Factors Affecting the Use of ICT Services in Ethiopia:
The Case of Illubabor Zone - Oromia Regional State

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ABSTRACT

ICT is used to enhance the overall activities of individuals, administrative processes of businesses and various governmental and non-governmental organizations. Despite its advantage in all aspects of development, it has drawn low attention in expanding the services in general and utilizing the technology in particular. Therefore, this study was aimed to explore the main factors that affected the usage of ICT in Illubabor zone, Ethiopia. A descriptive cross-sectional study design with quantitative and qualitative data collection method was carried out. The data was collected from 195 samples by using structured questionnaires and observations by employing simple random and purposive sampling techniques. SPSS version 16 was used for data analysis. The study confirmed that lack of computer skill training for staff and lack of sufficient budget for the provision of ICT are the major bottlenecks in expanding ICT service in the zone. Major emphasis should be given in enhancing the awareness of government employees to make use of ICT services in their daily official work.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

Information Communication Technology (ICT) is basically about using technology for information process and communication business. Its application ranges from collecting to disseminating or receiving information from one place to another electronically. The gathered information will be stored, retrieved, processed, and analyzed before it is communicated using ICT devices (Adigwe, 2012). In this study, ICT is considered as an electronic device that can be utilized by people to enhance or improve the administrative or overall office activities.

Nowadays, the prospective of ICT to promote overwhelming growth in the economy and reduction of poverty has got the attention of developing countries. The state of ICT access and usage in a particular country or region show both its social and economic development (Morrar, Abdeljawad, Jabr, Kisa, & Younis, 2019). As long as ICT presents opportunities for economic and social development, devising ICT policy and strategies, allocating the proper amount of budget and resource, creating a partnership with stakeholders and establishing suitable environment should be a primary duty and responsibility of a state. Governments especially the developing ones are often cash-strapped or have a multitude of other shortfalls which impact ICT development. In this case, establishing a network or partnership with private industry where some of the costs are shared along with the risks in improving the situation will be the best alternative solution. In this regard, it is essential to consider the role and contribution of NGOs in promoting ICT services (Shava & Maramura, 2016).

In Ethiopia, ICT development has become one of the priorities and key driver of the government for the socio-economic growth and transformation since the last decade (Report from Ethiopian Ministry). According to the report from the ministry of communication and information technology, the statistics about Ethiopian communication sector until June 2017 are shown in Table 1. The estimated population of the country in the same year was about 105.0 million.

Though the overall statistics seem promising, different regions, zones, and districts have unequal ICT coverage, and utilization rate due to unknown reasons and little is known figuratively. Thus studies aiming at finding the proper statistics of the accessibility and utilization of ICT in every corner of the country will help the government bodies to early identify the main factors those are affecting the expansion of ICT and to prevail over their impediments (Akther, 2015). Moreover, it also helps the policy makers and management authority in the process of policy making and development of effective ICT expansion. In general, policies, strategies, and investments that enable to seize the benefits of ICT are better based on statistical evidence (Adam, 2012). Therefore, this paper assesses the utilization and factors affecting the expansion rate of ICT in all governmental offices within the zone and all districts of Illubabor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

ICT has become one of indicator of economic growth and transformation of society. Those countries ranked at the lower position in the world ICT index are the third world countries. The gap between the development of a society and their ICT usage rate has a direct implication in categorizing whether they are underdeveloped or developing ones. Compared to the economically advanced countries, the opportunity of enjoying life and improving economic growth is much less in the developing ones due to limited internet connectivity and shortage of ICT accessibility. Those countries like Malaysia and Singapore those heavily invested in ICT have scored remarkable achievement in their economic development.

Many scholars agree that ICT infrastructure is important in enabling fast growth in emerging economies (Karimi, 2012; Ngwenyama, & Morawczynski, 2009; Kramer, Jenkis, & Khaz, 2007; Houghton, 2010). On the contrary, other researchers argue that less attention is given to civil infrastructure (electricity, roads, clean water, etc), human capital, and health. (Zhang, Wang, & Duan, 2016).

In Nwagwu (2005), the authors described their study participants agreed that 97% of them use a computer and other ICT devices for their administrative activities in the office. In general, many people are increasingly becoming dependent on computer and other ICT equipment to carry out their work, entertainment and contact people on social media. Hence, the availability of ICT infrastructure in schools, offices, etc., improves work performance efficiency and life satisfaction (Vijaykumar, 2011).

Table 1. Ethiopia's communication sector statistics – until June 2017

Number of customers	June 2017
Mobile telephone	58,080,626
Data and internet	16,505,225
Broadband (EVDO, WCDMA, LTE, ADSL)	6,902,902
Narrow band (1x, ADSL<256K)	276,294
GPRS	9,326,029
Fixed line telephone	1,169,625
Total customer	59,899,089

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