



## **Perceived Impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) on the Rural Youth of Manipur- An Exploratory Study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have shown increased participation as a channel in the development of rural areas. ICTs are undoubtedly the main agents to bridge the developmental gaps and youths initiate and direct this developmental process. The study was conducted to find out the purpose of usage of ICTs and the perceived impact on the rural youth of Manipur state. A total of 120 rural youth aged between 18 to 35 years were randomly selected from two sub-divisions of Imphal West district viz., Patsoi and Wangoi. The result shows the purposes of using ICTs mainly for social communication, entertainments and to get information on job and employment opportunities. Important perceived impacts on the youth were improved academic performance, increased awareness about personal health care and hygiene and increased awareness for employment opportunities. Though the perceived impact of using ICTs on the rural youth is more towards positive way, the challenge is to ensure that they use this to bring about desirable changes in themselves as well as development in the society.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Information and Communication Technologies had played a central role in young people's rise to prominence on a global level. ICTs have helped young generation to mobilize, collaborate and have given them a voice where there was none before. Like in most parts of the world, the penetration of ICTs is also much evident in Manipur and probably among its youth too. Youth constitute 19.92 per cent of its population in Manipur (UNFPA, 2014). However, the youth of Manipur are looming under the peril of unemployment, lack of job skills and skill based job, corruption, disturbance in education, insurgence, drug abuse etc. These make the youth frustrated and exhausted in this competitive world. Considering the various issues in development and also of the youth, it is necessary to understand their purpose of using ICTs and its perceived impact on the youth in the state.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in the Imphal West district of Manipur. Two sub- divisions viz., Patsoi and Wangoi which have the highest household ownership of ICT assets in the district were purposively selected. Three villages were selected randomly under each sub- division. From each village, 20 numbers of youth representing equal number of girls and boys were selected randomly and make a total sample size of 120 youths.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

*Purpose of usage of ICTs:*

The purposes of usage for the five selected ICTs (i.e., Mobile phones, T.V., Radio, PC/Laptop with internet and Kiosk/cyber cafe) are presented against the ICT tool in table 1. Majority youth used mobile phones (61.67%) for understanding of concept and other general information related to their academics and education. Maximum youth were found using mobile phones for accessing information on current and general affairs. Information on vacancies, job openings and employment opportunities were mostly received through radio (75.00%) and television (24.1%). To get information like government schemes and services radio (42.50%) and television (23.33%) were important channels for getting such information. Regarding information on agriculture related schemes and programme; the respondents reported radio (45.83%) and television (25.00%) to be important channels. They were found less interest in agriculture and allied sectors and shows unfavourable attitudes of taking agriculture as their livelihood. Kareemun (2013) opined that youth perceive agriculture as unattractive as a career without realising the importance of this sector in everyday lives. For the commercial services, printing documents, photo copying and recharging mobile phones/DTH majority youth were found to utilize the services of Kiosks (80.00%). For keeping touch with friends, family and relatives, cent per cent of respondent use mobile phones (100.00%). For social networking, Facebook and Whatsapp were found used through mobile phones (82.50%). Rodrigo (2016) revealed that youth interested in sharing information online using platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Diseases and preventive measures, awareness about epidemic and immunization programmes were received through radio (58.33%), television (40.83%). For entertainment purposes like watching movie and listening music respondent found used of television (97.50%). The accessibility and frequency of usage of ICTs are high for entertainment. It attracts the youth, respondent were found attached and spend their major time of accessing ICTs in entertainment purposes.

**Table 1: Purpose of usage of ICTs (n=120)**

Sl. No.	Purpose Items	ICTs				
		Mobile phones	T.V.	Radio	PC/Laptop with internet	Kiosk/Cyber cafe
<b>A)</b>	<b>Education and knowledge:</b>					
1.	Concept understanding and general information related to academics, current events and general knowledge	74 (61.67)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	30 (25.00)	1 (0.83)
<b>B)</b>	<b>Employment:</b>					
1.	Information on vacancies, job openings and employment opportunities, online submission of service applications	14 (11.67)	29 (24.17)	90 (75.00)	13 (10.83)	7 (5.83)
<b>C)</b>	<b>Rural Governance:</b>					
1.	Government schemes and services, Banking and G2C services	0 (0.00)	28 (23.33)	51 (42.50)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
<b>D)</b>	<b>Agriculture:</b>					
1.	Information on agriculture related schemes and programme, management of crops and information on marketing	13 (10.83)	30 (25.00)	55 (45.83)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
<b>E)</b>	<b>Commercial Services:</b>					
1.	Printing, photo copying, Xerox, internet browsing, recharging mobile phones/DTH etc.	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	9 (7.50)	96 (80.00)
<b>F)</b>	<b>Social/Communication:</b>					
1.	Contacting friends, family and relatives	120 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
2.	Social networking (Facebook, Whatsapp, Youtube, etc.)	99 (82.50)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
<b>G)</b>	<b>Health:</b>					
1.	Diseases and preventive measures, Awareness about epidemic and Immunizations	11 (9.17)	49 (40.83)	70 (58.33)	8 (6.67)	0 (0.00)
2.	Personal health care, hygiene and general health tips	29 (24.17)	23 (19.17)	23 (19.17)	12 (10.00)	0 (0.00)
<b>H)</b>	<b>Entertainment:</b>					
1.	Watching movie, listening music, etc.	26 (21.67)	117 (97.50)	0 (0.00)	37 (30.83)	0 (0.00)

#### *Perceived Impact of usage of ICTs:*

The perceived impact of usage of ICTs related to education, innovation, employment, citizen's participation, health and well-being, etc. is presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Perceived impact of usage of ICTs by the youths (n=120)**

Sl. No.	Impact Items	Average Score	Extent of impact (%)
<b>Education</b>			
1.	Better concept understanding and improved academic performance	6.27	62.67
2.	Increased access to experts and information sources	5.28	52.83
<b>Innovation</b>			
3.	Better ideas for educational project works/ assignments	3.94	39.41
4.	Suggested new ideas for agriculture & community development	4.88	48.83
<b>Employment</b>			
5.	Increased awareness for employment opportunities	5.48	54.83
6.	Time and cost saving in applying for employment	4.45	44.50
<b>Citizen's participation</b>			
7.	Transparency in governance	3.03	30.25
8.	Time saving and easy Banking /Transaction	4.30	43.00
<b>Health and well-being</b>			
9.	Increased awareness about personal health care and hygiene	5.52	55.25
<b>Negative Impacts</b>			
10.	Reduced face to face interaction with family and friends	4.49	44.91

In education, extent of impact of ICTs has found high at better concept understanding and improved academic performance (62.67%), increased access to experts and information sources (52.83%). ICTs have made information searching and retrieval easier in getting new ideas for agriculture and community development (48.83%). Particularly for agriculture, youth don't find benefit from agriculture using ICTs, except listening agriculture programmes through radio and television. Youth mention of benefitted using ICTs for community development. ICTs have lead to increased awareness for employment opportunities (54.83%) as well as time and costs saving in applying for employment (44.50%). In citizen's participation in the governance found less extent of impact to the youth. Youth found easy and time saving in banking activities (43.00%) with mobile phones and internet. The study reveals that youth have high extent of impact of ICTs in increased awareness about personal health care and hygiene (55.25%). Day to day health related programmes are broadcasted through television and radio and also made available at web that can be accessed anytime. On the other side of the coin it has been observed that social networking of ICTs attracts youth and they found themselves utilizing their maximum time in the imaginary world and reduced personnel interaction. Intervention of ICTs and its applications reduces the face to face interaction among people. Sometimes these make them deviated from their actual activities and wastage of time in irrelevant activities.

*Constraints in the usage of ICTs:*

The identified constraints mentioned by the respondents in the usage of ICTs and its applications are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Constraints in the usage of ICTs among the respondents (n=120)**

SL. No.	Constraints	Nos.	Percent
1.	Lack of infrastructural facilities for accessing ICTs resources	111	92.50
2.	Poor internet connectivity in rural areas	108	90.00
3.	Lack of time to access and use ICTs	73	60.83
4.	Poor finance and high cost of ICTs asset	71	59.16
5.	Lack of awareness about ICTs	70	58.33

Majority of the respondent mentions lack of infrastructural facilities for accessing ICTs resources and information (92.50%), very poor internet connections (90.00%), lack of time to access ICTs (60.83%), poor finance and low affordability as ICTs assets are costly (59.16%) and lack of awareness about ICTs (58.33%) as they do not have much ideas about the new high profile technologies.

## CONCLUSION

The purposes of usage of ICTs were found mainly for entertainment and social networking and have positive impact in the usage of ICTs. Youth is the time of life which shapes the future of the person as well as the nation. As quoted in UN document youth and ICT (<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-icts.pdf>) it is good news that youth are using ICT but the challenge is to inspire them to use it to change their world in a positive way. Thus it is important to ensure that information received through these channels and the purposes of usage of these channels are properly explored.

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