Research Article

Exploring the Students' Attitudes toward Internet Usage for Academic Excellence

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ABSTRACT

The Internet is being widely used as an educational tool with numerous potentials. The students who use the Internet for academic purposes especially they can gain more knowledge and enhance cumulative grade point average. The aim of the study is to explore the students' attitudes toward Internet usage for academic excellence. A cross-sectional survey questionnaire was used to collect data from 150 students at Dhaka University, Bangladesh. The study used descriptive statistics to analyze the collected data through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The results of the study identified that 94% of the students use the Internet and only 6% of the students do not use the Internet currently. The study also determines that the majority (59.33%) of the students use the Internet for both academic and non-academic purposes. In addition, a vast majority of the students agree that Internet usage increases their academic performances greatly. The findings suggest that policymakers should invest more in information technology to ensure Internet facilities for 24 h a day so that students can easily access the Internet anytime for completing their academic and research work. Moreover, the study identifies future research areas that provide scholars opportunities to push theoretical and empirical boundaries and offer further insights into the study of students' attitudes toward Internet usage.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet is being used to replace traditional classroom lectures or supplement traditional instructional systems. The Internet aids students to communicate with other students in a foreign country to share their ideas, experiences, knowledge, and cultures [1]. The Internet increases knowledge of the students, which helps them increase academic performances and develop a decent career. The students can use the Internet to enhance their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) [2]. University students need to use academic and reliable resources in their assignments and research works for the successful investigation. They should be encouraged to use e-libraries, e-journals, online databases, and e-books as academic resources for their respective courses [3,4]. Internet facilities need to be available for both teachers and students to facilitate teaching, research, and communication. The Internet is being widely used by many students with a view to enhancing their academic performance. Nevertheless, few or no studies were conducted at Dhaka University, Bangladesh to assess the students' attitudes toward Internet usage for enhancing academic performance. Based on the stated arguments, the study aims at exploring the students' attitudes toward Internet usage for academic excellence.

This study assesses the perceptions of university students toward Internet usage for academic excellence and, thereby, contributes to the literature on Internet usage by university students greatly. The study also facilitates to develop the theoretical and empirical basis for future impact studies of Internet usage on academic performances at other universities in the world. The results of the study will help reduce the current drawbacks of Internet usage and, thus, make available required Internet services for the university students.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. First, I have reviewed the related literature. I have then described the methodology of the study and presented the results and discussions of this exploratory research. Finally, I have concluded by illustrating the implications and limitations of the research, and by proposing future research directions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Internet usage has become a vital part of developing and developed societies throughout the world. Almost 78.1% of the United States population uses the Internet regularly [5]. Around 245 million people use the Internet in the United States, ranking among the top 10 countries in the world with the highest Internet usage. More than 90% of college students in the United States use the Internet regularly, this account for around 20 million college students. The Internet has become a very crucial part of almost every college student, where a vast majority of college students agree that the Internet is quite conducive to their education, particularly conducting research work and communicating with their peers and faculty [6,7], a very small portion of college students face academic problems due to excessive use of the Internet for non-academic purposes [7–10].

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Technological advancements have various impacts on education [11,12]. The universities all over the world have been expanding their investment on technology, and particularly the Internet, and actively promoting Internet usage in university education [13–24]. The teachers have been preparing their teaching materials and other supporting resources accessible over the Internet [25–30]. Now, students are more encouraged to communicate with teachers via email. As university authorities promote Internet usage, the researchers need to explore the students' attitudes toward Internet usage [1]. Instructors and teachers have been trying to use the Internet in the classroom and motivating students toward using the Internet for greater academic excellence [8,31]. Actually, the Internet enables the teachers to creatively deliver effective course instructions to students [25,32]. Kekkonen and Moneta [33] conducted a study to compare the students' learning outcomes in a lecture with an online version of an introductory computer course. The study found that both lecture and online learning students gained comparable factual learning outcomes. In addition, the online learning students outperformed the lecture students in applied-conceptual learning. Thus, the findings of the study suggest that the use of perfectly designed interactive learning modules can significantly foster high learning outcomes. Martin and Taylor [34] stated that the virtual classroom will be the next step in the development of educational technology.

There are myriad organizational factors [35–37] that may affect in individual's attitudes and perceptions but only two factors are considered as extremely important such as organizational support and Information Technology (IT) support [35,37]. Exploring the frequency and intensity of Internet usage among university students is also very important to understand the relationship between Internet usage and academic performances [8,36,38]. Several previous studies in Pakistan found that Internet usage had a positive influence on increasing marks, and reading, writing, as well as information processing skills [13,39]. Computer resources like games had a positive influence on memory and spatial skills and progressing auditory and visual capabilities, thus enabling overall student development [25,40]. Previous studies determined that students who search for information online obtain better marks because they have access to more data sources and are, thus, better informed on the subject [8,41]. Kupczynski et al. [42] conducted a study to understand the behavior of students in Internet courses and found that online learning students got greater educational success. Castaño [43] explored the benefits of student interaction for academic attainment, with the benefits having more to online learning students than those of physically attended classes.

Roman [44] conducted a study to assess the influence of gender on Internet usage at Peruvian University and found that there is no remarkable difference between male and female regarding the percentage of Internet usage but their expertise on using the Internet can influence whether or not they find the Internet conducive. A study by Roknuzzaman [45] found that around half of the responsible authorities at Rajshahi University, Bangladesh were not satisfied regarding the existing Internet services at the university. Finally, the study recommended increasing the technological investment to make available adequate internet facilities for the university community. Hossain and Rahman [46] conducted a comparative study of Internet usage at Dhaka University, Bangladesh and found that the Internet usage percentage among the students coming from Business Studies, Science, and Arts backgrounds is 100%, 92%,

and 90% consecutively. The research suggests that more students coming from Science and Arts disciplines need to start using the Internet for greater academic excellence. In Bangladesh, some previous studies determined the current situation of Internet access, the troubles for Internet access, and potential of internet business [47,48]. In Bangladesh, there are many factors that obstruct the Internet usage such as the erratic power supply, infrastructure problems, and high cost of Internet connectivity, etc. [49,50]. Only few studies investigated students' attitudes toward Internet usage for academic excellence. As per the above literature review, the objective of the study was to fill the identified gaps by investigating the students' attitudes toward Internet usage for academic excellence at Dhaka University, Bangladesh.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Study Area and Sample Selection

This study was carried out at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. A sample size of 150 respondents was selected purposively for this study.

3.2. Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

In this research, a cross-sectional survey questionnaire method was used to collect the required data. The questionnaire was divided into Part A and B. Demographic information was given in Part A. We asked respondents to provide information about their gender, age, marital status, birthplace, educational level. Part B included questions regarding the respondents' attitudes toward Internet usage for academic excellence. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree" was used for measuring the students' attitudes toward Internet usage for academic excellence. Before starting the data collection, the questionnaires were given to an experienced researcher at Dhaka University to evaluate the appropriateness of language and understanding of the questions.

The data collection was completed during the period of 2 months from January to February 2015. The sample included students from diverse backgrounds at Dhaka University, Bangladesh. In this study, the required number of respondents was selected randomly in an unbiased manner. The data were collected using a questionnaire developed in English. I communicated with the students to provide information in a form of information sheet. The questionnaires were personally distributed by the researcher and the respondents were made aware of their rights to withdraw participation at any time during the study. The study distributed 160 questionnaires, of which 150 (94% response rate) were returned and found to be valid for further analyses. In this study, the participation of the respondents was completely voluntary and no payment was given.

3.3. Data Analysis

The collected data were inputted into the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20.0 software (Armonk, NY, USA) to conduct the required statistical analyses. The results of the study were presented using descriptive statistics.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The respondents' demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1. Table 1 shows that 68.67% of the respondents were males and 31.33% of the respondents were females. Most of the respondents (80%) were aged between 21 and 25. 96.67% of the respondents were unmarried, 56% of the respondents came from the rural area, and 78% of the respondents studied Honors.

4.2. Percentage of Internet Usage among Students

The percentage of Internet usage among students is presented in Table 2. Table 2 shows that 94% of the students use the Internet and only 6% of the students don't use the Internet currently.

4.3. Students' Purposes of Internet Usage

The students' purposes for Internet usage are presented in Table 3. Table 3 shows that most of the respondents (59.33%) use the Internet for several purposes including academic, communication, entertainment, and online income. However, 9.33% of the students use the Internet only for academic purposes.

4.4. Students' Perceptions of Internet Usage for Increasing Academic Performance/CGPA

The students' perceptions of Internet usage for increasing academic performance are presented in Table 4. Most of the respondents (64.66%) agree that the usage of the Internet increases academic performance/CGPA. Only 17.33% of the respondents disagree that Internet usage increases academic performance/CGPA.

4.5. Students' Perceptions of Internet Usage for Searching Information and Completing Studies

The students' perceptions of Internet usage for searching information and successfully completing studies are presented in Table 5. Most of the respondents (92.67%) agree that the usage of the Internet enables them to search information and complete studies easily. Only 2% of the respondents disagree that Internet usage facilitates to search information and complete studies easily.

Table 1 | Demographic characteristics of respondents

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	103	68.67
Female	47	31.33
Age (years)		
16–20	26	17.33
21–25	120	80
26–30	4	2.67
Marital status		
Unmarried	145	96.67
Married	5	3.33
Birthplace		
Rural area	84	56
Small town	32	21.33
Metropolitan area	34	22.67
Educational level		
Honors	117	78
Masters	33	22

Table 2 | Percentage of Internet usage among students

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	141	94
No	9	6

Table 3 | Students' purposes of Internet usage

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Academic	14	9.33
Communication	13	8.67
Entertainment	13	8.67
Academic and communication	6	4
Academic and entertainment	3	2
Academic, communication, entertainment, and online income	89	59.33
Entertainment and communication	3	2
Non-user	9	6

Table 4 | The usage of the Internet increases academic performance/CGPA

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	5	3.33
Disagree	21	14
Neutral	27	18
Agree	74	49.33
Strongly agree	23	15.33

Table 5 | The usage of the Internet enables to search information and complete studies easily

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	3	2
Neutral	8	5.33
Agree	88	58.67
Strongly agree	51	34

4.6. Students' Perceptions of Internet Usage for Increasing Knowledge in the Field of Study

The students' perceptions of Internet usage for increasing knowledge in the field of study are presented in Table 6. Most of the respondents (92%) agree that the usage of the Internet increases knowledge in the field of study. Only 2% of the respondents disagree that Internet usage increases knowledge in the field of study.

4.7. Students' Perceptions of Internet Usage for Participating in Class-related Discussions

The students' perceptions of Internet usage for participating in class-related discussions are presented in Table 7. Most of the respondents (82%) agree that the usage of the Internet enables them to participate in class-related discussions easily. Only 3.34% of the respondents disagree that Internet usage enables them to participate in class-related discussions easily.

4.8. Students' Perceptions of Internet Usage for Increasing Motivation toward Completing Studies

The students' perceptions of Internet usage for increasing motivation toward completing studies are presented in Table 8. Most of the

Table 6 | The usage of the Internet increases knowledge in the field of study

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	3	2
Neutral	9	6
Agree	86	57.33
Strongly agree	52	34.67

Table 7 | The usage of the Internet enables to participate in class-related discussions easily

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	1	0.67
Disagree	4	2.67
Neutral	22	14.67
Agree	90	60
Strongly agree	33	22

Table 8 | The usage of the Internet increases motivation toward completing studies

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	1	0.67
Disagree	5	3.33
Neutral	43	28.67
Agree	72	48
Strongly agree	29	19.33

respondents (67.33%) agree that the usage of the Internet increases motivation toward completing studies. Only 4% of the respondents disagree that Internet usage increases motivation toward completing studies and 28.67% of the respondents are undecided whether the Internet usage increases motivation toward completing studies or not.

5. IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Implications for Research and Practice

This study contributes to the literature on the students' attitudes toward Internet usage for academic excellence. Regarding the theoretical point of view, this research shows the importance of Internet usage by students at the university level. The Internet is being widely used by university students to search relevant information and materials to complete their academic and research work. Most of the libraries at universities also subscribe to online journal databases, online books, and other academic resources for their students' usage. Indeed, the Internet has been playing a vitally important role in the lives of students. However, the amount of time spent online should be utilized effectively. It is believed that if the Internet services are made available, the students will actively use the Internet for completing their academic activities. Therefore, researchers show their special interest in doing researches on Internet usage by the students. Nevertheless, few or no studies have investigated the students' attitudes toward Internet usage for academic excellence at Dhaka University, Bangladesh. Therefore, the study examined the students' attitudes toward Internet usage for academic excellence based on descriptive statistics. This study identifies that students' Internet usage increases their academic performance significantly. The research also helps propose some suggestions that will lessen the current problems of Internet usage and make available internet services for all students by the respective university authority. The study suggests that university authority should increase the investment in technology which can make available the required Internet services for students at Dhaka University. Thus, the students will be able to use the Internet for retrieving the required information to complete academic work and participate in the class-related discussions appropriately.

The results of the study may provide valuable information regarding the development of practical guidelines for increasing Internet usage by students at the university level. The study found that 94% of the students use the Internet and only 6% of students do not use the Internet currently at Dhaka University. It suggests that policymakers should increase investment in technology to enhance the percentage of students' Internet usage. The study also found that the majority (59.33%) of the respondents use the Internet for both academic and non-academic purposes. It indicates that the Internet has a great impact on the lives of students. Most of the respondents (64.66%) agree that the usage of the Internet increases academic performances/CGPA. Therefore, students should increase the use of the Internet for academic excellence. Most of the respondents (92.67%) agree that the usage of the Internet enables them to search information and complete studies easily. In this regard, policymakers should ensure the availability of the Internet for 24 h a day to facilitate

the students' required information collection and completion of the study. Most of the respondents (92%) agree that the usage of the Internet increases knowledge in the field of study. Therefore, students need to use the Internet more to enrich their knowledge. Most of the respondents (82%) agree that the usage of the Internet enables them to participate in class-related discussions easily. It indicates that the students who use the Internet especially they can easily participate in any online class-related discussion. Thus, the Internet facilitates distance learning which is playing a vitally important role in educating students around the world. Most of the respondents (67.33%) agree that the usage of the Internet increases motivation toward completing studies. It suggests that the teachers or policymakers should encourage the students to use the Internet more for academic purposes which, in turn, can motivate them toward the study. Based on the overall results of the current study, it is highly recommended that 100% of university students should use the Internet to take its vast academic benefits.

5.2. Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations. First, the sample size is relatively small and the study uses only descriptive statistics for the presentation of data. Second, the participation of the female respondents is very small and the study does not collect information regarding the students' Internet usage experience. Future studies may explore the students' attitudes toward Internet usage for academic excellence at other universities of Bangladesh including more female students with a relatively large sample size.

5.3. Conclusion

There are many Internet applications that have been developed in recent years for various purposes. The applications which are developed for academic purposes are more inclined toward enabling distance learning. The Internet is being widely used by university students all over the world to facilitate their academic and research work. This study found that 94% of the students use the Internet and only 6% of the students do not use the Internet currently at Dhaka University. It implies that the Internet has already become a very popular medium of education among the students at Dhaka University. The study also determines that the majority (59.33%) of the respondents use the Internet for both academic and non-academic purposes. In this regard, the students in different fields of study should be aware of this so that the amount of time spent online can be utilized mostly for academic purposes. Because previous studies have also shown that students' excessive usage of the Internet for non-academic purposes may affect their academic performances negatively. In this study, the majority of the students agree that Internet usage increases their academic performances/CGPA. Therefore, the study suggests that policymakers should take proper initiatives to increase the Internet facilities at Dhaka University.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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