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Internet Usage and Academic Performance of Rural and Urban Adolescents in Coimbatore District

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ABSTRACT

Internet use increased rapidly in the first decade of the twenty-first century and it is keep growing day by day. Internet usage is more frequent among urban adolescents than rural adolescents.So both urban and rural adolescent Internet users have developmental differences in various skills. Hence a survey based study is made in Coimbatore district to identify developmental difference of over-all academic and class room performance among rural and urban adolescent Internet users.Complete enumeration of a larger sample size of six hundred students with equal representation of rural and urban adolescentage group of 14-17 years studying in class IX, X and XI standard were chosen randomly from four schools located at Coimbatore district. It was found from the study that there were developmental differences of academic performance among both rural and urban adolescent Internet users.

KEYWORDS Internet uses, adolescents, skill development,rural and urban area

Introduction:

The Internet is seen as the most dynamic mass media in present century. Its interactive nature has attracted adolescents from all walks of life. Unlike its predecessors like the TV and radio, the Internet is also a storehouse of knowledge providing access to huge pile of information. The number of adolescents independently using the Internet for self-directed activities is continually increasing.It became evident that through the adolescent's engagement with the Internet they have developed an in-depth understanding of the different uses of the tool for different purposes. The Internet is also an inseparable part of today's education system. Now a days the adolescent student increasingly depends on the Internet for their academic purposes (Salman, 2010).

Internet allows adolescent student to broaden their academic experience, access important information and communication with others. This is a universal fact that the use of Internet has a great impact on the student's academic achievement. The opportunities, which the Internet can offer in the sphere of education, are really unique. Internet is a relatively new channel for students and contains vast quantities of information that vary a great deal regarding its contents, aim, target group, reliability etc. In present days progress in the field of the Internet is bringing about progress in the field of education (Chapman, 2002).

Internet enables a bilateral flow of information between students and teachers. Students can now assume an active role in their learning, rather than a passive one, and Internet can act as a supplementary resource to the teacher's instruction. Students can search for information on their own and make active decisions about how to use it. Emails, instant messaging, chats, forums, and message boards are changing modes of communication within the classroom, as well as ease of interaction. The Internet allows communication outside standard school hours. Students who are shy or uncomfortable speaking up in traditional classroom settings can interact with fellow students, and ask questions of instructors via Internet. Both students and teachers are expected to be more technologically proficient in the age of Internet (Hart, 2011).

In our country we can see clear tendencies of increased concentration of information flows to urban and central areas than semi urban and rural areas. Urban and central cities are more strongly associated with the availability of the highest speed levels of Internet service than population density. In general, rural communities have less Internet facilities than metro communities. Rural areas face more obstacles in accessing the Internet than urban areas. Rural areas, however, may be at a disadvantage in reaping the benefits of this growth because rural households are still less likely to subscribe to the Internet than the urban households. Expansion of Internet access in rural areas is facilitated mainly by arrangements for public use, such as community service centres, Internet kiosks or multipurpose community tele centres. Most of the rural adolescents access Internet facilities in Community Service Centres. They need to travel a long distance to reach a Common service centre for Internet connection. There are no alternative Internet access facilities for them thereby the resulting in difference of academic performance among both rural and urban Internet users (Vikas, 2012).

Hence this study was planned with the following objectives:

Objectives of the Study:

- To study the in fluence of Internet on overall academic performance of the selected adolescents
- To find out the efficacy of Internet on class room performance of the selected adolescents

Hypotheses:

- There is no significant difference in over-all academic performance of rural and urban adolescent Internet users
- There is no significant difference in classroom performance of rural and urban adolescent Internet users

Material and methods:
The area undertaken to conduct the present study were the four secondary schools from both rural and urban area in Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu.Six hundred adolescent boys and girls were considered as sample who were in the age range of 14-17 years studying in class IX, X and XI standard of the higher secondary schools. Two schools from each rural and urban area were taken.One hundred and fifty students from each school were selected to collect data. A questionnaire was developed and collected necessary data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The findings of the study are discussed below.

1. Internet use and academic performance of adolescents:
The academic performance is how well someone does during their academics. This means, how well they did with school and all the activities that go along with it. That academic performance generally refers to how well a student is accomplishing his or her tasks and studies. There are number of factors affecting student's academic performance.Internet is one of the major factors affecting the academic performance of students. The following table illustrates the Internet use and academic performance of selected adolescents

Table No. 1. Internet use and academic performance of adolescents

Sl. No.	Statement	Rural N:300			Urban N:300		
		Girls N:150 (%)	Boys N:150 (%)	Total (%)	Girls N:150 (%)	Boys N:150 (%)	Total (%)
1	Developed and improved knowledge	70	75	73	75	80	78
2	Could to get educational information	75	70	73	82	88	85
3	Could clarify doubt	70	75	73	88	80	84
4	Improved performance in academic areas	62	70	66	75	80	78
5	Developed language skill	60	72	66	77	84	81
7	Increased reading skill	50	55	53	60	65	63
11	Helped to do school work	45	54	50	65	70	68
10	Improved vocabulary	40	45	43	65	70	68
9	Developed numerical skill	32	46	39	65	67	66
6	Able to learn/use new words	25	38	28	70	75	73
8	Improved spelling and comprehension	20	29	25	62	70	66
12	Increased self-regulation in learning	21	27	24	50	55	53
13	Promotion of literary verbal and non-verbal skills	20	25	23	60	64	62

It is heartening to observe from the above table that more than 70 per cent of respondents from both rural and urban area said that they developed and improved academic knowledge by using Internet. More than 70 and 80 per cent of rural and urban respondents expressed that they could get educational information and able to clarify their doubts by accessing the Internet.After using the Internet more than 60 per cent of rural and around 80 per cent of urban respondents have improved performance in academic areas and also developed their language skill. Here both the rural and urban respondent's developmental differences are 20 per cent.More than 50 per cent of rural and 60 per cent of urban adolescents expressed that Internet helped them to increase reading skill and they also developed ability to do school work accurately in time.Around 40 per cent of rural adolescents expressed that they improved vocabulary and developed numerical skill after accessing Internet. Their responses were less than 50 per cent because they could not able to use Internet regularly and they need to travel a lot to get the high speed Internet facility. But for the same urban adolescents responses were higher than 60 per cent.It is disheartening to note that due to the inadequate Internet facilities in the school, only 20 per cent of rural respondents improved word spelling, comprehension, increased self-regulation in learning and promoted literary verbal and non-verbal skills by using Internet but for the same academic performances urban adolescent's responses were higher than 60 per cent.

2. Internet use and improvement of classroom performance:
A class room is a place in a school or college where a particular subject is taught together to a group of pupils or students. The effective way of Internet users can help to improve adolescent's classroom performance. It has the potential to improve their quality of education. Hence the following table reveals Internet uses and better classroom performance of the selected adolescents

Table No. 2. Internet use and development of classroom performance

Sl. No.	Statement	Rural N:300			Urban N:300		
		Girls N:150 (%)	Boys N:150 (%)	Total (%)	Girls N:150 (%)	Boys N:150 (%)	Total (%)
1	Power to do academic work with group	55	60	58	65	70	68
2	Power of sharing academic problems and solution	50	56	53	60	64	62
3	Able to work/ learn cooperatively in class	42	50	46	55	60	58
4	Able to learn difficult subject matter	42	45	44	60	67	58
5	Capacity to do crafting/ extra-curricular activities	35	48	42	55	61	58
6	Capacity to do experiential exercises	40	42	41	55	60	58
7	Helped in creative writing	35	44	40	50	56	53
8	Able to get good marks in exam	30	32	31	55	67	61
9	Developed potentiality to do class assignment	29	32	31	57	65	61
10	Able to participate in school competitions	27	30	29	52	60	56

The above mentioned table reveals that more than 50 and 60 per cent of rural and urban boys and girls respectively developed the power to do academic work with group and improved the quality to share academic problems, solution and knowledge by using the Internet. More than 40 and 50 per cent of them (rural and urban) agreed that by using Internet they were able to work and learn cooperatively in class, developed ability to learn difficult subject matter,improved their quality to do crafting and extra-curricular activities and upgraded their capability to do experiential exercises and creative writing. Only thirty one per cent of rural respondents were able to get good marks in exam and also similar per cent of them developed potentiality to do class assignment appropriately after accessing the Internet. For the same class room

performance urban respondents were ahead of rural respondents (61%) and both rural and urban student's developmental differences are more than 30 per cent. It is disheartening to note that due to the lack of Internet facility only 29 per cent of rural respondents expressed that they developed confidence level to participate in school competitions by using the Internet but in case of urban respondents the responses were more than 50 per cent.

Conclusion

It is clear from the findings that the academic outcome such as over-all academic performance and better class room performance of urban adolescents were better-off than rural adolescents.So it is essential to improve academic performance among rural adolescent Internet users also. It is required to arrange for more opportunities to use Internet for them. Hence, it is suggested to the Government and private kiosks to arrangefor easily available high speed Internet facilities for rural Internet users.

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