MobileTelephones Communicationand Childs' Right Domestication: An Evaluationof Parents' Views and Counter Viewsin Uyo Metropolis, Nigeria.

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Abstract

The study examines development communications by mobile phones and child right domestication by evaluating the views of parents in Uyo metropolis in Akwa Ibom State. The main objectives of the study are to: find out the outstanding gender group of parents consenting to the use of mobile telephones communication by children in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State; identify the aspect of mobile telephone communication services that parents prefer children to patronize in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State Nigeria; determine the dominant reason that prompts parents to consent to the use of mobile telephones communication by children in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria; ascertain if there is any specific mode of development the use of mobile telephones communication aid in the implementation of rights of children in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A survey method was applied while questionnaire was used in getting data from 385 parents. Findings indicated that parents especially the female ones allow their children to access mobile phones for game playing rather than for purposes of communication. It was also seen that the use of mobile phones offers less development gains for the children, since the children waste precious moments while fiddling with mobile phones. Recommendations are that parents must not encourage the use of mobile phones by children out of the pressure from their kids. Parents should not succumb to pressure from children in allowing them access to communication gadgets like mobile phones that will turn around to affect children negatively.

***Keywords**: Child, Mobile, Telephones, Patronage, Domestication, Rights, Parents, Views*

Introduction and background of the study

Everything communicates. In this perspective, humansand non-humans communicate. This is because communication gets beyond the act of talking, and writing. Communication by human beings applies many devices, including the mobile telephones.

Like any other gadget, the mobile phone is also a tool of communication that can be used for positive and non-positive purposes (Cooke, 2019). Section 39 of the Nigerian Constitution guarantees everybody the right to freedom of expression, to hold opinions, impart ideas and information without interference, while also owning and operating any medium for the dissemination of information. These devices include mobile telephones. The Constitutional provision on the use of communication devices ranging from simple mobile telephones to mega apparatus covers all persons irrespective of age. Through mobile telephones, persons of all ages come across all forms of appropriate and inappropriate messages, images, or texts, and share them to friends or groups. For children, they can find their way to pornography sites and get addicted to it at an early age, changing their perceptions about people. Exchanging improper images can create a debacle that can crash the lives of children for a long time. The technological powers of the mobile telephones arewonderful and are learning tools for children as well. Delay in communication has been crippled by the advent of the mobile telephones.But Aoki and Downes (2003) say that mobile telephoneswere originally created for adults for business use. Srivastava (2005) supports the assertion that mobile telephones were made for use in businessand not for social conversations, though in 2002 the number of mobile phone users worldwide surpassed those of fixed-phone users even in the hands of children.

Allison (2004) attributes the multiplication of mobile telephonestechnology tothe reduced cost,smaller sizes and the pre-paid systems.The author says that, in 1999, 80 percent of children in Norway,90% in the United Kingdom,and 56% in Italy are known to have owned mobile phoneswhile inAustralia 50,000 children between 5 and 9 years of age also owned mobile phones. Carrying a mobile telephone is a child's choice in saving cherished text messages.The mobile phone is a symbol of status for families (Lasco, 2015). The features of the phone, the look and personalized accessories all prove to the standing of the family. It is seen as a trendyornament that satisfies the need for individualization by having choices in mobile wallpaper, ring

tones, phone covers, carry bags and other accessories (Williams & Williams, 2005). Indeed, even the ownership of a mobile phone indicates that one is connected, reachable and in demand. It can also be seen as a symbol of independence from one's family.

As Ling (2003) asserts,the beginning and adoption of the mobile telephone has led to a variety of adjustments in a range of social institutions from peer groups, the families and the schools. In Nigeria, the commencement of the Global System for Mobile communication (GSM) in 2000 affected how people communicated, conducted businesses and even socialized.

The effects of GSM and advancement in mobile and Information Communication Technology (ICT) have also impacted on the education of children as schools have invested in ICT equipment to access the many benefits of the Internet (Adomi & Kpangban, 2010). Schools introduce e-learning to enrich prospectus.Teachers are expected to be computer literate, and know how to utilize the Internet. As beneficial as it may be, mobile phones have been identified as a vast source of interruption for children at primary and secondary levels.Ott (2017) says that many teachers permit students to use their mobile phones when the use is compatible with schoolworkbut struggle to balance their use with the conventions of school practice. A number of schools do not permit mobile phones at all. Some allow limited use for explicit situations.Though mobile phones can be valuable tools for learning, many teachers and school owners fear that children use phones for the wrong things. Gore (2010) says that pupils (children) more likely make use of phones for the wrong things that divert them negatively.A study on parents of young children by Plowman, McParke and Stephen (2012) utilizing reports and observations show that 82 percent of parents in Turkey consented that a child's interactions with mobile phones technology can support four main areas of learning. Plowman et al. list the four main areas as: acquiring operational skills, extending knowledge and understanding of the world, developing dispositions to learning, and understanding the role of technology in daily life.On the other side, the authors presented that 12 percent of parents

argued that a child's health is endangered by an addictive use of technologies such as mobile phones, computers, and game consoles.In the United States, Adams (2011) says that through parental advicein the digital age, advances in computing technologies have hugely enhancededucation, especially, for general literacy and knowledge, skills acquisition and modes of thought that children require. He adds that advances in computing technologies have also hugely multiplied access to information principally for those children who can read. In Nigeria, Onyema (2019) indicates that there are millions of students (children) using mobilephones, but the instructive benefits of this technology are being ignored or misplaced. The use of mobilephones in classrooms is not encouraged in most learning institutions in Nigeria despite the use of mobile phones being widespread. However, Onyema states that considering the growing trend in child education which requiresthe use of modern learning technologies, there is need for stakeholderscomprised ofparents and teachers to embrace the initiative adopted by many countries. Therefore the general purpose of this study is to gather the views of parents to eitheraffirm or counter the use of mobile phonesby children in Akwa Ibom State capital, Uyo in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

On December 5, 2008, the Akwa Ibom State government signed the Child RightsBill into law, intended to protect the Akwa Ibom child from birth to adolescence at 16 years such that the child is afforded the necessary protection and assistance by his parents to assume responsibility. It was assumed that dignity, love and reasons to go on in life begranted to children with as much access to education, healthcare and other basic necessities of life.

Consequently, the Akwa Ibom State government at several fora nationally and internationally stepped further to make children the envy of othersby celebrating most of their birthdays for them and dedicating numerous awards to them.By domesticating the Childs Rights law, the Akwa Ibom child was to be given the right to access information from all the mass media communication tools oftelevision, radio, newspapers and other communication

devicesincluding mobile phones. The parents were tasked with providing information that children can understand and not promotingmaterials that couldharm children. The digital social media space is expansive. There are the positive sites. There are also negative sites, blogs, and websites accessible through mobile phones that are inimical to the aspirations and the development of children (Mathew,2016).Assessing the Child's Rights, Eleonu (2011) remarked that it appears that the law was an open cheque for children to use all media devices unrestricted to end up in reduced parental attention, early marriages, prostitution, acts of violence and several juvenile crimes.Groarke (2014) highlights that the use of cell phones can lead children to engage in inappropriate behaviours sincetexting and sending inappropriate pictures is a growing problem with children. The indecent photographs and video images circulate from phones to phone among children. He maintains that children are known to have access to pornographic sites from their multimedia devices as well as use mobile phones to commit examination malpractices. Considering the growing list of disadvantages, it seems that the provision of mobile phones to children does not amount to any form of child development in the social media age as mobile phones for communication are neither expected to be made part of property for children, nor are children expected to be exposed to mobile telephone communication equipment. Assuming that the law was signed to expand the scope of knowledge of an Akwa Ibom child,the statement of problem is, what happens to the care and protection of children from violent and anti-children development sites by the use of mobile phones which are capable of diverting theirattention from learning.It is therefore the core aspect of this work to investigate the views of parents on the circumstances surrounding the provision of mobile phones to children in the face of dangers inherent in such deeds by parents in Akwa Ibom State.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Find out the outstanding gender group of parents consenting to the use of mobile telephones communication by children in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

2. Identify the aspect of mobile telephone communication services that parents prefer children to patronize in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State Nigeria
3. Determine the dominant reason that prompts parents to consent to the use of mobile telephones communication by children in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria
4. Ascertain if there is anyspecific mode of development the use of mobile telephones communicationaid in the implementation of rights of children in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Research Questions

1. What is the outstanding gender group of parents that consent to the use of mobile telephones communication by children in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State?
2. Which aspect of mobile telephone communication services do parents prefer children to patronize in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?
3. What is the dominant reason thatpromptsparents to consent to the use of mobile telephone communication by children in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State?
4. What specific modes of development has the use of mobile phones communication aided in the implementation of the right of children in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

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Literature Review

Mobile Phones: An Overview

The development of the mobile phone has been driven by the communication needs of people around the world, with the resultant transformation in human communication and interactive relations in society. As Androuldakis (2010) explains, the mobile phone has become a critical component of modern society and a useful communication device that constitutes a vital part of daily life for people around the world. Thus, mobile phone, as an advanced form of communication technology has undergone a series of technological innovation designed and configured to meet the need of modern society. Campbell and Russo (2003) describemobile phone technology as consisting of hardware

handsets used as portable wireless devices with digital convergencefor interactivity. As Rippin, (2005) wrote, the coming of mobile phone has presented an exciting opportunity to know how technology developed to improve the process of human communication behaviour and a figurative technological tool that givesmeaning to daily life of users. It is generally said that mobile technology has become part of every society internationally and the number of users is on the increase day-to-day (Hakoama &Hakoyama, 2011).

This sequence is seen as a blessing to the African continent and to those who never had access to landline telephones because of poor telecommunications infrastructure (Mafirakurewa, 2009). The Pew Research Center (2015) reports that young people form the largest group are users of hardware mobile phones. This development has been seen as a major improvement in the country's telecommunications infrastructure. Gbenga-IIori and Ibiyemi (2010) notethat the acceptance of mobile phones has turned around the poor telecommunications infrastructures through which the majority of the public had no access to telephone lines. As Ntui and Edem, (2011) explain, in Nigeria mobile phones are part of lives, as a means of communication, more than fixed landphones by providingliberty to communicate with one another. Thus, the benefit of adopting mobile phone technologies in Africa as a regional bloc is that more people are now accessible to means of communication. Furthermore, the coming of smart mobile phones has openedup ease of access to mobile device technology. Ericsson Consumer Lab (2013) explains that smartphone possesses the potential to augment access to the communication device in the continent which could provide universal access and connectivity to wider citizens.

Significance of Mobile Phones

Mobile phone as the newest of the new media platform is playing decisive role in people's lives and its uniqueness has become a major interest for investigation, with a view to understanding how people use the device and to what benefit in today's society. Generally, mobile phone serves different purposes and functions

for users, with usage control and freedom, in terms of mobility and time (Oksman, 2010). Second, the use of mobile phone in two distinct forms enhances personal arrangement or management for beneficial purpose such as using clock, alarm, calendar and phonebook, and expressive interaction and social relation such as chatting with family members and friends via short messages.

Third, use of mobile phone privately or publicly shapes a new culture of social interaction and networking. Thus the phrase mobile culture or mobile youth culture hasbecome as expressive form of social change in society (Campbell & Yong,2008). Nowadays, itis extremely common toseechildren having fun with mobile phones of their parents. Parents also feel pleased by their children's skill of using mobile phones,without realizing that there are many disadvantages.Some parents tend to be somewhat more generous; they offer personal cellphones or tablet computers for private use to their children who use themfor playing games and music.

Disadvantages of Mobile Phones toStudents

Health Effect

Mobile phones have a possibility of causing a non-malignant tumour in the brain and ear of the user.Heeks (2008) claims that children consume a greater than 60 per cent of radiation into the brain from mobile hardware devices including mobile phones compared to adults. These days,children are hardly found outside for their sports or games; rather they waste their time on mobile games, which affect their physiological growth and immunity.

Association in Undesirable Things

In the 21st century, the sexual exercises and fierce acts are extensively developing step by step. This is the reason we can see bunches of understudies with cigarettes and medications. This is one of the significant imperfections with the ascent of innovation (Gross, 2000).

Sleepless Nights

Soyemi, Oloruntoba, and Okafor (2015) record that when children end up playing amusements on cell phones, they donot feel the time passing since they focus completely on the diversion. Somechildren play with phones till 2am or 3am.

Sexting

Sexting includes sending sexually provocative pictures or messages. It is a dependable fact that children are barrels of seething hormones, continually finding out about their sexuality (Austin, 2015). Notwithstanding, these self-educated lessons include some significant downfalls. Once a photograph is sent to one child there is the tendency that it can be sent to a majority of children connected by mobile phones (Srivastava, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

Technological Determinism

This study is backed up by the technological determinismtheory in media studies that assumes that a society's level of technology regulates the development of social structure and cultural values. Hauer (2017) says that techno determinism is a theory with an analytical angle of global socio-technical systems, created by an American sociologist, Thorstein Veblen, which states that the improvement of society's cultural values and social structure is driven by the technology it possesses. Technological advancements have become key aspects of influencing change and history. Technological determinism tries to explore how technology has had an impact on human actions and thoughts. Changes in technology are primary sources for changes in society. According to this theory, technology impacts on society like a billiard ball thatswivels everything around.

Family Systems Theory

The family systems theory was introduced by Murray Bowen in 1978.The theoryposits that the patronage of goods and services by individuals cannot be understood in isolation from the family control. Families are systems of interconnected and interdependent

individuals, none of whom can be understood in isolation from the system.

According to Bowen, a family is a system in which each member has a role to play and rules to respect. Members of the system are expected to act and interact in a certain way according to rules, largely determined by either the father or the mother as parents. Within the boundaries of the system, a pattern of behaviour may lead to balance and stability in the family system over a long period of time.

The theory explains that many interventionsthat promote behavior in children are directed by the parents. An analysis of the theory indicates that parents and other adult caregivers dominatethe physical and social elements that impact on the family members by the making of choices ranging from feeding formula to deciding when and how to introduce brands of products to children until they(children) begin to move on their own. This theory further explains that parents and caregivers influence physical activity and inactivity as well as the exerting of influence on technology (mobile phones) patronages and applications.Additionally, parents and caregivers make decisions related to the quality of products brought to the home, the number, the amount and quality of social interactions, the use of electronics, television viewing moments, and the nature of conversations by decidingwho, what, when, where, why and how family members interact, and place tight control on television viewing, playing of video games as well as the pattern of products consumption.Bowen identified four major parenting styles: authoritative, neglectful, permissive, and authoritarian and explained that each style has different characteristics and produces different effects on the children. Accordingly the authoritative parenting is considered the style most conducive to the development of children, as it is characterized by respect for the child, high expectations for achievement, understanding, and support whilethe permissive parent caters to the child's emotional needs without expecting the child to have any responsibility or self-control. In the same vein, the neglectful parenting shows low levels of sensitivity towards the

child and places minimal demands on the child's self-control, effective discipline or established boundariesas much as in the authoritativeparenting, demands maturity from the child without warmth or understanding and compromises on the child's sense of self-regulation.

The two theories are relevant to this research to bring out the views and dominant reasons why parents consent to the use of mobile telephones by children.

The Methodology

The study was carried out using the survey method which is considered an excellent way of measuring the opinion of people within a large population(Babbie, 2010).

Population

The population of Uyo metropolis in Akwa Ibom State as derived from the projected population of the state in theMinistry of Economic Development Statistical Year Book 2016 stands at 413,381 (Ezegwu, 2018).

Sample and Sampling

The sampling of the study was taken from The Slovin's Formula,quite popularly used for determining the sample size for a survey research, in education and social sciences, to compute the population size. The Slovin's Formula is given as follows: n = N/(1+Ne2), where n is the sample size, N is the population size and e is the margin of error to be decided by the researcher. Slovin's formula allows sampling the population with a desired degree of accuracy. Slovin's formula gives the researcher an idea of how large the sample size needs to be to ensure a reasonable accuracy of results. (Ellen, 2018).Using the population of 413, 381, the sample size of 399.61was arrived atandapproximated to 400 parents.

Data Collection

The distribution of thequestionnaire to 400 parentswas done accidentally atsix strategic locations where parents are usually seen in large numbers in any given day. The locations are: the General

Post Office at the center of the city, the Federal secretariat at the Abak Road end, the state civil service secretariat, the University of Uyo Town campus, the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital and the Government House at Wellington Bassey Way end. 400 copies of thequestionnaire were administered but the retrieval rate was 385 being 96 percent of the sample size. The accidental distribution of the questionnaire was based on the availability of the parents either as contractors, workers or retirees at the six locations.

Data Presentation

The data analysis was based on the objectives of the study.

Table 1: The outstanding gender of parents allowing children access to mobile phones

Respondents	Gender Percentage
Male 14437	
Female 241	63
Total 385	100

Source Field survey 2019

In table 1, data collected indicated that out of 385 parents, 144 or 37 percent were male while 241 or 63 percent were female who returned the questionnaire for computation. This indicated that a greater proportion of femaleparents (63%) allow children access to mobile phones than males (37%).

Table 2: The aspects of mobile phones parents allow children to access

Gender	VM	TM	Games	PS	Total	Percentage
Male	42 (11%)	13(3%)	86(22%)	3(1%)	14437	
Female	33(9%))	9(2%)	188(49%)	11(3%)	241	63
Total	75 (20)	22 (5%)	274 (71)	14 (4)	385	100

Source: Field Survey 2019

In table 2, four aspects of mobile phone usage were identified. These are: Voice Messaging(VM), Text Messaging(TM), Games Playing(GP) and Photo Snapping(PS). The data shows that 274 parents or 71 percent agree that they allow children to undertake Games Playing with mobile phones against the least of 14 or 4 percent of parents who allowphoto snapping. With respect to the playing of games, the table shows that female parents (188 or49 percent) offer their phone to children whileonly 86 or 22percent of male parents give out phones to children for the purpose of playing games. This implies that female parents are more indulgent in that regard.

Table 3 Dominant reasons for patronizing use of mobile phones by children

Gender	FS(%)	SL (%)	CP (%)	Total	Percentage
Male	14(4%)	35(9%)	95(24%)	144	37
Female	20(5%)	30(8%)	191(50%)	241	63
Total	34 (9%)	65 (17%)	286 (74%)	385	100

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 3 presents data on the dominant reason why parents allow children to have mobile phones with them. The data shows that the reasons were Family status, (FS), Safety/linkage (SL), and Child Pressure (CP). Out of 385 parents, 286 or 74 percent of parentsindicated that Child Pressure accounted for the dominant reason for giving children mobile phones against 34 or 9percent who chose family status as the reason. This means that most of the parents submit to the pressure of children or resort to pampering the children and allowing the wishes of the children to influence them.

Table 4: Specific Mode of Child Development

Gender	EID(%)	SML(%)	E(%)	Total	%
Male	28(7%)	21(6%)	95(25%)	144	37
Female	50(13%)	41(10%)	150 (39%)	241	63
Total	78(20%)	62(16%)	245(64%)	385	100

Source: Field Survey

In table 4, four modes of child development were identified. These are: Early ICT Drills (EID), Social Media Link (SML), andEntertainment (BE). 245 or64 percent out of 385 parents agreed that children gain Basic Education and entertainment in using mobile phones while others stand for early ICT drills and social media linkage. The data shows that with minimal percentages from all the modes of development, children acquire less in early ICT drills and social media links from using mobile phones but much in entertainment in playing games.

Discussion of Findings

Findings are discussed based on the research questions earlier raised. In research question 1, the data on table 1 shows that out of 385 respondents or parents 241 or 63 percentage of female parents support the patronage of mobile phones by children. This means that male parents refuse their children the privilegeof using mobile phonescontrary to what the female parents do. It shows that the female parents fall into this categoryof parents giving mobile phones to children since they stay most of the timewith the children unlike the male parents who do not usually stay around with the children. The outcome of the differences between the female and the male parents pattern of allowing children to use mobile phone can be a product of African culture , where mothers tend totakethe children along to farms or carry them along in house-keeping whereas the male parents rarely offer their children opportunities of learning from their actions and behaviours. This positively affects the level of active communication, and limits development and interaction beyond culture. This finding agrees with Shutee's (2011) position that"male parents have limited influence over the child's peer relationships to leverage factors for the benefit of the child, including their academic achievement."

On research question 2, the findings indicated that out of 385 parents, 86 male or 22 percentage of them allow children the access to mobile phones for playing games.On the reverse, 188female parents or 49 percentage of the parents allow children to make use of mobile phonesfor playing games. This means that of

all other aspects of phone usage and benefits, the parents hardly allow their children except on lighter aspects of game playing instead of text messaging, voice messaging or photo snapping. There are lots of things to think about when parents consider buying children mobile phones. Some parents want children to have a phone so they can call or be reached at any time. Lynch (2014) has it that children often enjoy playing games and watching cartoons using mobile phones since entertainment apps are most popular to the children.

Research Question 3 looks at the dominant reason parents allow their children to have access to mobile phones. The analysis shows that 286 or 74% percent of the parents accept that pressure from the children force them to give them mobile phones as against safety and linkage or family status. This means that the parents do not voluntarily give children mobile phones but are under pressure to do so. This is in agreement withLing's (2003) position that thatnew toolsof communication are finding ways into childhood as now children do not take time before throwing an outburst for parents and guardians to give them mobile phones.

Research Question 4 was on the aspect of development that giving children mobile phones can bring to the family or the society. The data indicated that 245 or 64 percent of the parents say that the children gain entertainment from using mobile phones. This percentage ranks higher than other forms of social development and basic education expected for children. This shows that neither the parents, the family nor the society gain much in allowing children touse mobile phones.Walter (2015) recorded that "Using a mobilephone to pacify a toddler may impede their ability to learn self-regulation, or use of educational tools.The pre-school brain has to be warned that using a tablet or mobile phone can divert a child's attention and may be detrimental to their social-emotional development".

This further agrees to the work of Sundus (2018)who posits that "By using screening tools, and the more time children spend on smart phones, tablets and electronic games and other handheld

devices the more likely the child have delays in expressive speech. Children learn to talk and communicate through interactions with others. This is the way they learn to communicate well; if they are not communicating they are not learning".

Conclusion

From the research review of previous works, it is adjudged that there is no communication instrument that is entirely harmful to the development of children. The aftermath of any communication equipment depends on the usage, the timing and the application of the components. Similarly, the research shows that it is not entirely negative to give children mobile phones but the gains are not completely outstanding against the negatives. Some parents say that mobile phones enable them to connect with their children especially while not at home. Thus in as much as it appears an uphill task to limit children from mobile phones, parents can limit the time of children exposure to communication gadgets. Using gadgets limits children time to communicate with their parents and learning is bounded. They need proper time talking with their parents so they can learn new words and how to communicate. Children need their parents not mobile phones. Also exposure to theses gadgets is linked to cognitive delays and impaired learning. Modern communication gadgets especially mobile phones are not entirely necessary in child development.

Recommendations

The study recommends that

1. Parents especially the female ones should encourage children to use mobile phones to address educational tasksthat can lead to positive change in their lives.
2. Parents should help children to enhance their ICT skills by using mobile phonesto draw efficient mindsets.
3. Parents should not succumb to the pressure of children in allowing them access to communication gadgets like mobile phones that turn round to affect children negatively.

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