on the students' ICT usage as well as type of gadgets owned and used. The second part consisted of six items about preferences of Webs on which to find information. The third part consisted of six factors which encourage adolescents to use technology. The forth and last part of the questionnaire had seven items regarding challenges that adolescents face during technology usage in both educational and social life.

To collect data from the ten schools the researcher visited the ten schools in person and administered the questionnaires on the students. For each item on the questionnaires, the respondents were supposed to circle one of the responses. The information collected from questionnaires were organised and statistically analysed to show relationships among variables. Qualitative data generated through open-ended questions in the questionnaire were described qualitatively in descriptive form. The results were summarised and meaningful interpretation of results were made to draw the conclusions and implications.

4. Results and discussion

This section presents and discusses the major findings of the study based on the data collected from the questionnaire. The results are presented using percentages in tables to show the adolescents responses to: ownership of ICT gadgets, preference of webs on which to find information, factors that encourage adolescents to use ICT, and problems associated to technology usage in educational and social life.

I. Hardware and software usage

In the first part of the questionnaire, the respondents were requested to respond to questions eliciting to the availability of ICT gadgets in adolescents. This part of the questionnaire also aimed at finding out if the adolescents are also connected to internet and the type of accessibility. The responses are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Ownership and usage of technology

Hardware ownership and usage in academic and social life	Responses	Percentage
Do you own a computer	Yes No	31.7 68.3
Do you own a smartphone	Yes No	65 35
Does your school provide computers	Yes No	34.3 65.7
Do you have access to internet at home	Yes No	19 81
Do you have access to internet at school	Yes No	0.7 99.3
Do you buy data bundles to access internet	Yes No	93 7

The responses showed that 285 of the adolescents who participated in the study have either a computer or a smartphone. Some of the adolescents had both a computer and a smartphone. 25 of the students did not have both a computer and smart phone, however upon being asked if they have access to technology they confessed that they borrow from their parents, siblings or friends to access technology. The responses confirmed that adolescents are the major consumers of ICT because all the 300 participants had access to ICT even if some of them did not have personal gadgets.

The researcher noted with concern that in as much as the Zimbabwean Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is emphasizing on digitalisation of the curriculum it has not made an effort to ensure that schools provide the hardware and software required. This scenario exposes the students from low-class families. This can lead to indiscipline as the young people try to raise funds for data bundles and fit into their peer groups. This might lead to love affairs between the young girls and financially stable men who can provide the software and hardware needed in ICT. The discrepancy can also lead to pilfering and cases of theft both at home and school.

II. Websites preferences

The study identified seven websites which are generally used by teenagers. The frequency of their use is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Adolescents websites preference

Website preference	Responses	Percentage
Google search	Yes	60.7
	No	48.3
Google Scholar	Yes	39.2
	No	60.8
YouTube	Yes	98
	No	2
Facebook	Yes	75
	No	25
Twitter	Yes	40
	No	60
Instagram	Yes	65.8
	No	34.2
WhatsApp	Yes	100
	No	No

The findings showed that the adolescents are more predisposed to social platforms than purely academic sites like Google scholar and Google search. This could be coming from lack of guidance from schools on how to use ICT productively in their education. Lack of ICT knowledge and skills in the teachers is a contributory factor hence the need to support introduction of ICT with relevant teacher development institutions. This will help the teachers to guide the learners adequately.

Too much use of social sites can lead to disciplinary problems since the adolescents will be exposed to plenty of nonacademic information including pornography, impersonification, online dating and even drug abuse. The adolescents' responses to the third part of the questionnaire confirm the dangers of unguided use of ICT.

III. Factors that encourage adolescents to use ICT

This section of the questionnaire had six responses. The responses have a close relationship with the type of site at which the students spend much of their time on. Their motivation to use ICT is more for social communication than academic use. The responses are summarised in table 3.

Table 3 Factors that encourage adolescents to use ICT

Factors encouraging adolescents to use ICT	Responses	Percentage
Academic research/ sharing ideas	Yes	72.6
	No	27.27
Downloading music and videos	Yes	90
	No	10
Reading jokes	Yes	72.2
	No	27.8
Following the life of the rich and famous	Yes	68
	No	32
Online dating	Yes	69
	No	30
Socializing	Yes	70
	No	30

Adolescents revealed that ICT assist them in their academic life as they use it for research and sharing of ideas with friends and other academics regardless of the distance between them. However, besides academic research and sharing of ideas, ICT is heavily used as entertainment. The other five items revealed that adolescents generally use ICT for entertainment in form of music, videos, online dating, sharing jokes, and following lives of public figures. The sites the students use have its own problems as shown in the next sub-section.

IV. Problematic use of ICT

The adolescents acknowledged that use of ICT has varied challenges which in a way affect both their social and academic lives as summarised in table 4.

Table 4 Problematic use of ICT

Problematic use of ICT	Responses	Percentage
Catfishing/ identity theft	Yes	50.7
	No	49.3
Copying work by others	Yes	68
	No	32
Sharing videos and photos without consent	Yes	47
	No	63
Distracted during lessons	Yes	43
	No	67
Pornography	Yes	64
	No	36
Cyberbullying	Yes	32
	No	68
Distracting other during lessons	Yes	42.6
	No	57.4

The responses show that on this part reflect that if not well guided the adolescents can fall prey to a lot of disciplinary problems as a result of ICT usage. The major effect of ICT on education is copying of assignments. Instead of widening and deepening the learners' understanding ICT has actually caused adverse results.

5. Recommendations

Integration of ICT in education must be accompanied by a series of guidelines defining the framework for ICT use in schools. The research identifies the three following guidelines" (1) information to be accessed by the young people, (2) communication connected with academic collaboration and teamwork, (3) ethics and social impact needed to face the challenges of globalization.

Investments for the teacher development institutions must prioritize programs for instructional technologies and support services which allow integration of ICT in teaching and learning. If teachers do not adapt their methods in order to make best use of ICT then the purpose of using ICT in education will be defeated; the adolescents will then use it for entertainment and socializing.

Schools or any other educational centers as reference contexts for the young people instead of avoiding the use of ICT should foster actions that contribute towards responsible use of ICT by young people in all aspects of their personal, academic, and social life.
This study strongly recommends normalizing the use of ICT, especially the computer and the internet in education at all levels. This will benefit curriculum implementation and enhance student learning. This requires the education policymakers, educators, and all the stakeholders to evaluate and be acquainted with the role of ICT in education in order to work out the most effective functioning of this in their education system.

6. Conclusion

The present-day education may not be conceived of, separate from ICT. In this perspective, any educational innovation is tied to technological development. It is therefore important for the society (policymakers, teachers, learners, and parents) to acknowledge and embrace the use of ICT in education. This will reduce abuse of ICT by adolescents as well as optimize the teaching and learning process.

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