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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE USE OF MOBILE PHONES AND STUDENTS' MORAL CHARACTER IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ILORIN METROPOLIS

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between the use of mobile phones and students' moral characters in senior secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis of Kwara State, Nigeria. The study population consisted of selected staff of three boarding secondary schools in Ilorin. One hundred and eight staff members were sampled proportionately through purposive sampling techniques. A 20-item researcher-designed questionnaire titled "Relationship between the use of mobile phones and students' moral character in senior secondary schools" (RBUMPSMCSSS) appropriately validated, and with reliability index of 0.82 was used to elicit the needed responses. Two research questions were asked and one hypothesis formulated to guide the study. The data collected were analyzed, using mean, standard deviation and spearman's Rho. The findings revealed that usage of mobile phones by students in senior secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis has negative effect on their moral character. The hypothesis showed that antisocial character of students in boarding secondary school is positively related with mobile phone usage. Based on the finding of the study, it was suggested that there should be only one fixed telephone to be used by every student when the need to communicate with parents/guardians arises, without secret discussion. The prohibition of mobile phone usage by students should cover the entire school premises, rather than being limited to classroom and students should be closely monitored by parents/guardians and school authority for undesirable change in character.

Keywords: Moral Character, Mobile Phone, And Secondary School

Introduction

Mobile telephone is no longer a prerequisite to measure prosperity, standard of living, economic and educational status and/or influence of an individual. Thanks to technological revolution/inventions without which mobile phones would not have been possible. The most popular cellular telecommunications system in the world, Global System for Mobile Telecommunication (G.S.M.) subscriptions reached 1 billion in the year 2004 (Electronic Notes, 2018). No wonder Epstein (2013) defined mobile technology as the single most rapidly embraced technology in world history. Its portability, convenience and multi-functional uses proved its worth. The number of smartphone users in Nigeria is currently put at 20.5 million and estimated to reach 23.3million in the year 2019 (The Statistics Portal, 2018) while the

Nigerian Communication Commission said the number of active mobile phone lines in the country rose to 144 million in December 2017 (Premium Times news, February 7, 2018). Looking around the city, town and even villages in present day Nigeria, one would not walk about two poles without seeing a business center mainly characterized by the use of umbrellas, kiosks and even shops painted with the colors of one or more of the mobile phones service providers as of old (Utulu, 2012).

The invention of this electronic wireless portable scientific device, which is used to receive and send voice and messages has contributed immensely to the modern life. Its importance goes beyond just making and receiving of calls and messages, it also includes among many others; ceaseless flow of communication which enables constant contact with families and friends, entertainment world; helping man to be more organized than ever through the aids of daily utilities application such as memo, calendar, calculator, alarm, documents, stop-watch. Currently, this device has become a necessity to many as it's now prohibitively impossible for many to live without it.

A nationwide survey conducted in 2010 shows that mobile phones are the most necessary medium of communication for adolescents. It has virtually affected the society's accessibility, security, safety and coordination of business and social activities and has hence become a part of culture of the whole world (Rabiu, Muhammed, Umaru & Ahmed, 2016).

Many institutions have been able to influence their learners through the use of this technological advancement. As reported by Cuing and Wang (2008), universities in United Kingdom use mobile phones in order to save and retrieve information by means of electronic books and other educational materials, therefore, making access to information for teaching and learning more readily available. Back to the continent of Africa, Nigeria in 2013, the University of Ilorin in particular, introduced the system of designing a special mobile phone for students to enhance the teaching and learning process. It's no more news that the Osun State government introduced something new to its senior secondary schools called "*the Opon-Imo scheme*" and through its graduate volunteer scheme- *Npower*, the Federal Government of Nigeria has also introduced the issuance of internet enabled smart phones. Leyden (2015) cited in Fakokunde (2017) in line with these, identified forty ways through which mobile phones could be use to facilitate learning. Out these twelve are listed below. These are

- i. checking of facts relating to academic work.
- ii. taking photos to illustrate work and presentations
- iii. using mobile phones as videos to record experiment for inclusion in projects
- iv. using mobile phones by teachers to carry out tests and quizzes
- v. reading news and current affairs that are related to learning.
- vi. using mobile phones as dictionary
- vii. using mobile phones as calendar for planning learning activities
- viii. accessing resources and materials quickly before examination
- ix. using stopwatch/timer for proper time management
- x. reading eBooks
- xi. recording explanation given by teachers for future references; and
- xii. using phones as calculator.

It is a known fact that larger percentage of young people are heavy users of the smartphones, which enable them to receive and send various text messages, posts, broadcasts messages, view normal and illicit pictures on web, listen to various forms of music and videos via the web or through connectivity functions of the gadgets.

Since time immemorial, each and every invention has contributed comfort as well as some ominous consequences with it. The Achilles' heel is that, despite the numerous benefits of this gadget, it also has a lot of negative effects on the learners, ranging from cheating, contributions to poor reading culture, exposure to negative terms and attitudes such as poor writing skills. For instance, use of abbreviations instead of writing in full), psychological disorder, health hazards and classroom distractions to mention but a few. Mamudu & Oyewo (2015) submit that the use of mobile phones by students has raised much concern for indiscipline, examination malpractices and mobile bullying. Psychiatrists proclaim that in the 21st century mobile phone addiction has become one of the major non-drug addictions (Ahmed, Qazi & Perji, 2011).

Free access to contents on web without the supervision of their parents, guardians or teachers has imbued a lot of negative behaviours in most learners. Rabi, Muhammed, Umaru & Ahmed (2016) reported that the availability of different kinds of affordable and inexpensive android mobile phones made it very easy for the adolescents to have access to different types of social media and pornographic sites where they access, download, exchange and watch pornographic films of different sexual orientations from all over the world.

A lot of researchers have examined the relationship between the use of mobile phones by secondary school students and its effect on the teaching and learning process. Many academics have also explored the effects of mobile phone usage on secondary school students' academic performance. It has been ascertained that the use of mobile phone willy-nilly in schools has its attendant adverse effect.

As stated by Omode (2014), the use of cell phones by students, teachers and school administrators is not focused on enhancing learning since there is no curriculum that allows for its integration into learning and teaching thereby making both teachers and school administrators to see mobile phones as distracters, thereby advocating restriction on its use. Niaz (2008) had suggested that since the addictive mobile use has now become a public health problem, the awareness about the dangers associated with excessive usage and addictive behaviors must be extended among common people.

Kuppuswamy & Narayan (2010) while investigating the impact of social networking websites on the education of youth, asserted that the social networks distracts the attention and concentration of the students toward learning as they convert it towards non educational activities such as useless and unnecessary chatting. Secondary school students now feel more comfortable chatting and viewing whatsapp statuses rather than reading or solving questions. Going by the importance of control to the teaching/learning process, it is time that a study should be carried out to look into the possibility of mobile telecommunication interfering into the moral standard of our secondary school students in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Undisputedly, the mobile phone is the most accessible mobile technology that students possess in our modern society. We are now in a new world connected like a web of a giant spider. Through the mobile phone, people can communicate freely without any barrier. The introduction of mobile applications for social networking such as 2go, Badoo, Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube etc make it more interesting and necessary to many. Today, students without mobile phones are viewed as local, immature and less privileged mostly by their mates in possession of one or two. Some do come to school with advanced gadgets loaded with various contents that can be assessed, shared within and outside the four walls of the classroom via internet. The portability and memory capacity of some of these gadgets made it easier for them to keep materials for viewing whenever and where ever it seems conducive for them. The use of security PINs and Passwords on these mobile phones make these contents secured from the scrutiny and prying eyes of parents and teachers (Rabiu, Muhammed, Umaru & Ahmed, 2016). As a result of the above assertion made by these scholars, most mobiles phones of secondary school students contain illicit contents.

Irrespective of the type of school, level of attentiveness of learners dropped every now and then as a result of the use of these gadgets (without contributions to knowledge) in the classrooms. Communication becomes ineffective as the recipients of knowledge find it difficult to contribute to the lesson, ask appropriate questions to enhance learning as they struggle to hide the gadget from the view of their teachers. No doubt, the device has contributed to poor reading culture in our society. It has equally promoted poor writing cum listening skills leading to poor academic performance of learners. The result of this is evident in our society, one of which is the astronomical increase in the number of special centers that promote examination malpractices.

In spite of stakeholders' efforts, students of day secondary schools have access to mobile phones at home. This means, the use of mobile phone and classroom activities was only taken into consideration. Although, a great deal of literature point out the academic performance as it was affected by the use of mobile phone in secondary schools in Nigeria. Most of these studies attributed the use of mobile phones by students and how it affects teaching-learning process, academic performance in secondary school and tertiary institution, but, little if not none examine the use of mobile phones by students and their moral character. To fill this lacuna, the study examines the relationship between the moral character of boarding secondary school students and the use of mobile phone in Ilorin metropolis of Kwara State in Nigeria.

Research Questions

This research study will be guided by the following questions;

1. What types of moral character are displayed by boarding secondary school students?
2. What is the level of access to mobile phones by the students?

Research Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between access to mobile phones and boarding secondary school students' moral character.

Method

This study is a correlational study since the researchers are interested in examining the relationship between the use of mobile phones and students' moral characters in public boarding secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis. The population of the study consists of all public boarding secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis, while the target population would consist of the staff (teaching and non-teaching) of the schools. There are five (two single sex and three mixed) public boarding secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis, out of which three were purposively selected (an only boys school, an only girls school, and a mixed school) as sample. There is a total of 193 teaching and non-teaching staff (136 teaching and 57 non-teaching) in the three purposively sampled schools. Out of which 108, consisting of 76 teachers and 32 non-teaching, were sampled, using proportionate sampling technique. This is in line with the Research Advisor (2006) table for sample selection, where it was stated that the best sample size for a population of 150–200 at 95% confidence and margin of error 5.0% is 108.

A 10-item, 2 scaled researcher-designed questionnaire was the instrument used in eliciting the needed response. The questionnaire was appropriately validated using the comments of three experts in the area of Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, and had a reliability index of 0.82 after a test-re test in a population of 78 teaching and non-teaching staff of two boarding secondary schools that were not part of the sampled schools within an interval of three weeks and the scores of the first test administered was correlated with the second scores using the Pearson, Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The data collected from the questionnaire were analysed, using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation). The acceptable mean is 2.5 while responses that yielded a mean less than 2.5 would mean disagreement. The Spearman Rho statistic was adopted in analyzing the hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Results

For each item on the instrument, a mean value above 2.5 is evident that such moral character is being displayed by the boarding secondary students. The closer this mean value is to 4 the more prevalent the moral character (item) in question is.

Research Question 1: *What types of moral character are displayed by boarding secondary school students?*

Table 1: Type of Moral Character Displayed by Boarding Secondary School Students

Statements	N	Mean	Std.D
Bullying	106	2.58	.904
Stealing of Staff and Matron Property	106	2.68	.931
Leave Class for Hostel Before Closing Time	107	2.70	.913
Cheating During Examinations	108	2.96	.906
Dishonesty	107	2.79	.833
Arrogance	106	2.77	.820
Lateness to Class	107	2.71	.932
Engaging in Non-Diligent Character	106	2.81	.896
Disobedience	108	2.84	.751
Indiscipline	105	2.92	.829
Engaging in Assaults	107	2.70	.849

From Table 1 above, bullying one another has a mean value of 2.58; stealing has a mean of 2.68; leaving class before time has a mean value of 2.70; cheating during examinations has a mean value of 2.96; dishonesty 2.79; arrogance character 2.77; lateness to class 2.71; disobedience 2.84; indiscipline 2.92; and engaging in assaults 2.70. Since all these items have a mean value of more than 2.5, we conclude that the types of moral character displayed by students of boarding schools are bullying, stealing, cheating during examinations, dishonesty, indiscipline etc. The values of the standard deviation, which is in every case very close to one for each item, is also an evidence that defiant behaviour of students are highly prominent.

Research Question 2: *What is the level of access to mobile phones by the boarding secondary school students?*

Table 2: Level of Access to Mobile Phones by Boarding Secondary School Students

Remark	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
High	65	61.3	61.3
Low	41	38.7	100
Total	106	100	

The above Table shows that 65 (61.3) borders had high access to mobile phones in boarding secondary schools, while just 41 (38.7) had low access. The implication of this is that students had a high access to phone usage in boarding secondary schools.

Hypothesis 1: *There is no significant relationship between usage of mobile phones and secondary school students' moral character.*

Table 3: Significant Relationship Between Usage of Mobile Phone and Secondary School Students' Moral Character

		Defiant Moral Character of Students	Mobile Phone Usage
Spearman's Rho	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.282**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.004
	N	106	105
	Correlation Coefficient	.282**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.
	N	105	106

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In Table 3 above, a Spearman's Rho value of 0.282 was derived, showing a positive relationship between defiant moral character of students and mobile phone usage. This value is statistically significant at 0.01 level of significance. This implies that we have 99% confidence that defiant moral character of boarding students is positively related with mobile phone usage. This shows that there is a relationship between the use of mobile phones and students moral character.

Summary of the Main Findings

Below are the findings:

1. The anti-social character of students in boarding senior secondary school is highly related to the usage of mobile phones.
2. All students had access to mobile phones, but those that had high level of access to mobile phones were more than those who had low access to phones.
3. There is high and positive relationship between the anti-social behaviours of students in boarding secondary schools and usage of mobile phones.

Discussion of the Findings

The study discovered that most of the behaviours displayed by the secondary school students in boarding are as a result of their exposure to mobile phones since most of those behaviours were not found to be rampant before the advent of mobile phones. In other words, the findings of this study revealed that moral characters of students in senior secondary schools are significantly influenced by the use of mobile phones. This is in line with the early findings of Tindell and Bohlander (2011), which examined the use and abuse of cell phones and text messaging in the classroom, and revealed that cyber bullying, cheating, health hazards, reduced cognitive ability are the resultant impacts of the use and abuse of cell phones by students.

The findings of the study also revealed that students had a high access to phone usage in boarding secondary schools. This is in agreement with Young (1998) in Mojaye (2015), who the major reasons behind this is that the use of mobile phones and the perceived social pressures towards the use of mobile phones. One of the use of mobile phones in schools, high use of mobile phones leads to addiction, which brings

in classroom distractions and rapid fall in level of concentration. Indeed, the study confirmed that the anti-social behaviours students in boarding secondary schools in Ilorin increased proportionately with their level of exposure to mobile phones.

The study further revealed that the level of access to mobile phones by students in boarding secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis varied and that the variability determined the extent to which mobile phone usage predicted individuals' anti-social characters. This supports the findings of Adenya & Oyeyinka-Oyelaran (2002) who noted that educational institutions have witnessed an astronomical increase in the use of mobile phones by students in recent times. This scenario has been extended to primary and secondary institutions as well. In highlighting the constraints to effective learning, Park (2005) listed inattentiveness, disruption and distraction. In Ilorin, closely associated with these is the use of mobile phones which cause noise and distraction during lecture hours. A study carried out at Ball State's Hanley Institute for mobile media research on students' use of mobile phones, revealed that students not only use a mobile phone for voice calls, but they also use it to e-mail, send text, download and listen to music and access social media sites. Mobile phones with internet service have brought about a profound and diverse pool of knowledge. However, it also tends to limit students' commitments to serious academic work and negatively impacted their thinking process, communication and language skills.

The positive correlation between the usage of mobile phones by the students in boarding secondary schools and the increase in antisocial behaviours was revealed in the study as well. The analysis revealed some common anti-social behaviours displayed by the students such as bullying, stealing, disobedience, indiscipline, examination malpractices. These are very high with students who have mobile phone in their possession as examination failure and negative attitude towards learning are common to them. This agreed with negative impact of mobile phones to students by Quraishi (2008), who stated that most of the students write the abbreviations while messaging to others. The same habit has been developed and used in answering questions in examination halls. They write 'U', '2', 'Btw', 'Becoz', 'R' and 'BV' instead of 'You', 'two/to', 'Between', 'because', 'or/are' and 'wife' respectively, which is a wrong way of writing in examinations.

Lastly, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between access to mobile phones and student's moral character was rejected. This means that we have strong evidence that the anti-social character of boarding secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis is positively related to mobile phone usage. This finding is in line with Olofiniyi *et al* (2012) and Trancy (2006), who asserted that additional problems emerging from the use of GSM in schools include; damage to attention span, critical-thinking skills, and respect for learning and teachers. Students who are distracted miss the ability to concentrate, plan, and work with complex ideas and sometimes seem to reflect a general decline in civility. They added that history is full of records of reckless and daring exploits of young men, some of which have resulted in great good and others in great evil. Therefore, the study accords with other researchers that concluded that mobile phone usage leads to problems in schools.

Conclusions

In the light of the findings made in this study, it is, therefore, concluded that there is relationship between the use of mobile phones and moral character of students in boarding secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis; that there is positive relationship between antisocial behaviours of students in boarding secondary schools and level of exposure to mobile phones; and there is equally a significant relationship between level of access to mobile phones and the types of anti-social behaviour displayed by the students in boarding secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis.

Suggestions

The following are, therefore, suggested by the study:

1. A standard counselling and human development centre should be provided in every boarding secondary school where antisocial characters of students could be promptly corrected.
2. There should be prohibition of mobile phone usage by students in the school premises, rather than in classrooms only.
3. There should be up-to-date information by the school management for parents/guardians about changes in the moral character of students.
4. There should be only one fixed telephone to be used by all students whenever there is need to communicate with their parents, and it should be placed in the counseling centre for proper monitoring.
5. There should be rules to minimize familiarities between staff and students beyond classroom in order to reduce exposure to mobile phones through staff.
6. There should be frequent searching of hostels and students' belongings without prior notice to students.
7. Both parents and staff should be mindful of what they do with phones in the presence of children/students.
8. Students should only be allowed to communicate with registered parents/guardians and discussion should not be in secret.

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