

COVID-19, ICT literacy, and Mental Health of University Students: A Three-Country Study

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Problem/Purpose

COVID-19, a global virus that causes deadly pneumonia came to worldwide awareness in 2019 and spread to almost every part of the world through 2020 as well as affecting millions of people in 2021. We ran a cross-national project examining the mental health of university students in Ghana, South Africa, and the United States against the backdrop of a surge in the digitalization of teaching at universities in these countries wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. The three questions that were asked for this study are as follows (R1) Is there a relationship between internet penetration and Information Technology and Communication (ICT) literacy? (R2) Is ICT literacy related to the overall experience in online teaching in higher education in the selected countries? (R3) To what extent do the challenges posed by the novel corona virus (i.e., COVID-19) combine with ICT literacy to affect the mental health of students?

Procedure

The survey was approved by the IRB board of the principal investigators. Data collection in South Africa (n = 525) and the United States (n = 500) was done through the PROLIFIC, an online market research platform. All participants were at least 18 years of age and consented to participation after reading the informed

consent. Data collection in Ghana (n = 515) was still collected online but coordinated by the Ghana Research team via direct recruitment of students enrolled at one main university.

Results

Data has just been fully collected across the three countries and is currently being cleaned. Next equivalence testing would be done to assess whether variables can be compared meaningfully across the three countries. We will then use multiple regressions and moderation analyses to examine group differences. Results pertaining to the three research questions across the three countries would be reported at the level of comparison possible.

Conclusion

Based on the research questions, we expect that Levels of ICT literacy, Internet access, cost of internet would be associated with educational stress (RQ 1& 2). Secondly, interactions between the former would be associated with higher mental health stress across the three countries(R3).