

Chapter 12

Mothers' Domestication of Household ICTs: Implications of Social and Cultural Factors

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ABSTRACT

ICTs such as television, the Internet and mobile phones have assumed a growing presence within the modern households and have made an undeletable imprint on family dynamics and parenting. Though, several gender studies have vouched to understand ICT domestication from the perspective of mothers, however the influence of social and cultural factors on the adoption and appropriation of ICTs has not been as widely studied as expected by scholars in the field. Therefore, in order to better explicate the influence of socio-cultural factors on mothers' domestication of ICTs, this paper delves to explore how mothers incorporate ICTs into their household routines and how they utilize ICTs as they fulfil their matrimonial responsibilities in managing their homes, coordinating schedules, fostering family interaction and supervising their children. Also, the paper highlights on how mothers screen and oversee their children's ICT use. The paper argues that cultural conceptions of motherhood and maternal responsibility, the premium placed on academic achievement by children, as well as the society's highly positive outlook on technology, greatly influence how mothers use and supervise their children's use of ICTs. The chapter professes that the mothers are creative in deploying ICTs in coordinating schedules with, disciplining and monitoring their children. The chapter concludes that perpetual mothering which is ICT-based could be burdensome and stressful.

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INTRODUCTION

The past 20th century had witnessed a tremendous series of changes in our post-modern society. One of the most important has been the transformation of the social role of women. Historically, women have been involved in jobs without remuneration, typically working in domestic labour. But in the last years their progressive incorporation into the labour market has supposed a point of inflexion. During the last decades, the labour force participation rate for women has been raised dramatically. This massive incorporation of women to the labour market has also stimulated their possibilities of access to the new technologies. However, a gender digital divide still exist, not only in the developing countries, but also in some developed countries, such as Spain. In most cases, in contrast to the general patterns of women participation increase, the gender distribution of ICT-specialist is an outlier (Gargallo-Castel, Esteban-Salvador, & Pérez-Sanz, 2010).

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) permeate every aspect of our lives; from community radios in the most rural parts of the globe to cellular phones in the hands of women and men in every community on earth, to computers in almost every medium to large organization. The advancement of ICTs has brought new opportunities for both knowledge sharing and knowledge gathering for both women and men. To the extent that the global community can reach heretofore unconnected individuals, families, and populations to better understand their needs and challenges, ICTs can provide unlimited opportunities for economic development and social engagement through new innovative thinking and tools. However, a basic assumption is that all members of our global community benefit from and are part of the growing knowledge society. ICTs have been compared to a double edged sword - advancing the knowledge society on one hand and deepening gender and social divides based on pre-existing social divisions on the other. Leaving large portions of the global community both undeserved and unengaged remains the largest determinant of success for current development efforts. Specifically, without a thoughtful policy, strategy, and execution plan to ensure women's full engagement in the knowledge society, the places in which they work, the families for whom they care, and the communities in which they live and serve will not thrive. The belief that one policy fits all has clearly demonstrated a lack of effectiveness over the years with a loss of billions of dollars and millions of hours of labor leading to little achievement towards the millennium development goals. (Melhem & Tandon, 2009).

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