Socio-Psychological Dimensions of Mobile Phone Addiction and Usage Patterns amongst Teenagers in Higher Institutions of Learning in Kwara State

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ABSTRACT

Mobile phone addiction is now a common phenomenon in the 21st century, especially among teenagers due to the unusual cravings in the use of technological devices. In view of this phenomenon, the study examined the socio-psychological dimensions of mobile phone addiction and usage patterns amongst teenagers in three Higher Institutions of Learning in Kwara State, Nigeria. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were utilized to analyze data collected on a sample size of 321 undergraduate teenage students whose selection were based on simple random sampling technique across three Higher Institutions of Learning which were the University of Ilorin, Kwara state University, and Al-Hikmah University respectively. Findings from the data analyses revealed uniformity in the usage patterns of teenagers in the use of their mobile devices. Significant positive relationships were also established between mobile addiction and socio-psychological dimensions such as loneliness, boredom, egoism, and self-independence at varying significant levels.

Keywords: Cell Phones, Dimensions, Handsets, Institutions, Mobile Addiction, Mobile Devices, Social Psychological, Technology, Teenagers, Usage Patterns

INTRODUCTION

Mobile phone revolution dates back to the 1950’s and since its inception mobiles have been evolving from one generation to the other with quantifiable improvements in the phones’ capacities and functionalities. These generations of mobile phones that have evolved so far are often referred to as 1G, 2G, 3G, and 4G respectively. Undoubtedly, the introduction of the 3G mobile phones fondly referred to as smart phones have brought about a wide acceptability among the youth, and in particular teenagers. Smartphones have special features such as Internet access and video capabilities that make them

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distinct from other generations of phones that were previously designed (Baron, 2010). Mobile phones do have similar features irrespective of the brand such as address book, variety of ring tones, alarm clock, calendar, radio, wallpaper, games, and music (Baron, 2010). This has necessitated the mobile phone as a must-to-have tool for teenagers based on its attractiveness and usefulness in varying dimensions (Nasir, Hecht, & Wenner, 2007). The reduction in the cost of handsets and portability of most mobile phones has also led to the rapid adoption rate by young people (Ling, 2001; 2003).

In a National survey conducted on youths, it was revealed that mobile phones were reliable platforms for communication for young people that had further accentuated its acceptance and use (Ishii, 2011). Interestingly, teenagers today depend extensively on mobile phones as a means of communicating with friends, family members, and colleagues at school through various platforms such as facebook, twitter, and yahoogroups just to mention a few. Unequivocally, mobile phones have the tendency of changing the way teenagers conduct themselves at home, in the school’s environment, and in public places due to the individuality that comes with mobile phone usage and peer group influence. For instance, negative behaviors such as disruptions in classroom, bullying other students, cheating during tests, and intrusion into others privacy are rampant amongst teenagers (Obringer & Coffey, 2007). Others include sleep disturbances, disturbance in public places, major and minor accidents, loneliness, and egoism among others. These and many other forms of negative behaviors constitute the social psychological dimensions of mobile phone addiction. These dimensions are slightly curbed in colleges and higher institutions due to individuality that comes with mobile phone usage and lack of policies and general rules guiding the use of mobile devices. Mobile phone addiction has become a common phenomenon amongst teenagers most specially and has resulted to social and psychological issues such as loss of concentration at home and in school, loneliness, disturbance in sleep, anxiety, domestic accidents, boredom, and egoism. There is the need to create a balance in the lifestyle of teenagers to check excessiveness and abuse in the use of mobile devices.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Because mobile phones are indispensable tools to teenagers, exposure to these devices could lead to addictive behavior with underlying social and psychological implications. Mobile addiction had been on the increase due to the usefulness and attractiveness of this device to teenagers in particular. More so, mobile addiction may affect the psychological, emotional, and social well-being of teenagers that could lead to deviant behavior. The focus of this research paper is to unravel the social psychological dimensions influencing mobile phone addiction and usage patterns amongst teenagers to check the excessiveness in mobile phone use. This current study is relevant due to the dearth of empirical studies on mobile phone addiction amongst youth in Nigeria’s Higher Institutions of Learning. More so, the literature has revealed that most of the research investigations on mobile phone addiction amongst youths emanate from countries outside Nigeria; therefore this study concentrates on the Nigerian environment and its peculiarities to teenagers. In view of this, the overall objective of this current study is to delve into social-psychological dimensions underlying mobile phone addiction and usage patterns amongst teenagers in Higher Institutions of Learning in Ilorin, Kwara State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent times, mobile phones have improved and enhanced communication from one person to the other in society. Majorly, mobile devices are communication tools that cut across different categories of people irrespective of age, culture, economic class, and so on (Katz, 1997). Mobile phones have been largely accepted by young people especially teenagers; it has become an essential part of their daily life (Ishii, 2011).
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