



Role of Policy in the Management of Smartphones among Undergraduates in Nigeria Higher Institutions of Learning

Oduroye, Ayorinde P*¹, Sarumi, Jerry Abayomi², Adegunwa, Olajide³, Enosegbe, Daniel⁴

^{1,3,4}Computer Science Department, Caleb University, Imota, Lagos

²Lagos State University of Science and Technology, Ikorodu, Lagos

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ABSTRACT

Smartphones have become a necessity in today’s world. Majority of our undergraduate students make use of their smartphones to take notes in their classes, do assignments and other class related works. Studies and observations have shown that students use their smartphones for other activities like online frauds, visit to sites that can corrupt their minds and even waste their precious time on video watching, streaming and downloading of inappropriate materials and films that are injurious to them which eventually have a negative impact on their studies. In view of the aforementioned, the formulation of policies to guide the management of smartphones by undergraduate students in our higher institution of learning is therefore very germane at this time.

It has been postulated that Policy makers should ban the use of smartphones among the undergraduate students in our higher institutions of learning but some other concerns are of the opinion that it should not be banned but regulated. Customized tabs with WIFI capabilities should be provided to enable students to go online for their research activities and classes thereby restricting them to their academics and prohibiting them from accessing forbidden sites. Institutional customized tabs will block some harmful materials and prevent them from unnecessary sites. Institutions should also allocate fixed megabytes to students for their educational programs. This will inculcate discipline into the minds of the students and make them to use their online allocations for necessary things.

Corresponding Author:
Oduroye, Ayorinde P

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INTRODUCTION

There is a concern which has resulted in various debates among educators whether smartphones should be allowed in the classroom or not. Studies and observations have looked through the pros and cons of smartphones to ascertain if they are assisting or hindering the process of education. The results showed that there are more advantages than disadvantages. A survey that was conducted on students and their smartphones found out that 95% of secondary and high school students have smartphones, and most of these smartphones were utilized for educational purposes. It has

been advocated that, a number of educational resources that can assist students to achieve success in their subjects are available through the internet for students’ use (<https://macsources.com>). For smartphones to be used in higher institutions of learning there must be policies guiding the use of the devices. It was the desire of this paper to look into the advantages and disadvantages and then come up with some policies that can be used to manage the benefits of smartphone for academic purposes especially among undergraduates in Nigeria Higher Institutions of learning.



Figure 1: Smartphones in the hands of students

Source: <https://www.google.com/imgres?>

The students of this generation are blessed with digital devices and internet to aid their learning experiences. There are numerous digital materials that are available on the internet for learning; however, studies and observations have shown that students use their smartphones for appropriate and inappropriate uses which has generated a lot of concerns among parents and educators. This study will therefore look into the use of smartphones by the undergraduate students in Nigeria Higher Institution of learning and examine the role of policy in the management of its use and other digital devices for optimal learning. This study assessed the role of policy in the management of smartphones among undergraduates in Nigeria Higher Institutions of Learning, while the objectives are stated below:

In an online magazine named *Investopedia* of March 20, 2022, Frankenfield, Jake gave a working definition of what a Smartphone is. He said it is a “Mobile Phone and Computer In One Device”. It can be seen as a handheld electronic device that provides a connection to a cellular network. Smartphones were originally meant to allow individuals to communicate via phone and email, but due to a lot of improvements and upgrading, smartphones now allow people to access the internet, play games, and send text messages in addition to making phone calls and sending emails. The introduction of smartphones dramatically altered the telecommunications sector. These additional functionality of the smartphones are what the students employed in their studies.

A study by Wali and Omaid (2020) on *The Use of Smartphones as an Educational Tool in the Classroom: Lecturers’ Perceptions*. It was published in *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (iJET)* 15(16):238. The paper studied the lecturers’ perceptions

toward the use of smartphone as an educational tool in classroom. It also investigated the benefits and perceived barriers of smartphone use by students in classroom. A quantitative research design was employed and data from a random sample of 50 lecturers of Kandahar University in Southern Afghanistan were collected using a questionnaire. The findings showed that the lecturers perceived the use of smartphone by the students in classrooms to be beneficial for students in their learning in various ways.

Mohammadi, Sarvestani and Nouroozi. (2020). *Mobile Phone Use in Education and Learning by Faculty Members of Technical-Engineering used Concurrent Mixed Methods Design* to study the behavior of a group of students to know the effect of Smartphones on their studies and health. It was found out that students that planned their time well and not spent too much on their phones did better in their academics and also did not experience depression unlike those who were very addicted to their phones. Lepp, Barkley & Karpinski (2014) suggested that college students are the most rapid adopters of cell phone technology and research suggested that high frequency cell phone use may be influencing the students’ health and behavior. Their study looked at the Relationship between Cell Phone Use, Academic Performance, Anxiety, and Satisfaction with Life in College Students. Their findings were published in *Computers in Human Behavior*, 31, 343-350. The study investigated the relationships between total cell phone use (N = 496) and texting (N = 490) on Satisfaction with Life (SWL) in a large sample of college students. The relationship was mediated by assessment of academic performance (GPA) and anxiety. The results indicated that the cell phone use and texting models had good overall fit while Cell phone use/texting was negatively related to GPA and positively related to anxiety; in turn, GPA was

positively related to SWL while anxiety was negatively related to SWL. Their findings have added to the debate about student cell phone use, and how increased use may negatively impact academic performance, mental health, and subjective well-being or happiness.

Lepp et al (2014) observed that Cell phones or mobile phones have become a very important part of our daily lives, as a result of this, it has been very difficult to imagine living our lives without a cell phone as most of our work is done using cell phones. Everything has its pros and cons and mobile phones have its positives and negatives. A study on the sleep habit of Japanese students and the use of mobile phone has been reported

((<https://myessaypoint.com/positive-and-negative-impact-of-cell-phones>); Kawada, Kataoka, Tsuji, Nakade, Krejci, Noji, Takeuchi, Harada (2017)). The study showed that the students that put their smartphones near their beds did not have quality sleep and they show emotional blow out like anger, irritation and depression. In essence, it is not good for students to put their smartphones near their beds when sleeping.

Ashley (2018) in her article “Spending too much time on your phone? Behavioral science has an app for that” and was published at <https://theconversation.com> visualized that “Technology is meant to be addictive. And a society that is “mobile dependent” has a hard time spending even minutes away from their app-enabled smartphones”. She is also of the opinion that “We’re squandering increasing amounts of time distracted by our phones and the consequences of this is that it is taking a serious toll on our mental and physical well-being because according to many research works excessive technology use is linked to depression, accidents and even death

POSITIVE EFFECTS OF SMARTPHONE ON STUDENTS

Improve the ability to manage time

Organize their study time so that they can be more punctual in learning and set the priority scale in doing their assignments. With the help of smartphones, students can become the best students in learning and improve various aspects of their lives through proper time management (Takahiro et al., 2017 and Whillans, 2018). Time flies with the gadgets in hands when one has to press this and that, however, with the smartphone one can still track one’s time. For example, deadlines can be set on the smartphones with an alarm accompanying it; this can help one to complete a task at the designated time, thereby managing time efficiently. For instance, students can set the time on their smartphones to wake them up on time for school in the morning and can also set a text alert as a reminder to do something on a certain day.

Communication

The very first positive point of mobile phones is communication. Internet has made the world to be a global village and has made communication between individuals and group of people possible. It has also brought good communication systems into businesses which has improved business transactions.

Entertainment

Mobile phones have become a source of unlimited entertainment. Smartphones have come into existence which not only help in making calls but also help to stay entertained by allowing one to play games, listen to music, watch films on You tube, tik tot and lots of other stuff.

Improves Knowledge

Before the advent of the internet, students used to look up to parents, teachers, and books to get more knowledge to their think tank but today, through smartphones, students can explore new things in an enjoyable manner rather than going through whole books to find the desired information. They can also get access to any book or educational site within seconds and at any time of the day. Apart from the aforementioned, students can use their smartphones to record the class lectures and photograph the instructor’s notes.

Learning out of the Class

Students no longer need to wait for their computer class to use the lab in order to find out things. They now can check things from anywhere using the internet on their smartphones. Like this, learning takes place both inside and outside the classroom. Through a smartphone, they have access to libraries as well. Hence, no more searching for books in physical libraries; type the book you want, and it will appear in front of you within no time.

Students can also use websites to acquire material for their studies, in addition to the applications that assist them with their assignments or homework. For example, students can benefit from the case studies available online. Furthermore, we also now have access to the editing programs like Grammarly, which also have mobile versions that assist students in becoming better essay writers, so they can even create reports on their smartphones. Moreover, social media groups enable the students to connect with other scholars. This way, they can interact and learn from one another’s experiences.

Helpful in Locating Students Movement

Smartphones have built-in GPS technology, with this, parents can always monitor the movement of their children and see exact location they are but the GPS location indication must be switched on.

Negative Effects of Mobile Phones on Students.

Distraction and Lack of focus: The virtual world the students view on their mobile phones is highly distracting and can make them not to be focus.



Figure 2: Students’ concentrating more on their Smartphones

Source: <https://theconversation.com/spending-too-much-time-on-your-phone-behavioral-science-has-an-app-for-that-105025>

Risk to health and accidents

Research studies have also claimed that mobile phones have a negative impact on health of an individual especially when mobile phones are being used for long hours daily, this might lead to serious health issues like poor vision - constant staring at mobile phones affects eyesight and eye health which can lead to eye discomfort and damaged eyesight. Reports of been made on various accidents that occurred on campuses which had caused a lot of injuries or headlong collisions with others while talking on mobile phones and walking, even students do enter into the drainage or hit their foot on stones or hard objects and fall. Records also have it that a number of serious accidents have occurred while people were driving and talking on the mobile phone while giving half attention to the mobile call and half attention to their driving.

Sleep loss

Disrupted sleep pattern due to lot of time spent on the smartphone.

Poor academic performance:

Many researches have been done on the use of smartphone for academic exercises, it was found out that excessive smartphone use in the classrooms can obstruct academic performance (Lepp, Barkley and Karpinski (2014) found the negative effects of excessive smartphone use on students' academic performance through decreased GPA scores.

Truly, mobile phones can help students in studies if only they use them wisely. Majority of the students become additive to their mobile phones and are found playing games, chatting with their friends and watching movies and other stuff while they are supposed to be studying or busy with their academic works. If students are busy keeping their eyes on their mobile phones at all times they won't get time for studying which would lead to poor grades.

Policies for Appropriate and Inappropriate Use of Smartphones on Education Campuses

According to the online dictionary, “policy is a set of ideas or plans that is used as a basis for making decisions,

RECOMMENDATIONS

To be able to manage the use of smartphones and other digital devices for optimal learning experience, the following recommendations were made. Firstly, the institutions of learning need to come up with some policies to guide use of smartphones on campus and in the classrooms. The following policies may be of help:

- Students are not to use their smartphones while walking or trekking on Campus, this is to prevent unwanted accidents.
- Education Institutions of Higher Learning to prove customized Tabs or digital devise for students use. This can only be used for assignments, classwork and acquisition of knowledge from certified sites.

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- There should be allocation of fixed megabytes for each students use. This will discipline the students to use the available data for serious work.
 - Banning of smartphones and other digital devices that are not approved by the institutions’ authority should be banned.
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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Mobile phones have really changed the way of communications and Cell phones are the most used communication tool today. But they are not just limited to communication purposes they are available for many applications. It has been reviewed that the use of smartphone as an educational tool in the classroom is good and can even allow students to study and learn outside the classroom but because students can be tempted to use the smartphone in an inappropriate ways, then there is the need for policy to guide the students in the use of smartphone especially when they are on the campus for their studies. It was also deduced that constant connection to the internet and our constant connection to our phones suggests that there is a gap in bonding with those that we care about, this then lowers the state of happiness. Constant connection to technology undermines happiness, relationships and productivity. This may not be good for the students.

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