

CORRELATES OF INTERNET USE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Internet is a new technology in Nigeria that is desirable to be used among secondary school students. Students are in love with internet because any kind of information on any topic is available on the internet. With fast and vast information exchange occasioned by globalization, efforts are being made towards providing caution on students' use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and internet in particular. This study aims at analyzing the use of internet among secondary school students in Nigeria. The paper discusses the following correlates – internet as a concept, characteristics of secondary school students, problems of adolescents, positive and negative effects of internet use among students and the strategies to reduce the negative effects of internet use.*

KEYWORDS: Internet, Technology, Education, Students, Globalization, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The secondary level of education occupies a very significant position in the school system as it is the bridge linking the primary and the tertiary levels of education. Special attention given to this level will go a long way in affecting the quality of the output from the system that would be either pushed into the labour market or into the higher levels of the national education system (Ikpeba, 2010).

The Federal Government of Nigeria, recognizing the importance of this level of education outlined among others, the broad aims of secondary education, thus, to prepare the individuals for useful living within the society and for higher education National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004).

Realizing that students in the secondary level of education are in their adolescent stage, most of the times, youths tend to imitate every behaviour, especially new ones (Alio, 2010). Technology application has taken over every aspect of everyday life. It is hard to image life without using one form of technology application or the other. Osadolor (2008) noted that one of the greatest challenges faced by secondary education in Nigeria is its capacity to apply modern information technology appropriately. Yet, the role of modern information technology application in fostering the instructional and management activities that enhances students' achievement is continually being emphasized by scholars and administrators alike. Modern information technology application has brought a lot of changes to the classroom through the use of computer, internet, e-mail, video conferencing and electronic white board analysis etc. The use of internet by secondary school students which is the focus of this study assists teachers in the delivery of instructions to the students by allowing them to interact or relate with

designed lessons that have been either programmed into the system or to find out information themselves on any specified lesson on the internet.

Internet as a Concept

The word internet was used uncapitalized as early as 1983 as a verb and an adjective to refer to interconnected (World University Computer, 2012) in the early 1970s, the term internet was used as a “short-hand” form of the technical term internetwork, that is the results of interconnecting computer network with special gateways or routers. Internet was used as a verb, meaning “*connect together*” especially for networks.

Internet can be defined as an international network or an information superhighway which connects computers from different geographic locations to share information and resources using HYPERTEXT TRANSFER PROTOCOL (http) and electronic mail (e-mail) services. Most of the computer systems are configured to run on stand alone, this means that they can run off line without connecting to the internet until an internet Modem such as MTN Fast Link, Glo, Etisalat, Visaphone Modems is connected. A particular computer can access internet when it is operated within a particular wireless hotspot. A hotspot is used to grant internet to those systems that are installed within any defined connectivity. Examples are ESUT – AC ICT hotspot in ESUT, Nigeria and AfriHub at the University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus - Nigeria. Internet browsers such as Moxilla Finefox, Internet explorer, Safari, Opera etc are soft wares that can be used to access the content of the internet on geographic user interphase via a particular internet search engine. An internet search engine is a custodian of different websites arranged in categories for which access to internet is made possible. Typical examples of internet search engines are google, mama.com, yahoo, asa.com, ping.com, aol.com (American online) etc.

Electronic mail services are used to send or receive electronic mails on one’s system using any defined electric mail service such as google mail, yahoo mail, hotspot mail etc. One should note that before any system will enable the user to use any of their services, an electronic mail (e-mail) account which contains the proposed user’s bio-data must be captured, processed before that particular e-mail account can be put to use.

Internet and World Wide Web (WWW)

The terms internet and World Wide Web are often used interchangeably in everyday speech. It is common to speak of “going on the internet” when involving a web browser to view web pages. Therefore internet is a particular global computer network connecting millions of computing devices; the World Wide Web (www) is just one of many services running on the internet.

The web is a collection of interconnected documents (web page) and other web resources linked by hyperlinks. In addition to the web, are a multitude of other services that are implemented over the internet. They include the e-mail, file transfer, remote computer control, news groups and online games. Web (and others) services can be implemented on any internet and accessible to network users (<http://www/study mode.com/easy/> positive effect of TV on young / 1360800.htm, 2013).

Characteristics of Secondary School Students

Students in secondary level of education are in their adolescent stage of life. An adolescent is said to be undergoing transition from childhood to adulthood. He is trying to learn the pattern

to belief, norms, values and traditions of adult society. He is also trying to secure career, striving to be able to deal with the influence of his/her peers among other developmental tasks (Nnamani, 2008).

Many psychologists, guidance counsellors and educators have given various definitions of adolescence from time to time, in terms of physical, mental, social and emotional maturity; but there is a consensus among the psychologists – that adolescence is a transition period between childhood and adulthood (Nnamani, 2008).

Adolescent is neither a child nor an adult but is caught in a field of childhood and field of adult. It is sometimes referred to as the period of teenage.

Adolescent varies to some extent in length family to family, from one socio-economic level to another and from culture to culture. It also includes the period of mental, emotional and social maturity as well as physical maturity. Chronologically, adolescence lies roughly between ages of 12 and 18 years.

According to Njoku (2006) adolescence period experiences a spurt in physical growth, change proportions and maturing of primary into secondary sex characteristics. This is called adolescent growth spurt, when the adolescent experiences a very rapid increase in height and weight. The growth spurt occurs at about the age of 12 in girls and 14 years in boys. This called pre-adolescence.

Puberty

The pre-adolescent growth spurt is followed by a period of speedy growth know as puberty. This period experiences rapid increase in the size of genital organs and the individual attains sexual maturity. Puberty is attained between 13 and 14 year of age. However puberty (beginning of sexual maturity) occurs from the first menstrual period (i. the menarche) in girls and the appearance of pubic hair in boys. During puberty, male hormones (androgen) in boys are increased in production and female hormones (estrogen) in girls. It is good to note that puberty stage varies from culture to culture and both boys and girls hormones develops at different rates. Some people are earlier matures while some are late developers; and all of them have implication in the development of all round efficiency.

In Nigeria, according to Nnamani (2008), the period of adolescent is regarded as between 11 and 18 years. In Nigeria, at the age of 18 years, individual are eligible to vote during national elections. (Njoku, 2006). From same 18 years of age individuals apparently answer for themselves (that is, they are old enough to take responsibility and even go to prison). The word apparently is used because at age 18 in Nigeria and even up to 24 years children still live under the care of their parents and can leave only when employed in a job which most of the times is not easy to get automatic or when the children are married and fit to live on their own. This then suggest for caution in relationship they involved in.

The adolescent stage is regarded as a period of “storm and stress”. Anyafulude (2008) noted that Piaget (1954), the Swiss psychologist, who had done extensive work on the development of intelligence, drew up certain stages where intelligence develops from infancy to adulthood. Piaget described the period from age 11 years and above as Formal Operational Stage. From age 11 years, individual’s brain is about to mature. He is capable of solving higher or much more difficult problems. At this formal operational stage, the adolescent produces his own

form of egocentrism. He can think about obstructions and hypothetical concepts and is able to speculate in thought “from the real to the possible”.

Problems of the Adolescents

Adolescents have been known to show signs of worries due to certain generalized and personal reasons. These adolescents’ stress and storms, most of the times originate from their emotional instability. The reasons for this instability always relates to their pattern of physical development. Some of the sources include:

1. Congenital or naturally inherited defects like blindness, deafness, stammering and physical malformation like spoilt upper or lower limbs and crippling conditions.
2. Stunted physical growth (dwarfism) and sometimes excessive physical growth (gigantism).
3. Chronic illness, like sickle cell anemia, diabetes etc.
4. Physical injuries, due to accidents or severe burns, covering large areas of skin, injury at work in factories, injury in battle, sports etc.

Whatever is the source of the physical problems, they are always distasteful to the adolescents. Both home and school should therefore take necessary precaution to avoid them where possible and to give prompt treatment and attention where such injuries have already occurred.

Implications of the Adolescents’ Physical Development

Normal physical growth and development involves not only the attainment of adequate size and strength but also dexterity in motor skills in boys and girls. This will make it possible for them to perform their works effectively. Nkpa (2001) defined work as it relates to occupation, vocations or professions, implies some physical and/or mental exertion by which an individual seeks to earn an honest living. To work is one of the essential social expectation of adulthood in Nigeria and indeed in many other parts of the world. Work is the culmination of most academic or vocational training of the formal and non-formal training institutions. It is worthy to note that work confers on the worker a considerable measure of social and economic security and acceptability among responsible members of a community. It is an indispensable element responsibility and vital criterion for measuring vocational maturity. Durojaiye (1976) noted that differences in size, strength and health are more important determinants of social adjustment than are moderate differences in intelligence. From an interview of Nigerian male and female of senior secondary schools students in Ibadan, it was found that majority of students (about 62%) said that in a free choice situation, that they would opt for improvements in their physical structure rather than gains in intelligence. Put, the other way, physique is more highly regarded than intelligence interest and character by young growing people. Therefore, parents, teachers and other stakeholders charged with handling of youth are advised to pay attention on what they look at / see, listen/hear and do/handle so as to provide valuable clue for understanding adolescent value preferences and behaviour in order to give them appropriate guidance.

Changes are inevitable. These changes have offered good and bad influences especially on adolescents who are the makeup of secondary level of education. Nwosu and Udofia (2010) pointed out that many nations of the world have effectively integrated Information Communication Technology (ICT) into the main stream of their educational practices, that

Nigeria is still caught at the middle with particular reference to internet use among secondary school students.

Positive Effect of Internet among Secondary School Students

1. **Internet is the largest information base:** Any kind of information on any topic under the sun is available on the internet. So search engines can help secondary school students find data on any selected subject known to man. Ranging from government to law, trade fairs and conferences, market information, new ideas, technical reports etc. Students can learn / study about emerging changes and innovations especially in the field of science and technology.
2. **Online correspondence system with e-mail can send and receive instant letters:** One's messages are delivered instantly to people anywhere in the world, unlike pen and paper / traditional mail that takes a lot of time. E-mail is now an essential communication tool for students correspondence.
3. Internet is used for online banking, job seeking and application, hotel reservation etc are available on the internet. Internet keeps students aware about many issues.
4. The internet is a very effective way to buy and sell all over the world. One can shop on line. There are many online stores and sites that can be used to look for products as well as buy them using credit card. One does not need to leave the house. Communities of all types have sprung up on the internet. It is a great way to meet up with people of similar interest and discuss common issues.
6. One can download a lot of games, music, videos, movies and most of other entertainment softwares. Most of them are free. Internet keep the students occupied.
7. **Online chat:** There are many "chat rooms" on the web that can be accessed to meet new people, make new friends as well as stay in touch with the old friends.
8. Internet can help one solve various issues which are not possible due to geographical distance.
9. Internet enables individuals to share culture. One can adapt a culture that is good from other geographical location.
10. Internet can be used to access news, weather, sport reports, to plan and book vacations and to find out more about their interest.
11. Internet is used by many people to chat, send message and use e-mail to stay in touch with friends world wide – that is in place of pen pals.
12. Social networking websites such as facebook, twitters and my space have created new ways to socialize and interact. Uses of those sites are able to add wide variety of information on pages to pursue common interest and to connect with others.
13. Internet makes it possible to find existing acquaintances, to allow communication among existing groups of people. Sites like linked in fosters commercial and business connection for students.
14. You tube and fliker specialize in users' video and photographs.
15. Television can be entertaining and educational. It can open up new world for students giving them a chance to travel the globe, learn about different cultures and gain exposure to ideas they may never encounter in their own communities. Programmes with positive role models can influence viewers to make positive lifestyle changes.
16. Secondary school students are in love with new technology. Students always form the majority of music artist fans and even the artists. Internet has given music industry a wise access to a wider fan base. When music is available in the internet, the fans can access

music from other favourite artists that they have never heard before and then can create more fan base or attention to the artist.

17. Internet gives the users access to new and improved ideas from around the world such as news, gadgets and music. A new artist can improve / train himself from good musics accessed from the internet.

Negative Effect of Internet on Secondary School Students

1. Internet can expose young generation to different cultures and ways of life that can make them to become vulnerable.
2. One's personal information such as name, address can be assessed by other people. One's use of credit card to shop online can be risky because one's credit card can be "stolen" and it is like giving someone a blank cheque.
3. Accessing pornographic programmes is a serious issue especially with the adolescents. They may begin to practice it, this exposing them to immorality, taking their mind off the lord. There are many thousands of pornographic sites on the internet that easily be found which will be detrimental to letting children use internet.
4. A lot of unsolicited e-mail is sent to people's mails (spamming). Such illegal activities are frustrating for all internet users.
5. Internet ruins face to face relationship. People don't visit one another again.
6. Internet fills people's mind with filth, damages their eyes and melts their brains.
7. Addiction of television among students. Television is one of the most common electrical appliances in people's homes and almost all individuals are exposed to it at some time or the other. Students spend between three to four hours watching Tv each day. It has played an important role in their lives and its viewing has been a favourite activity for many of them.

McDoughs (2009) conducted a study and noted that an average, children ages two-five years spend 32 hours a week in front of a television (TV) – watching television, digital video decoder (DVD), digital video recorder (DVR) and video using a game console.

8. Kids, ages between 6 and 11 years spend about 28 hours a week in front of TV. The vast majority of this viewing (97%) is of live. Media technology offers now more ways of access to TV content such as on the internet, cell phones and ipods. This has led to increase in time spent in viewing TV, even as TV-sets viewing has declined. Robert (2005) observed that 41% of TV viewing is now online. Rideout (2010) noted that two-thirds of households view TV during meals. 53 percent of households of students in secondary school do not have rules about TV watching. Television can have negative effects on student in that students can learn from TV what parents don't want them to learn. Watching TV can affect students' health, social and psychological behaviours. (<http://www.study mode.com/easy/positive effect of TV on young/1360800 htm>). Internet negatively affect students' career choice. Students in secondary schools are still in their stage of career choice. Where people do not know the stability and prospects of a particular occupation and rush into it just because they have accessed or watched people on the internet who have succeeded in that occupation, would face the problems of choosing occupations that are already saturated which may have no prospects.

Oranu (2008) reported that very often people choose some occupations only to find out when it is already too late, that they do not like the occupations and this leads to job dissatisfaction and frustration.

9. Many secondary school students cannot copy notes in class. It is either that they cannot spell words correctly or that they have lost skills in writing with paper and pen. Students can no longer write simple letters. Before 1990, students in secondary school can read and memorize multiplication tables at the back of exercise books. Solve mathematical problems using long division, log tables, solve problems with the help of some neumonics like BODMAS. The use of internet and new technologies have ruined the brain and minds. Students would always go for the fast and sharp practices. No wonder the increase in examination malpractice in Nigeria secondary schools. Even some tertiary institutions graduate students that are referred or called illiterate graduates.
10. Internet do expose students to political activities which discourage them from their academic activities. Some youths opt to imitate and envy the affluent display of some politicians in the movies or on TV programmes at the detriments of their academic endeavours.

Strategies to Reduce Negative Effect of the Use of the Internet Among Secondary School Students in Nigeria

Parents, teachers, counsellors and education stakeholders have roles to play in bringing about desirable and appropriate use of internet among secondary school students. This they could do by acquiring the some characteristics, excepts that such qualities will not flow as naturally as they would, if the individual was born with them. Such qualities like friendliness, kindness, honesty respect for other people's right and fairness to all are basically innate. But a person can be trained to acquire certain traits that are necessary qualities for performing some peculiar roles. With practice a person can acquire such characteristics.

Parents, teachers, counsellors and stakeholders in secondary education system can acquire the following essential qualities or characteristics in order to help students stay less on the internet and be more useful to themselves, their families and the society in general. The qualities include:

1. ***Empathy or a sympathetic and human understanding:*** This is very important to parents, teachers and counsellors because acquiring this quality will help them to establish rapport or cordial relationship with the students / children for good advise against negative effect of internet.
2. ***Friendliness:*** Parents, teachers and counsellors who are not friendly towards children/students will not be effective in correcting any bad behavior from them.
3. ***Respect for other people's ideas, opinions, lines of thinking and philosophies:*** For one to help students avoid negative effect of internet, the parents, teachers and counsellors should understand the characteristics of the adolescents in order to respect their ideas, opinions, lines of thinking and their philosophies.
4. Unconditional regard for students' worth and dignity as a human being.
5. Alertness to the feelings and facial changes of the students, particularly when giving them advice ***or during school counselling sessions***. If the students/children become uncomfortable with certain revelations, during counselling session, one should be aware of it and make necessary adjustment.

6. **Confidentiality:** One of the most important keys to success for a counsellor / parent / teacher is being able to keep secret any information that is confidential.
7. **Self-evaluation:** A counsellor/teacher/parent who is doing the work of a leisure counsellor should evaluate him/herself from time to time to see whether he/she is living up to expectations. He/she should check how he/she reflects on what he/she is improving. Emike (2008) defined leisure as freedom from occupation, employment or engagement. Leisure is the time in which individuals' feeling of compulsion should be minimal. It is a discretionary time, the time to be used according to a person's judgment or choice. One needs to live by example.
8. **A sense of humour:** A good sense of humour cheers up even a depressed student. But a sense of humour needs to be exhibited at appropriate occasions and not when a student is in a crisis stage.
9. **Honesty:** Parents/teachers and counsellors should be honest and genuine. This behavior is essential even when it might hurt the feelings of the students. Parents/teachers/counsellors should emphasize the student's good and strong points but honestly let the student know his weakness.
10. **Maturity:** Parent/teacher/counsellor needs to demonstrate mature behavior within and outside his hours. The parent/teacher/counsellor should live decently.
11. **Recognition of limitation:** Parent / teacher / counsellor should recognize his/her limitation and accept the fact that he does not have all the answers to all problems. He/she should make appropriate referrals to other appropriate individuals or centres (example: churches for prayers) when their services will better meet the needs identified by parent / teacher / counsellor.
12. **Parent / teacher / counsellor should be a model of rational and logical thinking:** Other ways of helping secondary school students avoid negative effect of internet include:
13. **Provision of occupational information to the students:** The provision of occupational information prevents job dissatisfaction and frustration in a job and eliminates inefficiency and low productivity. Occupational information can be provided at the secondary school level so that young school leavers will be aware of the occupations available in their communities and the requirements for such occupation. Where occupational information is provided, students will be able to know that is not only the prestige and name attached to an occupation that is necessary in making a choice but that choice should be based on the interest, couple with ability to succeed in the chosen occupation.

Good occupational information given to students regularly and on time will help students to be wise while accessing information on the internet or when viewing online television programmes.

14. Parents should be given adequate information on dangers of students being on the internet with either their cell phones, cyber café or online television.
15. Parents/teachers/counsellors should try to learn the use of internet so that they can control their students/wards in the use of internet.

16. Government should ban the use of cell phones during class hours in the secondary schools in Nigeria.

Religious leaders should preach against influence of internet on students' dressing. Youths copy wearing of indecent dresses from the internet.
18. Moral construction and civic education should be made compulsory for secondary level of education in Nigeria.
19. Motivation as a guidance service should be given to secondary school students. Learning can be facilitated by motivation which can be from within the person (intrinsic) like the need for achievement; or from other persons (extrinsic) like the need to solve a family problem. Motivation from forces having both internal and external origins, appears to be most conducive for efficient and effective learning (Ugonabo, 2008). For example, a student in Technical College may engage in a "work study" programme in a roadside mechanic shop because he wants to acquire more practical skills (intrinsic motivation) and through such knowledge progresses in his occupational area (extrinsic motivation) and in turn pleases his parents, friends (extrinsic motivation).
20. ***Overcoming of physiological problem:*** This study has earlier noted the physical injuries due to accidents or severe burns, covering large areas of skin, injury at school, shops/laboratories, sports or even at birth, malnutrition, illness and other experiences in life. These are major problems against successful completion of school programmes by secondary school students. Such learners can be helped by school counsellors and teachers to overcome their problems. The student can be guided to the website where they can read about successful physically challenged persons. This will help them to know that they too can make it irrespective of their health challenges. Teachers and counsellors can also help them to get information on how to solve their problems.
21. ***Information on good family relationship:*** Information should be provided with their families relationships, health care practices and avenue for extra money / income (through involving them in the entrepreneurship activities which will keep them busy and also improve in their finances). This will help to reduce their attention to the internet.
22. The school guidance and counsellors should step up to their responsibilities in guiding and counseling the secondary school students.

CONCLUSION

It has been established that the use of internet is desirable among secondary school students in Nigeria. Internet is a new technology which has some good and bad effects on Nigeria secondary school students because youths tend to rush into things because of their natural characteristics. Strategies on how to reduce the negative effects were extensively explored. The study also concluded that teachers, parents and counsellors have very important roles to play in order to help the students stay less on the internet as well as prevent internet's negative effects on them.

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