

ROLES OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN IN OGUN STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study spotlights the roles of Information Communication Technology (I.C.T.) on economic development of women in Ogun State using the women in Ilaro; Yewa South Local Government as a study. This study is premised on the framework of two theories: The Uses and Gratification Theory and Media Dependency Theory. Some of the objectives of the study is: To examine the rate at which illiteracy level determines the use of ICT applications such as social media; to examine if the use of social media by women is advantageous to their economic development. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study; the population comprised of women in Yewa South Local Government from where a sample size of one hundred (100) respondents was picked using simple random technique. From the findings (based on some of ICTs applications used by women such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc), It was discovered that social media helps to create awareness for goods and services, and its use also leads to economic development of women; Facebook is the most popular ICT applications used by respondent. Finally, it is concluded that Women's engagement in ICT applications such as social media is active and in-depth in terms of learning and education. It is therefore recommended that women need to be educated more on the use of ICT applications in order to ensure proper use of its tools so as to bring about desired results.

Keywords: Information Communication Technology (ICT), Social Media, Economic Development, Women, Facebook

1. INTRODUCTION

Culturally, especially in the western part of Nigeria, women's place is basically at home and kitchen and this had resulted in women's voices being muted and in most cases their opinions are not sought on important issues even those that concern them. It is their male counterparts that are considered more intelligent and being called upon to proffer solutions to challenges faced by women and which in most cases are wrong approaches and inappropriate. (Charmes & Wieringa 2003).

In many parts of the world women are the home makers, they are the coordinators of both their children and husbands mostly found to be fully involved in running homes rather than working. But in the 21st century the definition of woman and womanhood is fast changing, this is because women are now found to be captains of industries and Chief Executive Officers of companies and industries. Notwithstanding that today's women are working and effectively involved in policy making of their communities, states and nations, they combine their duties with home building and children rearing though a little percent of them now cling to career rather than being home makers and children rearers. It has been noted however that women are better managers of both human and natural resources and this had been shown to be true in many cases which had afforded women the opportunity of venturing out to be relevance in other fields and capacities other than at home and kitchen. And this had led to women being engaged in various activities that can improve their economic abilities and development.

In this period of rapid technological developments and an ongoing information revolution, one of the key by-products is incessant change. Two of the main characteristics defining this historical period are the twin concepts of globalization and the information economy. This transformation which embodies social, economic, political, technical and cultural processes is affecting nearly all economies and creating tremendous challenges and opportunities in its wake. (Charmes & Wieringa 2003).

African countries will not be (and have not been) spared, although there is still concern that the gap from the rest of the world is widening. Within this context, many studies and initiatives are concerned with ensuring that African countries are prepared to meet the challenges of the information age, and their main thrust seems to revolve around access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) and ICT policy development in general. (Ahmed et al, 2008)

By definition, ICTs include electronic networks embodying complex hardware and software - linked by a vast array of technical protocols. ICTs are embedded in networks and services that affect the local and global accumulation and flows of public and private knowledge. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, ICTs cover Internet service provision, telecommunications equipment and services, information technology equipment and services, media and broadcasting, libraries and documentation centres, commercial information providers, network-based information services, and other related information and communication activities; quite an expansive definition. It is not uncommon to find definitions of ICTs that are synonymous with those of information technology (IT). For example, Foster defines IT as 'the group of technologies that is revolutionizing the handling of information' and personifies a convergence of interest between electronics, computing and communication. (Ahmed et al, 2008)

The terms designate the information processing interaction between providers and users of information and also the development and application of information-processing systems that may not be regarded as part of the development of telecommunications. It is important to emphasize that these technologies only provide new mechanisms for handling an already existing resource: information. Therefore, to understand ICTs, one must first understand information practices and needs.

Nevertheless, in African countries, there is considerable interest in exploiting ICTs in all sectors. In the economic sphere, interest in ICTs is partly inspired by a belief that they are increasingly essential for the efficient use of resources in general. For example, in the short term, low-wage countries may be able to compete in international markets without having to make much use of the newer technologies, but, in the longer term, income growth is likely to be constrained along the path of low productivity growth. Also, since the new technologies are often concerned with quite new areas of activity - software production or data-entry services, for example - a failure to develop the capability to make use of them could preclude other important opportunities.

In Nigeria, ICT opened access to education and knowledge. A big breakthrough in ICT technologies occurred in the 1960s. Computers, Internet, and Web changed the lives of Nigerians. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. The country has huge urban growth rate at present time. This is a good condition for the upsurge of Internet usage, and the usage of ICT technology in such areas as education, health, agriculture, business, government, and transportation. Such development has been observed since the last 15 years. Internet usage level in Nigeria in 2012 was less than 16% and this is a very low rate. In 2013 Nigeria had 1.38 Mbps of average download speed. The rate is extremely low in comparison with 10.1 Mbps - the download speed of USA. In 2012 28.4% of the population were Internet users. In 2013 the download speed increased to 5.22 Mbps. (Legit, 2013)

Nigerian ICT development is under the rapid transformations especially in the field of mobile communication. In 2013 about 83% of the population (166.6 million people) were active subscribers of mobile phones. ICT has huge potential to transform a society. ICT can reduce the rate of poverty and improve the economic and social status of people. A major function of ICT is it being a tool that helps organizations, businesses, and individuals to use information in the most accessible and convenient way. ICT covers all the products or devices that can transmit or receive, manipulate or retrieve information in digital form. ICT involves not only the technology but also the processes of retrieving, storing or transmitting digital data. ICT includes any computing hardware and the hard and software for operating the networks for transmission of information.

The application of ICT is very crucial especially in renewable energy, agriculture, environmental conservation, and water. The population is rapidly growing but the resources are depleting so, we need to evolve the judicious utilization of resources. Of course, information cannot be the only panacea to poverty, hunger, diseases or illiteracy. But the information, if used the right way and in the right time can help bring solutions. (Legit, 2013)

Empowerment on the other hand, refers to the ability of people to control their own destinies in relation to other people in society (Mason, 2005). There is no universal definition of women's empowerment as factors such as socio-cultural, geographical, environmental, political and economic, as well as many other aspects of countries and regions influence it. Kabeer (1994) offers a definition of empowerment as 'the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them'.

According to The World Bank (2008): empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. So, one definition of women's empowerment could be a process that gives them control of power and resources, and changes women's lives over time through their active participation in that process.

The domestic or household level is the central point of gender-based discrimination and the goal of empowerment. (Narayan-Parker, 2005) because of the power relation in the family hierarchy. Domestic power dynamics can be analysed by an individual's access to and control of different 'spaces' such as physical, economic, socio-cultural and political, and non-physical within the domestic level.

The mental space of women remains the most critical issue since it has a complex relationship with other non-mental spaces. Mental or psychological space consists of the feeling of freedom that allows a person to think and act. For example, it often happens that interventions that expand a woman's economic space with increased income do not empower her if she has no control over the income. Therefore, expansion in economic space alone will not bring about empowerment. If the interventions increase a edit level of confidence and self esteem, then a process of empowerment has began. An expansion of this space implies a change in perception and leads to a feeling of strength. Hence, understanding the link with other spaces will help policy makers to understand why some interventions fail in spite of an increase in physical, economic and political spaces (Ranadive, 2005). Though some ICT interventions in Nigeria are not benefiting rural women economically (Alam, 2006; D.Net, 2007), they are helping to provide required information to rural women, which eventually changes their perceptions and expands their self-esteem as human beings. This issue needs to be investigated; that is, whether ICT can empower rural women with or without economic benefit.

The Need for Women's Empowerment: The World Bank (2001) developed a two-pronged strategy to eradicate poverty: large scale investment in developing countries; and empowerment of underprivileged people. Therefore, disadvantaged people have the potential to develop their lives and eradicate their poverty if they are empowered. Women are half of the total population in the world yet 70% of the world's disadvantaged are women (Actionaid, 2006). Many women are the poorest of the poor because of the extreme forms of discrimination that persist in many parts of today's world (Obayelu & Ogunlade, 2006). Women are, therefore, not only the representatives of impoverished people in the world but they are also the most deprived and the cross-cut category of individuals that overlaps with all other disadvantaged groups (the poor, ethnic minorities, etc). Although actively participating in taking care of children, family members, livestock and agricultural work (food production, preservation and processing), household work, health care and so forth, women have limited access to resources and economy. The World Bank (2008) has identified empowerment as one of the key constituent elements of poverty reduction and sustainable development. So, it is important to empower women to change their lives through eradicating poverty and enabling their contribution to society.

How Ict Can Aid Women's Empowerment Information is noted as a prerequisite for empowerment, while participation drives empowerment by encouraging people to be actively involved in the development process, contribute ideas, take the initiative to articulate needs and problems and assert their autonomy (Obayelu & Ogunlade, 2006). The UN millennium development project (United-Nations, 2005) focused on globalization as well as gender equality and empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty in a sustainable way. Women's full and equal access to ICT-based economic and educational activities support women's contribution in business and home-based activities and help women to become more empowered. By accessing information, women can enrich and enhance their quality of life. Successful case studies from many countries described the use of ICT as a tool for the economic empowerment of women (Prasad & Sreedevi, 2007), participation in public life (Lennie, 2002), and (Mitchell & Gillis, 2007). When used effectively, ICT can create better opportunities for women to exchange information, gain access to on-line education and to engage in e-commerce activities (Marcelle, 2002).

1. Alternatively, the consolidated framework developed by Chen (1997) details four broad pathways through which individuals' experiences change:
2. Material pathway, through which changes in access to or control over material resources, such as in the level of income, in the satisfaction of basic needs or in earning capacity, are experienced.
3. Cognitive pathway, through which changes in level of knowledge, skills or awareness of wider environment are experienced.

4. Perceptual pathway, through which changes in individual confidence level and self-esteem and vision of the future as well as changes in recognition and respect by others are experienced.

Relational pathways, through which changes in decision-making roles, bargaining power, participation in non-family groups, dependence on others and mobility are experienced.

To fully understand the process of change, Chen (1997) details two types of variables: the key participation variables (i.e. demographic profile of the client, household dependency ratio and the economic portfolio mix of the household) which are designed to measure the different levels of contact that a woman might have with various services offered by micro enterprises; and the mediating variables (i.e. social norms such as gender division of labour, gender norms of behaviour and gender allocation of resources), which are thought to affect the direction and strength of the relationship between participation in micro-enterprise services and impacts on individual level.

Ilaro is situated in the centre of Egbado land midway between the land area comprising Egbado North and South. This central position resulted in its being traditionally designated the administrative headquarters of the entire Egbado land from 1914 to 1976, when the new Local Government set up was established. It is today the Headquarters of Egbado South Local government.

Ilaro occupies an area of some 9.5 square kilometres of land and is situated on the rich cocoa belt of South Western Region of Nigeria with an above average rainfall.

Occupation and religion of the people of Ilaro

Ilaro people are predominantly farmers while others, especially women are traders. A very small percentage of the people are artisans.

Some ICT applications used by women for economical developments are:

What is regarded today as social media includes amongst others the following:

Social Networking Sites: This type of social media allows users to connect by creating personal web pages and then connect with friends to share contents and communication. The very common and most popular social network includes: Facebook, Snap chat, Instagram, and twitter, linkeln, MySpace. It is used to connect people globally and it mostly includes personal profile, finding friends, and communities. They are also the common phrase that are used an umbrella term for all social media and computer mediated communication. It is also used to describe community base website, online discussion forum, chat rooms and other social web space online. Ellison and Boyo (2007), cited in Osharive;2015, defined social networking sites as web –based services that allow individuals to construct profiles, display user connections, and search and transverse within that list of connections. It can also be described as a website that allows users to share information within a selected group. It is also said to be a great way to stay connected and; a convenient way to share photos from trips. Awake; 2012 cited in Oshareva (2015).

Podcasts: These are multimedia contents (audio and video) syndicated over the internet via a web feed. They deal with audio and video files that are available online and people can have access to by subscribing through services like apple iTunes. It is a combination of broadcasting and iPod. It enables users to download audio files that can be played on computers and portable devices. (For use on portable media players like: iPod, mp3player; personal computers.

YouTube: This provides a home for PSAs and educational videos; it was founded in February 2005; it has large accessibility and good resource for schools and organizations. It is easy and convenient to use. And it can as well be linked or embedded across the internet. It is the world's most popular online video community, people watch and share originally –created videos. It is also the second search engine in the world

Facebook: Started in 2004 by Harvard students, it is a platform to share announcements, requests for feedbacks, questions, and links with an interested community that also gives people place to share information with each other. It is person to person, groups, or page based accounts. This enables users to create a central page, check post, browse sites with its simple layout and it also provides space for basic information and variety of posts types with its potential audience .An average user spends almost 1hour per day on Facebook.

Twitter: This is used mostly for short facts or reminders, It (#) hash tags group together similarly themed tweets. It can as well be linked to Facebook, it provides an On-The-Go updates for reminders .Integrated with cell phones and texting. It is short text updates, about 140 characters

Instagram: This is a social networking application that is made for sharing videos and photos. It is very similar to twitter and Facebook; everyone who create an account will have a profile and news feed whenever they post videos or photos on it. It will be displayed on their profile and other users who follow the will be able to see their post in their feed and you will also see posts from other users that you follow.

Whatsapp Messenger: This is a free download messenger application; it uses the internet to send messages, images, audio etc. It has similar service like text message service but it rather uses internet to send messages. It was founded in 2009 by an ex yahoo employees. It enables users to share their location in real time messages etc.

LinkedIn: This is a social media networking site that is designed specifically for the business community. The goal of this type of social media is to allow registered members to establish and document networks of people they know and trust professionally. It was launched in May, 2003.

Objectives of the study

- To examine the rate at which illiteracy level determines the use of ICT or social media
- To examine if the use of social media by women is advantageous to their economic development.
- To study the social media application(s) mostly by women in Ilaro.

Theoretical framework

This study is premised on a frame work of the following theories:

Uses and Gratification Theory

The uses and gratification theory developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974).This theory suggests that audience are responsible for selecting the media that would best serve their need. The uses and gratification theory, is an influential tradition in media research. The original conception of the approach was based on the research for explaining the great appeal of certain media contents. The core question of such research is: why do people use media and what do they use them for? (McQuail,1983)

In mass communication process, uses and gratification approach puts the function of linking need gratification and media choice clearly on the side of audience members. It is suggested that people needed influence what media they would choose, how they use certain media and what gratifications the media give them. This approach differs from other theoretical perspectives in that it regards audience as active media users as opposed to passive receiver of information in contrast to traditional media effects theories which focus on “what media do to people” and assume audience are homogeneous, uses and gratification approach is more concerned with “What people do with media”(Katz,1959) cited in communication theory,wikibook.org(2013).

Needs and Gratification

The uses and gratification approach is known to emphasizes motive &the self-perceived needs of audience members. Blumler & Katz (1974) concluded that different people can use the same communication message for very different purposes. The same media content may gratify different needs for different individuals. Basic needs, social situations, and the individual’s background such as experiences, interest, and education, affect people’s idea about what they want from media and which media best meet their needs. That is audience members are aware of, and can state their own motive sand gratifications for using different media. Katz, Gurevitch & Haas (1973), also developed 35 needs which is taken from the social and psychological functions of the mass media and put them into five categories:

1. **Cognitive need:** including acquiring information, knowledge and understanding;
2. **Affective needs:** including emotion, pleasure, feelings;
3. **Personal integrative needs:** including credibility, stability, status;
4. **Social integrative needs:** including interacting with family and friend; and
5. **Tension release needs:** including escape and diversion.

Source: Katz,Gurevitch&Haas (1973) cited in wikibooks.org (2013)

In line with the words of Katz et al (1973), McQuail's (1983) classification of the following reasons for the use of the media:

Information

1. Finding out about relevant events and conditions in immediate surroundings, society and the world
2. Seeking advice in practical matters or opinion and decision choices
3. Satisfying curiosity and general interest.
 - Learning self-education
1. Gaining a sense of security through values

Personal Identity

- 3.0 Finding reinforcement for personal values
- 4.0 Finding models for behavior
- 5.0 Identifying with valued others(in the media)
- 6.0 Gaining insight into oneself

Integration and social interaction

- Gaining insight into the circumstance of others; social empathy
- Identifying with others and gaining a sense of belonging
- Finding a basis for conversation and social interaction
- Having a substitute for real life companionship
- Helping to carry out social roles 'Enabling one to connect with family ,friends and society

Entertainment

- Escaping or being diverted, from problems
- Relaxing
- Getting intrinsic cultural or aesthetic enjoyment
- Filling time
- Emotional release
- Sexual arousal

McQual, (1983), in wikibooks.org (2013).

2. Media Dependency Theory

The media dependency theory was introduced in outline by two America communication researchers; Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur in (1976). This theory is said to be a systematic approach to the study of the effects of mass media on audience and of the interactions between media, audience, and social system. (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur ;1976) The media dependency theory is also known as media system dependency theory and it is said to have been explored as an extension of or an addition to the uses and gratification approach. Thought, there is said to be a very subtle differences between the media dependency theory and uses and gratification theory, the media dependency theory can look at audience goals as the origin of the dependency while on the other hand, the uses and gratification approach emphasizes audience needs (Grant et al. 1998). These two theories can however be said to be in agreement that media use can lead to media dependency. However, Palmgreen, Wimmer & sengren, (1985); Rubin (1993); Parker Plank, (2000), cited in (communication theory; 2013), in their various studies averred that uses and gratification studies discussed media use as being gratification directed. The media dependency theory also states that more dependent an individual is on the media for having his or her needs fulfilled, the more important the media will be to that person. Dependency theory according to Ball-Rokeach&DeFleur (1976) also conceives of dependency as a relationship in which the fulfilment of one party's need and goals is relevant on the resources of another party of the theory is the relationship between media and audiences. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur averred that in industrial and information based society, individuals tend to develop a dependency on the media to satisfy a variety of their needs, which can range from a need for information; to a need for relaxation and entertainment. DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach (1976) also described dependency as the correlating relationship between media content, the nature, and society, and the behaviour of audience.

As DeFleur and Rokeach (1989) suggested, active selector's use of the media to achieve their goal will result in being dependent on the media. People will become more dependent on media that meet a number of their needs than on media that provides only a few ones. Littlejohn, (2002) while Rose (2002) stated that "if a person finds a medium that provides them with several functions that are central to their desire, they will be more inclined to continue to use that particular medium in the future" In general, the extent of the media's influence is said to be related to the degree of dependence of individuals and social systems on the media. Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, therefore put forward two basic propositions and these are: The greater the number of social functions performed for an audience by a medium (e.g. providing entertainment and information, the greater the audience's dependency on that medium. The greater the instability of the society (e.g.: in situation of social change and conflict), the greater the audience's dependency on that media. Therefore, the greater the potential effect of the media on the audience. According to Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, there are three major potential types of effects that result from an audience's dependency on the media:

Cognitive effects: These are changes in an audience's attitudes, beliefs, and values including changes brought about by the media in its role in political agenda setting.

Affective effects: This includes the development of feelings or fear and anxiety about living in certain neighbourhoods as a result of overexposure to news reports about violent events in such areas.

Behavioural effect: A good example of this is "deactivation" and this occurs when an individual member of an audience refrains from taking certain action that they would have taken; had they not been exposed to certain messages from the media. Finally, since its inception, the media dependency theory has generated many cross-disciplinary studies. It has also served well as a theoretical basis for research in the domain of communication. (Yang Lin; 2018)

2. METHODOLOGY

The Research Design adopted for this study is the descriptive research design which afforded the researchers the opportunity to collect data without manipulating any of the variables of interest in the study. The statistical tool used in the study is the simple use of percentage

Research Population: the population for this study comprised of women living and conducting business in Yewa South Local Government area of Ogun State.

Sample and Sampling Techniques: the sample for this study comprised of one hundred respondents that was randomly selected for this study. The women used for sample of this study were drawn from the Federal Polytechnic community and generally from the town.

A self-designed questionnaire was used for gathering the data needed. The questionnaire was divided into two sections (sections A & B). Section A requested for the personal information of the respondents while section B consisted of questions relating to the variables under investigation. The questions were structured in a way to elicit required information on the phenomenon under study.

Results

Table 1: Do you agree that social media can be used to improve economical status?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	55	55
Agree	35	35
Uncertain	6	6
Disagree	2	2
Strongly disagree	2	2
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

From table 1 above, (55%) of the respondents strongly agree that social media can be used to improve economic status while (35%) also agreed, only (6%) were uncertain about this opinion. Meanwhile, (2%) of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree to this. This table indicates that social media can be used to improve economic status of women.

Table 2: Do you agree that the use of social media depends on one's educational level?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	40	40
Agree	30	30
Uncertain	15	15
Disagree	10	10
Strongly disagree	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

The table above indicates that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the use of social media depends on one's educational level with (40%) and (30%) of the respondents that strongly agree and also agree to this while (15%) were uncertain; only (10%) disagree to this and (5%) strongly disagree as well. This goes a long way to show that the use of the social media does not depend on one's educational level.

Table 3: Is social media helpful in creating awareness for your goods and services?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	72	72
No	28	28
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

The above table indicates that (72%) of respondents agree that social media helps to create awareness for goods and services while (28%) of the respondents disagree with this. This is an indication that social media can be used to create awareness of goods and services provided by women which can increase their economical development.

Table 4: what are the social media applications you use to promote your goods and services?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	41	41
WhatsApp	27	27
Instagram	12	12
Linkedin	7	7
You tube	13	13
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 4 showed that (41%) of the respondents used Facebook while (27%) used WhatsApp, while (12%) used Instagram, (13%) used You tube and only 7% makes use of Linkedin. This tables shows that Facebook was the most popular of the applications used by respondents to create awareness about goods and services

Table 5: Do you agree that social media enhances economic development of women?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	62	62
Agree	23	23
Uncertain	10	10
Disagree	5	5
Strongly disagree	-----	-----
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

From the above table, (62%) of respondents agreed that social media enhances economic development of women; (23%) also strongly agree to this while (10%) were uncertain and only (5%) disagreed.

3. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

It was discovered that most women who are ICT literate and users are educated with minimum education level from secondary school leaving certificate to Masters and beyond. Though there were a very small percentage of ICT users that were not educated beyond primary school. And these set of ICT users employed many social media applications to promote their businesses, trades and crafts and the use attracted many followers and audiences' part of who patronises them.

With the use of ICT and social media to promote trades, businesses and crafts, women now have bigger exposure for their entrepreneurial activities and it had afforded some of them to do on-line businesses as well.

It was also revealed that most women who are using ICT and had upgraded economically due to its use mostly make use of WhatsApp and Facebook.

Women who are not using ICT and social media to promote their businesses and trades were found to be operating on a smaller scale and mostly are not educated beyond primary school certificate.

Part of the findings was that all the women who are not using ICT or who do not know how to use ICT did not know that their mobile phones have more uses other than to take and make calls.

The Internet, the wireless telephone and other information and communication technology enable women to communicate and obtain information in ways never before possible. It has also increased participation in decisions that affect womens' lives.

4. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

This paper discussed the issue of women empowerment using ICT tools/social media applications, and its results in the economic development of women. It can be concluded that if womens' engagement in ICT is active and in-depth in terms of learning and education, then women could become more empowered.

Recommendation

Poverty could be alleviated in rural populations through women acquiring knowledge and education. It is recommended that special schools be established for women irrespective of age for those who are willing to be educated. It is also important that women are enlightened about usefulness of ICT to their economic development. Generally, there is the need to educate women in the use of ICT and ensure proper use of the tools so as to bring about desired results.

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