

The Influence of Internet Use on College Learners' Social and Academic Obligations in Arusha City

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of internet use on college learners' social and academic obligations in Arusha city, Tanzania. The study was guided by four research questions and employed correlational/ descriptive research design to determine existing relationships between the rate of internet use and college students involvement in academic and social obligations. A total of 164 students participated by filling the questionnaire and expert judgment determined the validity of the questionnaire. Reliability of the questionnaire ranged between 0.636 and 0.703 meaning that the questionnaire was reliable to be used as source of data from the field. The study concluded that students accessed most of study materials from the internet. They had multiple sources to access internet, something which made them updated with both academic and social information. The use of internet did not hinder them from academic activities but rather supported their academic activities. Students used much of their time in social and academic obligations than in internet use. Finally, those students who actively participated in social obligations, they also participated in academic affairs. Therefore, it is recommended that lecturers should encourage learners to participate in social responsibilities as this propels their participation in academic affairs.

1. Introduction

The rate of internet users has been increasing in the global. While this could be advantageous in some aspects of human life, it could also negatively influence various aspects of human beings. Particularly, this study investigated on the influence of internet use on college learners' social and academic obligations. In this day and age, the growth of the Internet is, unquestionably, well-known and has developed a new socioeconomic environment, where information, innovation and knowledge play a primary role in various aspects of human activities. Through its multiplicity, the internet constitutes probably the best way for accessing activity, learning and information, as well as for establishing socialization processes and communication among people (Papanis, 2010). Particularly, internet plays a great role in academic institutions of both developing countries and developed countries. It has become a means for the whole process of knowledge growth all over the world. Papanis (2010) further adds that students realize that the internet has greatly simplified their learning, improved their academic performance, and motivated their involvement in research,

studies, personal and group activities through the online teaching forums and new innovative teaching and learning techniques.

The world Internet statistics report reveals that about 45% of Internet users are below the age of 25. These are younger people who tend to be more online than older people, in both developed and developing countries. The number of people with internet access has grown to over 2.7 billion almost 40% of the world's population. Europe is the leading continent having more than 75% of internet penetration rate in the world. In Africa, 16% of people are using internet. This is only half the penetration rate of Asia and the Pacific which are 38% to 32% (ICT Facts and Figures, 2013). This implies that Africa is still lagging behind as far as the rate of internet use is concerned, though the fact remains that the youths compose big percentage of those who are using internet in day to day activities. Research also indicates a big gap between men and women who use internet in developed countries. It has been revealed that there are 475 million female internet users and 483 million male internet users. This indicates a big difference for women and men internet users in developing countries (ICT Facts and Figures, 2013).

Though Internet plays a great role socially especially to adolescent and youths it has been discovered that the internet has made negative practices. Taking an example of Argentina, it has been found that internet use is not regulated. Anybody in Argentina can invest money and open a cyber café where by youths take advantage of this circumstance to surf the internet with no restriction. Youths can surf for unsafe pages and chat with people who they do not know and spend most of their time in playing games online and devote a few hours on their important activities (Study mode, 2013). While this is true to any kind of youths, it is also true to learners in academic institutions where there is a danger of the youths to overuse the internet at the expense of less involvement in academic and social obligations. Furthermore, internet users appear to experience tedious increase in stress due to much involvement in activities and social obligations found in the internet (Kiesler & Kraut, 2013). According to Cummings, Butler and Karaut (2002), internet has reduced users' communication with their family members, resulting into decline in the size of their social circle and increases depression and loneliness.

While internet could have detrimental effects on the life of the youths, it can also have some advantages. Kiesler and Kraut (2013) further contend that internet plays a constructive social impact to the society by helping students being innovative and creative, improving their ways and techniques to study and doing research.

Tanzania like any other developing countries seems to have a growing interest in technological innovations on the use of shared networking tools like twitter, my space and Facebook to connect with other people in various places all over the world. The country, like any other developing countries has an increase in the number of people who are using Internet. According to INTREC (2011), Tanzania Internet users has increased from 520,000 users in year 2005 to 4,900,000 users in year 2011 due to introduction of the subsea fibre optic cables which reduces the internet charges.

Internet has therefore become a very significant working tool in Tanzania mostly in organizations, business companies and academic institutions.

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of internet use on college learners' social and academic obligations in Arusha city, Tanzania in order to give necessary recommendations. The study was guided by four research questions namely; (1) what is the rate of student's involvement in internet use, academic obligations and social obligations? (2) Is there significant difference between the rate of internet use and the rate of involvement in Social Obligations? (3) Is there significant difference between the rate of internet use and the rate of involvement in Academic Obligations? (4) Is there significant relationship between the rate of internet use and participation in social and academic obligations by college students?

2. Review of Related Literature and Studies

2.1. The Use of Internet among the Youths

The internet is a global network connecting millions of computers. More than 100 countries are linked into exchanges of data, news and opinions. According to Internet World Stats, as of December 31, 2011 there was an estimated 2,267,233,742 internet users worldwide. This represents 32.7% of the world's population (Webopedia, 2013). The internet is perceived as a tool which offers access to vast amounts of information or content. This content can be accessed intentionally or accidentally (Trend Micro Incorporated, 2013).

The use of internet by the youths could be dangerous and therefore needs to be monitored. This is because the environment of the internet makes it challenging to match the information to the age level of the several users. In essence, when a child or an adult searches for particular information through a search engine such as Google, the results of the search are not categorized based on the various age levels to minimize the chances of children getting exposed to unsafe content (Bullen and Harre 2000 as cited in Vatcke et al. 2006). Youngsters are often faced with a threat when it comes to arranging face to face meetings with people they have met online. These threats face all the children or youth who are very trusting when it comes to people that they interact with via the internet. Lack of supervision of both parents and school teachers and also awareness from the side of the internet is not fully known by the youngsters (Kraut, 2002). Furthermore, there are several websites that exist on the internet that do not have any restrictions in terms of people who are allowed to view the content that is available on those websites. Children can intentionally visit pornographic websites and often suffer the effects of having been exposed to the unsolicited pornographic material (Larose, Eastin, and Gregg, 2001).

Introduction of the internet at schools and homes has often raised fears around the issues of security, confidentiality and abuse (Valcke et al. 2006). School children and young people encounter a range

of risks on the internet relating to communication. Making friends online has attracted particular attention as a risky behaviour. The internet can therefore be seen as a threat to the youth because of its ability to provide both safe and unsafe content (Livingstone and Helsper2007).

The Interval of time that the learners spend on the internet on daily or weekly basis could be recognised to the point that they accomplish various activities on the internet. In a situation where internet access is closely controlled and users are often under very close management, learners could feel restricted and thus be obliged to limit their internet use. In order for one to obtain the replication of the length of time that learners spend surfing the internet, a sense of balance should be struck between the time spent at school, at home or at internet cafes. (Mayayise2008).

The study of Papastergiou and Solomonidou (2005) revealed that the internet was more used or accessed by the youths at homes than at school. This result suggests that learners feel more comfortable accessing the internet in places where they are not under constant supervision. The results also revealed that boys were found to use the internet more often outside school than girls. In terms of frequency, boys were found to use the internet more on a daily basis than girls. The internet was not only accessed from home but was also accessed at internet cafe. Internet use outside school by boys was focused mainly on entertainment-related activities and web-creation. The girls used the internet outside school to find information about beauty contests since this is an area of interest amongst girls in general. The boys proved to be highly motivated by the use of the internet because they started using the internet to develop web pages which is very good creativity.

2.2. Social Impact of Internet Use

Internet use has significant social impact among the youths. This is supported by results of an investigation in the United States of America by Gross (2004) which established that there was a common perception amongst the parents that successive internet use resulted in children growing isolated from other people. Furthermore, the survey discovered that frequent use of the internet was seen to cause a decrease in the overall well-being of the youngsters and a decrease in social network. Moreover, the internet was also perceived to create an environment whereby youngsters could easily quit their social or emotional bonds with local friends because of the relationships that they have established on-line with strangers (Kraut et al., 2002 as cited in Gross, 2004). This suggests that internet use, if not controlled, can have negative social impact among the youths in the society.

3. Research Methodology

This section discusses the methodology used in this study. Particularly, it explains research design, population and sampling procedure, validity of research instruments and data analysis procedures used to investigate on the influence of internet use on college learners' social and academic obligations in Arusha City.

3.1 Research Design

The study employed correlational research design to determine existing relationships between the rate of internet use and college students involvement in academic and social obligations.

3.2 Population and Sampling Techniques

The study was conducted in Arusha City which has several teacher training colleges. Of these, five were randomly sampled with a total of 164 students who participated by filling the questionnaire.

3.3 Validity and Reliability

Expert judgment approach was used to determine the validity of the research instrument. An expert critically looked at research questions that guided this study with corresponding questionnaire items in the questionnaire before the actual collection of data and gave necessary recommendations for further improvement. Reliability of the questionnaire instrument was tested by the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The total number of items was 20 under three major variables namely Social Obligations, Academic Obligations and Internet Use. Table 1 indicates Reliability of the variables ranging between 0.636 and 0.703 meaning that the questionnaire was reliable to be used as source of data from the field.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis of the Questionnaire

SN	Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Social Obligation	7	0.636
2	Academic Obligation	6	0.638
3	The Rate of Internet Use	7	0.703

4. Analysis, Presentation and Discussion of Findings

In this section, findings are presented and discussed in the light of existing literature in order to give necessary recommendations. Presentation was guided by four research questions which are (1) Is there significant difference between the rate of internet use and the rate of involvement in academic obligations by college students? (2) Is there significant difference between the rate of internet use and the rate of involvement in social obligations by college students? (3) Is there significant difference in the rate of internet use by college students categorized according to gender and age? (4) Is there significant relationship between the rate of internet use and participation in social and academic obligations by college students? In order to answer these research questions, respondents rated items in the questionnaire with responses ranging from between Strongly Disagree (1) Disagree (2), Agree (3) and Strongly Agree (4). The mean score of responses was interpreted by the following scale:

Means Score	Category	Interpretation
3.50-4.00	Strongly Agree	Very High
2.50-3.49	Agree	High
1.50-2.49	Disagree	Low
1.00-1.49	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

1. What is the rate of student's involvement in internet use, academic obligations and social obligations?

This question was analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics in terms of mean scores and standard deviations. Table 2, 3 and 4 indicate the rate of students' involvement in internet use, academic and social obligations.

Access to Internet

As Table 2 indicates, students agreed that they access most of study materials from the internet ($M=3.1220$, $SD=.94499$). This implies that internet is a useful tool for students to secure materials for academic purposes and is supported by Papanis (2010) who maintained that students realize that the internet has greatly simplified their learning, improved their academic performance, and motivated their involvement in research, studies, personal and group activities through the online teaching forums and new innovative teaching and learning techniques. Respondents also agreed that their mobile phones have access to internet ($M=2.8720$, $SD=1.02218$), their close friends spend most of their time over the internet ($M=2.7683$, $SD=.93071$) and that apart from college computers they access internet through other sources ($M=2.7683$, $SD=1.01883$). This suggests that students have multiple sources to access internet, something which makes them updated with both academic and other types of information.

Table 2: The Rates of Internet Use

SN	Item/ Statement	Mean	Std Dev	Interpretation
1.	I access most of study materials from the internet	3.1220	.94499	Agree
2.	My mobile phone has access to internet	2.8720	1.02218	Agree
3.	My close friends spend most of their time over the internet	2.7683	.93071	Agree
4.	Apart from college computers, I access internet through other sources	2.7683	1.01883	Agree
5.	I feel very uncomfortable when I spend a day without internet use	2.6037	1.11663	Agree
6.	A day cannot pass without accessing internet	2.4695	1.04161	Disagree

Finally, students agreed that they feel uncomfortable when they spend a day without internet ($M=2.6037$, $SD=1.11663$). This implies that students consider access to internet as something important in their daily life. Students, however disagreed that a day cannot pass without accessing internet ($M=2.4695$, $SD=1.04161$). This suggests that even though their mobile phones have access to internet, sometimes they spend a day without access to internet.

Academic Obligations

Students indicated agreement to all six items that measured their involvement in academic obligations. Particularly, they agreed that they come to class on time ($M=3.3841$, $SD=.81699$), their academic performance is quite good ($M=3.3476$, $SD=.78008$), they meet academic obligations on time ($M=3.2988$, $SD=.80015$), they fulfil individual assignments on time ($M=3.2927$, $SD=.75920$), their participation in group assignment is adequate ($M=3.2927$, $SD=.80623$) and that their group members do not complain about their non-participation ($M=2.5915$, $SD=1.15016$). This suggests that even though students spend most of their time on internet, the use of internet does not hinder them from academic performance but rather it supports their academic activities.

Table 3: Academic Obligations

SN	Item/ Statement	Mean	Std Dev	Interpretation
1.	I come to class on time	3.3841	.81699	Agree
2.	My academic performance is quite good	3.3476	.78008	Agree
3.	I meet academic obligations on time	3.2988	.80015	Agree
4.	I fulfil my individual assignments on time	3.2927	.75920	Agree
5.	My participation in group assignments is adequate	3.2927	.80623	Agree
6.	My group members do not complain about my non-participation	2.5915	1.15016	Agree

Students' involvement in social obligations was measured by seven items of which students indicated agreement. Particularly, students agreed that their social relations with neighbours is good ($M=3.3476$, $SD=.81093$), they fulfil family obligations on time ($M=3.1524$, $SD=.87637$), they participate in social affairs in the neighbourhood ($M=3.1280$, $SD=.81516$), they actively participate in family social affairs ($M=3.0793$, $SD=.87910$), they spend considerable time with family members ($M=2.9451$, $SD=.90840$), they socialize with their siblings/ children/ wife/ husband ($M=2.8232$, $SD=1.00877$) and there are no complains about their non-participation in family affairs ($M=2.6890$, $SD=1.01566$). This suggests that, much as students spend much of their time over the internet, they still have time to fully participate in family affairs.

Table 4: Social Obligations

SN	Item/ Statement	Mean	Std Dev	Interpretation
1.	My social relations with neighbours is quite good	3.3476	.81093	Agree
2.	I fulfil family obligations on time	3.1524	.87637	Agree
3.	I participate in social affairs in the neighbourhood	3.1280	.81516	Agree
4.	I actively participate in family social affairs	3.0793	.87910	Agree

5.	I spend considerable time with family members	2.9451	.90840	Agree
6.	I socialize with my siblings/ children/ wife/ husband	2.8232	1.00877	Agree
7.	There are no complains about my non-participation in family affairs	2.6890	1.01866	Agree

2. Is there significant difference between the rate of internet use and the rate of involvement in Social Obligations?

This research question called for testing of a null hypothesis which states: *There is no significant difference between the rate of internet use and the rate of students' involvement in Social Obligations.* As seen in Table 5, the overall mean score for students' use of internet was 2.6655 (Std. Dev = .60556) meaning that students generally agreed that they use internet in their day to day life. The general mean score of students' involvement in Social Obligation was 3.0235 (Std. Dev = .50768) meaning that students equally agreed that they actively involved in social obligations. The Sig. of 0.00 in Table 6, which is lesser than the critical value (0.05) indicates that the mean score difference is statistically significant, therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and maintain that there is a significant difference between the rate of internet use (M=2.6655, Std. Dev.= .60556) and the rate of involvement in social obligations (M=3.0235). This means that students use much of their time in social obligations than in internet use.

Table 5: Paired Samples Statistics for Internet Use and Social Obligations

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Internet Use	2.6655	164	.60556	.04729
	Social Obligations	3.0235	164	.50768	.03964

Table 6: Paired Samples Test between Internet Use and Social Obligations

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	INTERNETUSE – SOCIAL	-.35801	.65923	.05148	-.45966	-.25637	-6.955	163	.000

3. Is there significant difference between the rate of internet use and the rate of involvement in Academic Obligations?

This research question called for testing of a null hypothesis which states: *There is no significant difference between the rate of internet use and the rate of students' involvement in Academic Obligations.* As seen in Table 7, the mean score for students' use of internet was 2.6655 (Std. Dev = .60556) meaning that students generally agreed that they use internet in their day to day life. The

mean score of Academic Obligations was 3.0235 (Std. Dev = .50768) meaning that students equally agreed that they actively involved in social obligations, though the mean score for academic obligation was higher than that of internet use. The Sig. of 0.00 in Table 8, which is lesser than the critical value (0.05) indicates the mean score difference is statistically significant, therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and maintain that there is a significant difference between the rate of internet use (M=2.6655, Std. Dev.= .60556) and the rate of involvement in Academic Obligations (M=3.0212). This means that students use much of their time in academic obligations than in internet use.

Table 7: Paired Samples Statistics for Internet Uses and Academic Obligations

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	INTERNETUSE	2.6655	164	.60556	.04729
	ACADEMIC	3.2012	164	.51477	.04020

Table 8: Paired Samples Test for Internet Use and Academic Obligations

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	INTERNETUSE - ACADEMIC	-.53571	.67653	.05283	-.64003	-.43140	-10.141	163	.000

4. Is there significant relationship between the rate of internet use and participation in social and academic obligations by college students?

This was a major research question in this study, seeking to establish the influence of internet use on students' participation in social and academic obligations. In order to establish this kind of relationship, it was necessary to test a null hypothesis which states: *There is no significant relationship between the rate of internet use and students participation in social and academic obligations by college students.*

Table 9: Correlations between Internet Use and Academic and Social Obligation

		Social Obligation	Academic Obligation	Students' Rate of Internet Use
Social Obligation	Pearson Correlation	1	.392**	.309**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	164	164	164
Academic Obligation	Pearson Correlation	.392**	1	.279**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	164	164	164
Students' Rate of Internet Use	Pearson Correlation	.309**	.279**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	164	164	164

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

This hypothesis was tested by Pearson Product Moment Correlational Coefficient. As seen in Table 9, there is a significant relationship between the rate of internet use and students involved in academic and social obligations with the sig of 0.00. This leads us to reject the null hypothesis and maintain that there is a significant relationship between the rate of internet use and students' participation in social and academic obligations.

Academic and Social Obligations

Particularly, the analysis yielded a positive correlation between Social Obligation and Academic Obligation (Pearson Correlation .392, Sig. 0.000). Since this kind of relationship is positive, it implies that the more social obligation increases, the more academic obligation of students increases. This means that those students who actively participate in social obligations, they also actively participate in academic affairs. This finding has tangible implications to educators in higher learning institutions. Educators therefore, need to inculcate in the mind of the learners the importance of participation in social obligations as this positively influences their active participation in academic affairs as well, leading to success in their studies.

Internet Use and Social Obligations

The analysis also yielded a positive correlation between the Rate of Internet Use and Social Obligation (Pearson Correlation .309, Sig. 0.000). Since this kind of relationship is positive, it implies that the more Internet use increases, the more social obligation increases. This means that those students who actively use internet, they also actively participate in Social Obligations in their society. Thus, the use of internet influences students to participate in social obligations in their particular societies.

Internet Use and Academic Obligations

The analysis also yielded a positive correlation between the Rate of Internet Use and Academic Obligations (Pearson Correlation .279, Sig. 0.000). Since this kind of relationship is positive, it implies that the more Internet use increases, the more academic obligation increases. This means that those students who actively use internet, they also actively participate in academic affairs. Thus, the use of internet influences students to participate in academic affairs in their particular colleges.

5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This part gives summary of results and discussions in this study. The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of internet use on college learners' social and academic obligations in Arusha city, Tanzania in order to give necessary recommendations. The study was guided by four research questions and the following conclusions and recommendations were reached:

1. Students under investigation access most of study materials from the internet. They have multiple sources to access internet, something which makes them updated with both academic and other types of information. They feel uncomfortable when they spend a day without internet. They consider access to internet as something important in their daily life.

This suggests that even though their mobile phones have access to internet, sometimes they spend a day without access to internet. Based on this conclusion, it is recommended that educational institutions should provide sufficient access to internet so that learners may have full access to internet for both academic and social affairs.

2. The use of internet does not hinder students from academic activities but rather it supports their academic activities. Much as they spend much of their time over the internet, they still have time to fully participate in both academic and social affairs. Their social relations with neighbours is good, they fulfil family obligations on time, they participate in social affairs in the neighbourhood, they actively participate in family social affairs, they spend considerable time with family members, they socialize with their siblings/ children/ wife/ husband and there are no complains about their non-participation in family. Therefore, educators should keep on advising learners to strike the balance between internet use and participation in academic and social obligations.
3. There is a significant difference between the rate of internet use and the rate of involvement in social obligations. Students use much of their time in social obligations than in internet use. Furthermore, there is a significant difference between the rate of internet use and the rate of involvement in Academic Obligations. Students use much of their time in academic obligations than in internet use.
4. Finally, there is interrelationship among variables in question. Particularly, those students who actively participate in social obligations, they also actively participate in academic affairs. With this conclusion, it is recommended that lecturers should encourage learners to participate in social responsibilities as these increases their participation in academic affairs. The more Internet use increases, the more social obligation increases. Therefore, those students who actively use internet, they also actively participate in Social Obligations in their society. Those students who actively use internet, they also actively participate in academic affairs. Thus, the use of internet influences students to participate in academic and social affairs in their particular colleges. Therefore, students should be encouraged to use internet as this increases their rate of participation in academic and social affairs.

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