

Usage of internet for academic purposes by undergraduate students

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ABSTRACT

At present, universities are implementing internet-based learning to improve the academic knowledge of the students. The present generation is also well updated with the frequent use of internet for information and communication in their daily life. Internet aids in updating the student's knowledge with the current scientific information. In addition, internet-based learning improves the quality of education of the students than the conventional teaching method. The study aims to evaluate the usage of internet for academic purposes by undergraduate students. A validated questionnaire was distributed to approximately 150 participants of undergraduate students. Data were collected and recorded. Statistical analysis was done with the collected data to evaluate the usage of internet by the undergraduate students for their academic purposes. This study is designed comparatively to evaluate the internet usage for academic purposes by the undergraduate students. The reason of this study is to aware the students about the pros and cons of over usage of internet and to motivate them to use internet more for their academic purposes.

Keywords: Research, world wide web, professionals

Introduction

Internet provides a wide range of information which helps in increasing the knowledge of the people. It is also used most commonly for easy communication. People are well familiar to access easily on the internet for social, educational, and entertainment purposes.^[1] The present generation is well updated in the use of internet and computer. The rapid development in computer technology and increase in accessibility and availability of internet for academic purposes changed the study and practices, environments in much educational management. In addition, internet is used as a tool to know about the newly updated information to increase the knowledge of the people. At present, many universities have been implementing internet-based learning to increase the academic knowledge of the students. Internet-based learning comprises communication, interactivity, displaying images, electronic records and databases, digital imaging,^[2] exposure to new information, and better understanding of the concept. Hence, it increases the academic performance of the students than conventional

teaching methods. Internet facilities in many universities have been increased because the usage of internet by the students for wide variety of academic purposes also increased.^[3] Undergraduates who are grown in the digital age are highly exposed to internet usage from childhood, and they are more focused toward the lectures which are highly engaged with the digital media and resources.^[4] Internet provides a wide variety of references and information for academic works as well as scientific researches. Internet is potentially an excellent medium for teaching and learning.^[5] Undergraduates use internet as academic sources or references to complete their assignments and project works.^[4] Besides academic purposes, internet plays an important role in communication for academic purposes and personal uses. Communication websites for communication are Gmail, Facebook, WhatsApp, etc. Undergraduate student use these websites to communicate with their friends and professors. Although the personal usage of internet seems to be increased than the usage of internet for academic purposes, the use of internet for academic research is much greater than personal use. Hence, this study aims comparatively to evaluate the internet usage for academic purposes by the undergraduate students and to aware the students about the pros and cons of over usage of internet in turn to motivate them to use internet more for their academic purposes.

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Materials and Methods

Approval for conducting the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board. This prospective observational study was conducted for 1 month (December 2016). A total of 200 questionnaires were

distributed to the undergraduate students and the response was by 150 students. The questionnaire included queries regarding knowledge of usage of computer and internet (Table 1-5).

Table 1: Questionnaire items on computer access

Questions	Percentage
1. Do you have access to a computer?	
Yes	98.7
No	1.3
2. If yes, at which place you will access the computer more?	
At university	32.2
At home	67.2
Other place (Internet cafe)	0.6

Table 2: Questionnaire items on computer skills and training

Questions	Percentage
4. How long ago did you first start using a computer regularly?	
Not using regularly	16.7
1-6 months ago	22.7
7-12 months ago	6.7
13-24 months ago	6.7
25-36 months ago	4.0
37 or more months ago	43.3
5. How would you grade your general IT skills (Windows, Microsoft Office, and Internet)?	
Unable/beginner	48.7
Competent in some basic skills	31.3
Competent in most basic skills	20
6. How did you familiarize yourself with computers?	
Through a course in the university	28.7
Through personal study	65.6
Experience through a special course	5.7

Table 3: Questionnaire items on computer activities

Questions	Percentage
7. What features of computers do you use more in the pursuit of your studies?	
Word processing	21
Multimedia	16.4
Internet	39.3
Presentations	14
Medline	4.2
Data management	4.0
Other	2.0
8. How would you rate your ability to use a word processor to produce a page of text?	
Unable/beginner	42.7
Competent in some basic skills	34
Competent in most basic skills	23.3
9. How often do you utilize the computer for academic activities?	
Every day	50.7
2-3 days a week	27.3
Once a week	12
Once a month	8.0
Never	2.0
10. How often do you utilize the computer for personal use?	
Every day	52
2-3 days a week	20.7
Once a week	15.3
Once a month	7.3
Never	4.7

Results

The age of the participants ranges from 19 to 22 years. The participants include 76.7% of females and 33.3% of male. 98.7% students have good access toward computer and 98% toward internet. 67.2% of them use computer at home and only 32.2% in university; 39.5% use internet in their university and 57% use internet at their home (Figure 1) in which 43.3% students access computer more than 37 months and only 16.7% students do not use computer regularly. 31.3% students have some basic knowledge in general information technology (IT) skills and 34% can make a paragraph of text. 22% students feel that they were unable to access the general IT skills in computer and 16.7% unable to make a paragraph of text on their own. 56% students use internet more in the pursuit of their studies and 35% students use word processing more in their studies. 50.7% students use computer every day for their academic activities and 52% use for their personal use. 34.7% students have very good access and availability of the internet and 49.3% feel that internet is very easy to use. 49.3% students use email every day (Figure 2). 36% students feel that lecture notes on college website will be very useful. Even though all notes and

Table 4: Questionnaire items on Internet access

Questions	Percentage
11. Do you have access to the Internet?	
Yes	98
No	2.0
12. If yes, at which place you will access the internet more?	
At university	39.5
At home	57.1
Other place (Internet cafe)	3.4
13. How would you describe the access and availability of the internet?	
Good	35.4
Very good	34.7
Adequate	25.3
Poor	3.3
Very poor	1.3
14. How easy do you find the Internet to use?	
Very easy	49.3
Fairly easy	36.7
Average	10.7
Not very easy	1.3
Not at all easy	2.0
15. Overall, how confident are you in the relevance of information on the Internet?	
Very confident	38.5
Fairly confident	28.7
Average	25.4
Not very confident	7.4
Not at all confident	0
16. How often do you use email?	
Every day	49.3
2-3 days a week	29.3
Once a week	16.7
Once a month	2.7
Never	2.0

Table 5: Questionnaire items on activities involving the Internet and dentistry

Questions	Percentage
17. How useful do you think lecture notes on the school website would be?	
Very useful	36
Fairly useful	35.3
Average	20
Not very useful	4.0
Not at all useful	4.7
18. Do you think this would stop you going to lecture?	
Yes	44
No	56
19. How often do you use the Internet for dentistry?	
Every day	55.3
2-3 days a week	29.3
Once a week	12.7
Once a month	2.7
Never	0
20. How often do you use the internet for pleasure?	
Every day	55.3
2-3 days a week	28
Once a week	14.7
Once a month	1.3
Never	0.7
21. Do any of the following stops you from using the internet?	
Viruses	29.7
Cost of use	19
Time if the line is busy	31
Availability of computers	7.8
Confidence in the accuracy of information	5.6
Confidence in the ability to use	5.6
Others	1.3
22. Have you visited any sites of interest?	
Yes	
No	
Open-ended questions:	
23. List your favorite non-dental sites	
24. List your favorite dental sites	
25. What information related to dentistry would you like to be available on the internet?	
26. Are there any other comments that you would like to make about the use of the Internet in dentistry?	

information are available on internet, 56% feels that internet notes would never stop them going to lecture. 55.3% use internet every day for dentistry and for daily pleasure. 31% feels that shortage of time will stop them from using internet. 78% students visited websites in their own interest.

Open-minded questions include favorite dental and non-dental sites, what information related to dentistry should be available in internet, any comments on what should be updated in internet about dentistry. In this study, 25.3% students stated that YouTube is their favorite site, 37.3% students had no idea about dental site, 69.3% students do not want any information related to dentistry be available in internet, and 14% students commented that different techniques in dentistry should be updated in internet.

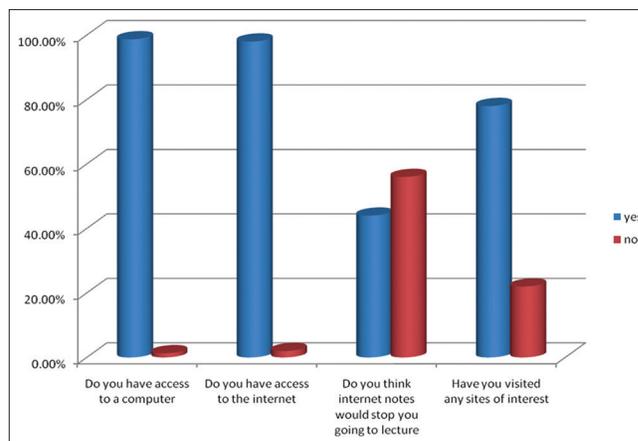


Figure 1: Depicts that accessibility and interest over computer and internet by the students

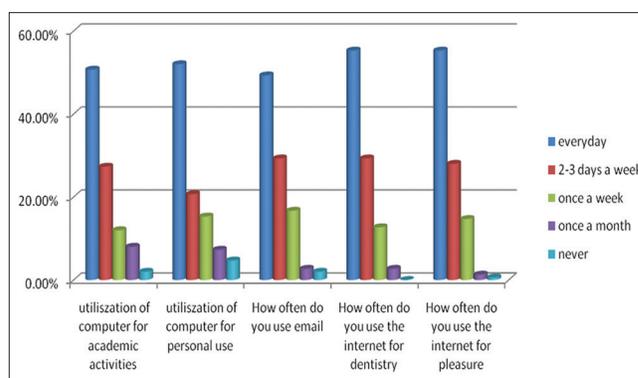


Figure 2: Depicts that utilization of computer and internet for academic purposes

Discussion

Internet usage related to research has been increased due to computer technology advances and usage habits change accordingly. Students in higher education believe that they can use internet as an educational tool^[1] so that they need to be aware of time spent in the browsing internet should be utilized profitably.^[6] Many universities prefer online teaching to make their students more focused on managing their own learning and to work at their own time and pace.^[2] Online teaching allows the use of sound, videos, and animations to communicate information.^[7] A study by Rajab and Baqain states that 72% of the students had access to computers at home.^[2] In this study, 98.7% students access computer, but only 67.2% students access computer at home. Some basic computer skills include introduction to computers, Windows, Microsoft Office, and the internet.^[2] According to Rajab and Baqain, 29.5% rated themselves as beginners in IT skills and 71.5% as competent in some basic skills and 19.4% rated as beginners in word processing and 80.6% as competent in most basic skills, and according to Muniandy, only 30% students perceive very high level of internet usage skills.^[8] By this study, 56.3% have competent skills, 21% familiar in word processing (Figure 3), and only 26.7% rated them as beginners. In a recent study by Dogruera *et al.*,^[11] they stated that only 24% students felt good for using internet for academic activities but the percentage increased to 76%. According to Rajab and Baqain,

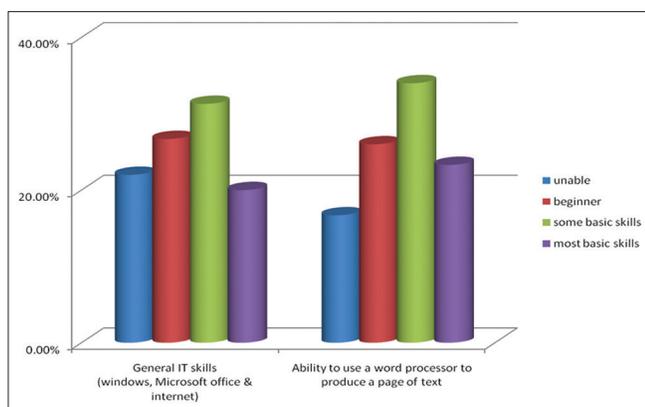


Figure 3: Depicts that knowledge of the students on word processor and general information technology skills

91% students use internet for their academic activities;^[2] however, in this study, it is decreased to 50.7%. According to Jones *et al.* and Rajab and Baqain,^[2] only 61% and 11.2% students, respectively, stated that the internet will stop them going to lecture; however, with this study, it is changed to 44%. 15.7% stated in Jordan University^[3] that as they often use email for academic purposes, it is increased in this study to 49.3%. According to Dogruera *et al.*,^[1] 80% participants felt that search engines on the internet are easy to use. By this study, 49.3% felt easy to use internet. According to Rajab and Baqain,^[2] only 36.9% felt that internet is very easy to use, 31.3% felt that lecture notes on the college website is very useful but the percentage is increased to 36%, and only 2.6% used internet every day for dentistry but the count increased to 55.3%.

Conclusion

This study indicates the time spent on internet and use of internet for academic activity. Students have good knowledge regarding usage of computer and internet. As well, they show interest in using internet more for personal use than academic purposes which is more for communication than searching for information. Hence, it is essential to motivate the students to use the internet for more academic purpose.

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