

Impact of Internet Utilization on University Students

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were: to analyze the academic, social, physical and moral impact of internet utilization on university students and to give recommendations to improve the situations and for further research. This was a survey type descriptive research. Population of the study comprised of all the students enrolled in BS programs in the eight randomly selected universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. Seven hundred BS students were sampled from the selected universities using purposive sampling method. A self-developed questionnaire (on four parameters; academic, social, physical and moral effects) was used as a research tool. To examine the differences about the effects of internet utilization on university students independent sample t-test were used. Data were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation in SPSS 16. It was found that utilization of internet was positively affecting the academic activities of the students. Utilization of internet was making them more socialized; however, it was affecting their health and moralities negatively. It is recommended that there must be some awareness, guidance and check on the students to prevent them from negative effects of internet utilization on their health and moralities.

Keywords: Utilization, Internet, University Students, Academic, Social, Health, Moral

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Introduction

Whenever any new medium enters in human lives, people try to adopt it rapidly, like the radio and TV's interventions do. Same is the case with the internet. In a highly developed country internet has changed the life style of the people and are regularly using internet. Even in the less developed country of Pakistan, the use of internet is increasing and has impact on its users. So internet provides a new area of research for the students and researchers in this field. So this is the need of the day to introduce the internet as a new technology in education which will bring changes in the entire system of education.

There are a few physical barriers between countries in a globally mediated world. Before the popularity of information technology, it was possible for the Govt. of any country to physically prohibit the transportation and distribution of unwanted newspapers, magazines, and books. Similarly it was harder to jam unwanted radio and television broadcasts. But they could do it, until satellite came along. But now Governments cannot disrupt satellite signal. (Rooh-e-Aslam et al., 2009) In this era of information technology, internet emerged as a new mass medium and the concerns of communication researchers shifted towards the functioning and effects of new technology on its users and on human communication. Our emphasis is more with the human and social impact than the technology itself. (Bryant & Zillmann, 1994).

The internet has become the quick growing and widespread medium, especially in the West. It was investigated that as of August 2001, there were 513,410,000 internet subscribers worldwide. Another parameter of the internet's quick growth was the age between the internet becoming widely available to subscribers and it's having 50 million users in the United States and took only five years, as compared to 13 years for television and 38 years for radio. (Green, 2001).

One Meta analysis which was conducted in September 2002 by pew internet of different Global surveys, estimated that 606 million individuals are online globally, which is roundabout 10% of the total world population. European's group of 191 million users and 187 million Asian Pacific users. Canada and U.S. subscribers are 183 million. Latin America 33 million, Africa 6 million and the Middle East 5 million constitute the developing world when it approaches to both the number of absolute subscribers and internet penetrated subscribers. It is slower and less advanced than European countries but this new trend is getting popularity all over the world (www.pewinternet.org).

In post colonial India, the groups that have benefited from educational and professional opportunities in technology are primarily middle and upper class, upper caste, English speaking urban cities. Following liberalization in 1991, the internet is central to plans of national development. But as of March 2004, India had only 4.55 million internet subscribers. Pakistan has also emphasized the development of its telecommunication sector, but the reach of the internet is limited. A 2000 report estimated 400,000 subscribers for 2003, while another source, updated as of May 2006, estimates internet users at around 1.7 million. For Bangladesh, one source specifies a user population of about 3 million as of 2005 (<http://www.gethede/ges/rel/prj/ffs/iss/en1748723.htm>, 2007).

A current report mentioned significant increase in computer and internet use in India, from 6% in 2002 to 21 percent in 2005. For Pakistan the increase is similar (Rooh-e-Aslam et al., 2009)

As part of a policy to boost Pakistan's e-readiness and bring the country into the digital age, the Pakistani government gives facility of internet access to 96 cities in the country. But in terms of high-technological infrastructure, data security, and trained personnel, Pakistan received the lowest rating in a survey of 42 countries. The country has little more than 200,000 people out of a population of 140 million, who pay for internet service. (www.news.bbc.co).

The number of net users in Pakistan is rising spectacularly. The increasing number of subscribers and their hidden motives to go online to find information, to get entertainment, purchase products, get services and see websites for self satisfaction have been at the heart of one important debate about the impact, effects and future of the internet. Internet was advanced, nurtured and get popularity by hackers, people show interest in information and communication technology, information and communication through the computers (Bryant & Zillmann, 1994).

As McLuhan (1967) said, the village is "a world in which people encounter each other in depth all the time so the advent of internet provides renaissance to McLuhan's ideas because internet connects the people of different groups, interests and communities. If it won't deliver or transmit information, people fundamentally alter the relationship and their world.

Ahmad's study about "Net Café and its effects on users" is an analytical survey which represents that internet play a useful role in communicating the peoples and is a great site for youngster to communicate with people of other communities, to solve their problems, and to get data about their educational careers. But there is a possibility of both positive and negative effects of internet. Such as an internet affect the minds of our young generation. Our youngsters watch obscenities in net cafes and they also search or open the immoral and unethical sites. The owners of net cafes have no code of conduct for the wrong use of internet (Ahmad, 2000).

Internet utilization increases students' learning and can be a device for creative, communicative and intellectual work with others. However, Internet utilization can also take students away from doing important social activities such as homework, consuming much time with family and friends or may affect their health and moralities. Therefore, the researchers attracted to see the effects of internet utilization on university students.

Objectives of the Study

The following were the objectives of this study.

1. To analyze the academic, social, physical and moral effects of internet utilization on university students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
2. To give recommendations to improve the situation and for further research.

Research Methodology

The study was descriptive and survey type in nature. Following procedure was adopted for this purpose.

Population and Sample

Population for this study comprised of all BS students studying in the universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Total 22 universities were located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa out of which 8 were selected randomly i.e. Peshawar University, Gomal University Dera Ismail Khan, Hazara University, University of Science and Technology Bannu, Cecos University Peshawar, Sarhad University Peshawar, Gandhara University

Peshawar, Qurtaba University Dera Ismail Khan. A sample of 1000 BS students was randomly selected from these selected universities with the help of purposive sampling method.

Instrumentation

A self-developed questionnaire was used as a research instrument which was developed on five point Likert scale. The questionnaire was comprised of four parameters; i.e. Academic, Social, Physical/Health and Moral effect of internet utilization.

For the reliability and validity of the questionnaire it was pilot tested. The questionnaire was validated by the two professors of IT department and two from education department. Opinions of these experts were incorporated and then it was distributed to forty BS students of different universities for further validity and reliability. Observations were incorporated and for reliability Chronbach alpha value was calculated that was 0.73. Items were excluded with a Chronbach alpha value less than 0.25. Later on these 40 participants were excluded from the sample.

After pilot testing 1000 sets of refined questionnaires were personally distributed among the sampled students (125 questionnaires to each university) and 700 questionnaires (70%) were retrieved.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The collected data was entered in SPSS 16. Mean and SD were used as statistics. The scale options, given weight and range were as follows:

Scale options	Weight	Range
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00-1.50
Disagree	2	1.51-2.50
Undecided	3	2.51-3.50
Agree	4	3.51-4.50
Strongly Agree	5	4.51-5.00

Table 1
Student's Perception about the Academic/Educational Impact of Internet Utilization

S. No	Statement	M (N=700)	S. D
1	I find and learn new knowledge on internet which improves my vocabulary.	4.51	.79
2	I know and find latest information through internet.	4.44	.74
3	Internet improves my writing and typing skills.	4.04	1.06
4	I search and download various articles about my own educational field which enhance (increase) my knowledge.	4.36	.85
5	My parents and teacher often appreciate me whenever I told them about useful things on internet.	3.91	1.05
6	Internet is the easiest way to purchase and download various books, research articles, Power point presentation, assignment preparation etc	4.30	.92
7	I search various online libraries which improves my study.	3.91	1.07
8	Internet affects my academic/educational career i.e. my position/grade etc.	3.51	1.18
9	Internet is a hindrance (difficulty) in the way of my study.	2.94	1.27
10	Internet improves my English language.	4.16	.92
11	Internet affects the usage of books or the trend of going to libraries.	3.87	1.06

Table 1 shows the academic impact of internet utilization that students learn new knowledge on internet with the mean score 4.51 and SD= .79. The mean score falls in the range 4.51-5.00 which means that the students are "strongly agree" that they learn new knowledge on internet.

The students find latest information on internet, internet improve their writing and typing skills, they download various articles from internet, parents/teachers appreciate them whenever they told them about useful things on internet, they use internet for purchasing/downloading books, they search online libraries, internet affects their educational career, improve their English language capability and internet affects the importance of libraries with the mean score 4.44, 4.04, 4.36, 3.91, 3.51, 4.16, 3.87 and SD= .74, 1.06, .85, 1.05, .92, 1.07, 1.18, .92, 1.06. The mean score falls in the range 3.51-4.50 which means that the students are "agree" in response to the above statements.

The student perception about that internet is a hindrance in the way of their study with the mean score 2.94 and SD= 1.27. The mean score falls in the range 2.51-3.50 which means that the students are "undecided" that internet is a hindrance in the way of their study.

Table 2
Student's Perception about the Social Impact of Internet Utilization

S. No	Statement	M (N=700)	S. D
1	Internet gives me awareness about the global society.	4.26	.80
2	Internet updates me on the recent and latest events occurring in the global world.	4.24	.79
3	My social circle is becoming wider due to internet.	3.79	1.04
4	I am in close contact with my family due to internet	3.54	1.30
5	I am in close contact with my friends due to internet.	3.78	1.20
6	I make new friends due to internet.	3.48	1.31
7	I think that the world has become global village due to internet?	4.30	.89

Table 2 shows the social impact of internet that internet give them social awareness, recent and latest events in the world, social circle enhancement, social contact with family/friends and due to internet the world has become global village for them with the mean score 4.26, 4.24, 3.79, 3.54, 3.78, 4.30 and SD= .80, .79, 1.04, 1.30, 1.20, .89. The mean score falls in the range 3.51-4.50 which means that the students are "agree" in response to the above statements. The students are "undecided" that they makes new friends on internet with the mean score 3.48 and SD= 1.31.

Table 3
Student's Perception about the Physical/Health Impact of Internet Utilization

S. No	Statement	M (N=700)	S. D
1	Internet affects my sleeping habits.	3.48	1.34
2	Excessive use of internet declines (decrease) my health.	3.42	1.24
3	Internet affects my eyes badly.	3.69	1.17
4	Internet affects my ears negatively.	3.11	1.24
5	Internet makes me lazy.	3.20	1.33
6	I often tired due to excessive use of internet.	3.46	1.23

Table 3 shows the physical/health impact of internet utilization that internet affects their sleeping habits, declines their health, affects their ears, makes them lazy and they become tired due to excessive use of

internet with the mean score 3.48, 3.42, 3.11, 3.20, 3.46, and SD= 1.34, 1.24, 1.24, 1.33, 1.23 . The mean score falls in the range 2.51-3.50 which means that the students are “undecided” in response to these statements.

The students are “agree” in response that internet affects their eyes badly with the mean score 3.69 and SD= 1.17.

Table 4
Student’s Perception about the Moral Impact of Internet Utilization

S.No	Statement	M (N=700)	S. D
1	I think that internet affects the morality / ethics of new generation negatively.	3.98	1.16

Table 4 shows the moral impact of internet utilization with the mean score 3.98 and SD=1.16. The mean score falls in the range 3.51-4.50 which means that the students are “agree” that internet affect their morality negatively.

Conclusions

On the basis of findings following conclusions were drawn:

1. Students perceived that they learn and find latest knowledge and information through internet, such as writing and typing skills, download and purchasing various articles, search online libraries. They also perceived that internet is not a hindrance in the way of their study.
2. Students argued that internet make them social as they make new friends, have a close contact with their families, updates them about the recent and latest events occurring in the world due to which the world become global village.
3. Students were agreed that internet affects their health and morality/ethics negatively.

Recommendations

On the basis of conclusions following recommendations can be made:

1. Internet may be used for academic purposes in educational institutions, as the researcher found that internet affects the usage of books or the trend of going to libraries as mostly students found it online but keeping in mind, that book and libraries have their own importance; their value may not be ignored.

2. The researcher also found that mostly internet affect the sociality of the students positively but it does not mean that internet are totally positive; for example, students who make new friends on internet is not most often positive because in first few meetings the friends meet them so socially but after that they attack like sending pornographic pictures or even they are sexual predator or give monetary loses etc.
3. It has been observed that excessive use of internet affect the health of the users so there must be some checks upon the students to allocate proper timing for internet usage. It was also found that internet affects the eyes of the users so there must be screen saver/LCD monitors to prevent them from the bad effects of internet.
4. The researcher also found that mostly internet affects the morality/ethics of the new generation negatively so there must be strictness to forbid the students from seeing obscene materials or such sites may be blocked.

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