

Comparative Study of Internet Usage Among University Students: A Study of the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

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Abstract

Internet is a versatile tool used by the students that draws attention of many researchers. But little research has been found regarding the comparative study of internet usage among university students. For this reason, the study surveyed the internet usage among university students coming from Business Studies, Science & Arts disciplines at University of Dhaka, Bangladesh and the overall perceptions towards the internet usage. So we developed a survey questionnaire and collected data on students' demographics, internet usage behavior and purposes of internet use. Therefore, we distributed 50 questionnaires to each discipline and a total of 150 questionnaires were returned and all were usable. Then we analyzed the obtained data using SPSS. The results show that the percentage of internet usage among the students coming from Business Studies, Science and Arts disciplines is 100%, 92% and 90% respectively. The study recommends that the students coming from Science and Arts background should enhance the internet usage. And the students from all backgrounds should enhance the frequency of internet access per day and invest more on internet usage. The study also recommends that the universities should provide adequate internet facilities and enabling environment for student. This study provides a theoretical and empirical basis for further studies on internet usage of university students.

Keywords: comparative study; internet usage; students; University of Dhaka

Introduction

At present, Internet is a very important tool used by the students for education and also other various purposes like entertainment. Many academic and research institutions provide internet service to students, teachers as well as researchers. Nowadays students access to the internet more frequently to collect information for their homework. Thus internet has become very popular among the students. Internet also increases the skills and capabilities of the students that can facilitate their studies and professional life. Therefore we need to acquire much information about internet to explore the relations with other variables regarding educational contexts which are significant for students.

Internet should be ensured for both students and teachers to facilitate research, teaching and communication. Students also use the internet greatly to enrich their academic work. However, little has been done in terms of research to compare among the university students coming from diverse disciplines in case of using the internet, purpose and impact of using the internet and the overall perceptions towards the internet.

On the basis of these arguments, the aim of this research is to compare among the students coming from diverse disciplines(e.g. Business Studies, Science & Arts) at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh in case of using the internet and the overall perceptions towards the Internet.

This research paper contributes to the literature on internet usage of University students by performing a comparative study of internet usage among University students based on a survey questionnaire. This research also contributes to the theoretical and empirical basis for further comparative studies of internet usage in other Universities of the world. Finally, we conclude that the findings of the study will contribute to the reduction of existing limitations on internet usage and ensure adequate internet facilities and enabling environment for students at University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The remainder of the study is organized as follows. First, we review the related literature. Next, we describe the research methodology and we present the results and discussion of the empirical study. Then we show the recommendations of the study. Finally, we conclude by explaining the implications and limitations of the study, and by suggesting future research directions.

Review of the literature

The literature review shows that there is a huge amount of literature available on internet usage in Bangladesh but no in depth study has been done to compare among the students coming from diverse backgrounds (e.g. Business Studies, Science & Arts) at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh in case of using the internet and the overall perceptions towards the internet.

Mostafa (2011) stated that there is a big percentage of internet usage among students, for example, 56% of the respondents use the internet for educational purposes. Students mostly like electronic media comparing with printed media in case of searching information. Using the internet, the students find the easy access to the information and they use search engines mostly in searching information. The highly used search engine is Google (Islam, 2013). A study on internet usage conducted in the Rajshahi University, Bangladesh showed that approximately half of the responsible authorities of different sectors were dissatisfied regarding the current internet facilities in the university. At the end, the research recommended some future directions to ensure better internet service for the university community (Roknuzzaman, 2006).

A study regarding the effect of gender on internet usage by library science students revealed that there is no any notable difference between male and female in case of internet usage percentage but their internet skills can influence whether or not they find the internet useful (Roman, 2003). A study illustrated the condition of internet access in Bangladesh, the problems of internet access as well as the potential of internet business. Internet usage by undergraduates has also been done internationally (Rahman, 2004). A research on internet usage performed in the Shippensburg University, USA including 406 graduate and undergraduate students. The study found that the most of the graduate and undergraduate students used the internet 1-2 times in a week. The most used internet service was email because 100 % of undergraduate and graduate students used email (Laité, 2000). A study on internet usage among undergraduate students performed in the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria revealed a big percentage use of internet. Cyber cafes are found as their access point and the university library is yet to provide inter access for the students. Therefore the research suggested that the university should provide more access points for the students (Omotayo, 2006).

A research on internet usage was performed at Seton Hall University in the United States. The findings of the study revealed that 40.2 % of the respondents used the Web daily, 38.3% weekly as well as 10.7% monthly. Approximately 10% of the respondents opinioned they rarely or never used internet (Bao, 1998). A research on students' perceptions toward the internet usage for learning was performed at University of Malaysia, Sarawak. The research showed that the students had positive perceptions towards learning with using internet. The students had rudimentary skills in case of usage internet and they regarded internet as a useful tool for learning (Hong et al., 2003). A study examined the percentage of internet access and the usage of electronic resources by undergraduate students at three Nigerian Universities. The study showed that undergraduate students use the internet

largely. But due to the infrastructure, the access to the internet in the university libraries, departments and computer labs was poor. The most of the respondents were dependent on private internet services and cybercafés. The study also found that the respondents should be trained in terms of using internet and databases (Ani, 2010).

A study was conducted on internet usage including the students and faculties in Kuvempu University. The study showed that 42.1% students use internet twice in a week and 31.25% faculties use internet daily. The most of the faculties and students use internet for the purpose of studying/ teaching. The library is identified as the favorite place for using the internet. The majority of the students and faculties are satisfied with the current internet sources and services (Biradar, Rajashekhar, & Sampath, 2006). A research was performed on internet usage among university students in the United Arab Emirates. The objectives of the study were to examine socializing on the internet and perceptions towards the internet. The findings of the study showed that the internet may play a vital role for preventing social exclusion as well as gender segregation (Ozad, 2010). Another study was conducted on internet usage among university students in the University of Punjab, Lahore. The aim of the study was to find out the internet usage behavior of the students. The findings showed that most of the students use internet for their academic and research purposes. They were regarded as the new internet users. The common places for internet usage were identified e.g. university library, departments and homes. Most of the students have learnt to use internet by themselves or by the help of the friends without taking any training from the formal training center (Sakina et al., 2011)

A research was performed on internet usage among students in the University of Dares Salam. The outcomes of the study showed that the most of the students were not using internet because of the lack of computers, low skills in internet usage and very slow speed of computers. The study also found that the most of the students didn't use internet for academic purposes. Therefore the study recommended to connect more computers with the internet and proper training on internet usage should be given to the students (Luambano & Nawe, 2004). Another study examined the purpose of internet usage and learning by the internet. The findings of the study showed that the internet has become a vital part of college life and its usage is reaching 100% among the students. The study also found that 36% of the students spent 1-10 hours weekly for using the internet. Students mainly use internet for sending or receiving email, reading newspaper, research work, chat and downloading images. Students used to watch less television programs because of their high percentage of online activities in the internet. Saving of time and ease of work were the reasons of internet usage among the university students (Ruzgar, 2005).

A study was performed on the usage of internet by students and teachers in the Shaheed Bhagat Singh College of Engineering & Technology, Ferozpur, Panjab. The study revealed that 36.7% of students and 46.7% of teachers used the internet daily. Approximately 90% of the respondents used internet at their college. The favorite search engine was Yahoo. 36.7% of the respondents were partially satisfied and merely 31.7% of respondents were fully satisfied in case of using internet (Rajeev & Amritpal, 2004). A research showed that the information seeking processes were mostly performed using electronic resources and the internet was the most important information channel among the students (Armstrong et al., 2001). The study also revealed that the students search for the information especially in the university library. Other studies also investigated the effect of various disciplines on the behavior of students' information seeking (Fidzani, 1998). A research was performed at Aligarh Muslim University in India to explore the internet usage behavior among the students. The study revealed that the most of the respondents had a five year history of internet usage. Comparing with the students and research scholars, the academic staff spent more time on internet usage (Nazim & Saraf, 2006).

A research investigated the extent to which the academic staff of the university used electronic information services in their work. The study revealed that the internet was the most favorite information source. University staffs having low level of IT skills largely used the internet because of its easy access and immediate results (Hewitson, 2002). The shortage of searching skills is still hampering the proper usage of internet for the Faculty of Medical Sciences in University of Jos, Nigeria. The research was performed taking the 138 academic staff members from the faculty. The study revealed that the gaining of proper internet skills may lead to find the important research and teaching resources (Nwokedi, 2007). A study on internet usage performed in the Engineering Colleges of Punjab and Haryana states of India. The findings of the study showed that all the respondents use internet frequently because they had the access to the internet either at college or at home (Kaur & Manhas, 2008).

A research was conducted to explore the extent of internet usage by the academic community, the reasons for not using the internet, the level of satisfaction and problems with the existing internet services in these institutions. The findings of the study showed that the usage of internet by the students was low because computers along with internet facilities were trivial at the time of studying. But the most of the students revealed their interest for internet usage and interested to enhance their internet usage skills. Nowadays the world is going through an information revolution that may immediately alter the way. In Bangladesh, there are several factors that hinder the usage of internet including the cost of internet connectivity, power

supply and infrastructure problems (Sujatha, 2011). A study on internet usage was conducted in the tertiary education media. The study recommended that students should use internet as a tool for communication along with the source of information (Ozad, 2010). At present, the students are interested in using the internet to search information and perform their coursework that may bring their academic success (Escoffery et al., 2005). The students were new internet users but they used the internet daily. Most of the students had the internet access at home. The students used to use the internet mainly for educational and communication purposes (Safdar et al., 2010). In a study, it was found that all respondents were using internet because of getting quality information. Most of the respondents used the internet to perform the research work as the library of the university gave access to a large number of online journals and databases (Nazim & Saraf, 2006).

A similar study was conducted on information science students at Loughborough University. They examined the sorts and years of materials that these students used in the references for preparing their assignments and thesis papers (Oppenheim & Smith, 2001). The students mainly use books along with the internet as the third valuable source of information (Majid & Tee Tan, 2002). Performing a study, it has been understood that the students are using the electronic sources greatly but the proper training should be ensured for the process of documentation (Davis & Cohen, 2001). Undergraduate students use more the online education modules and the internet than the libraries' web pages and sources (Van & Cason, 2006). A research was conducted to explore the purposes of internet usage by the students (Aiken, Vanjani, Ray & Martin, 2003). In a study, it was found that 75% of Americans of ages between 18 and 29 and 65% of ages between 30 and 49 regularly accessed internet to search (Armstrong et al., 2001).

Methodology

Procedures

In the operation of the data collection function of current research, the quantitative method has been made. The major rationale to use the research method is that the research required the quantitative (measurable) research data. For the collection of research data, close-ended research questions were presented. The close-ended survey questions have been applied for the collection of measurable research data according to the data need and research contexts in given research situations. The population for this study consisted of the students coming from diverse disciplines at University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. To ensure a heterogeneous sample, stratified sampling is used for this research. Respondents were selected using stratified random sampling. Then we performed a questionnaire survey

among 150 students coming from Business Studies, Science and Arts backgrounds at Dhaka University, Bangladesh. Secondary data sources were articles on the related factors in the conceptual framework of the study as well as electronic (e.g. Internet) and printed sources of data.

Data analysis

In the current research, the statistical tool named SPSS has been mainly used for the analysis of research data. The IBM SPSS 20.0 has been used for the frequency distribution and so on. In the current research, different tables are mainly used for the presentations of analyzed research data.

Results and Discussion

Demographic information of respondents

Description	Frequency	Percentage	
Gender	Male	103	68.67%
	Female	47	31.33%
Marital Status	Single	145	96.67%
	Married	5	3.33%
Age(In year)	16-20	26	17.33%
	21-25	120	80 %
	26-30	4	2.67%
Birth Place	Rural Area	84	56%
	Small Town	32	21.33%
	Metropolitan Area	34	22.67%
Educational Level	Honors	117	78%
	Masters	33	22%
	M.Phil.	Nil	Nil
Educational Background	Business Studies	50	33.33%
	Science	50	33.33%
	Arts	50	33.33%

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 1. Of the surveys analyzed, 103 respondents (68.67%) were males and 47 (31.33%) were females. Majority of the respondents are Single 145 (96.67%), aged over 21 (80%), came from Rural Area 84 (56%), and studied Honors 117 (78%). Table shows that 50 (33.33%) of respondents were from each discipline.

Percentage of internet usage among Business Studies, Science & Arts students at Dhaka University

Internet usage	Business Studies		Science		Arts		Grand Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Yes	50	100%	46	92%	45	90%	141
No	Nil	Nil	4	8%	5	10%	9

Table 2: Percentage of internet usage among Business Studies, Science & Arts Students

Data in Table 2 shows that the percentage of internet usage among the students coming from Business Studies, Science and Arts background is 100% (50), 92% (46) and 90% (45) consecutively at University of Dhaka. So, it indicates that students coming from Science and Arts background should increase the usage of internet to accelerate their academic performance.

The usage of devices to connect to the internet

Devices used	Business Studies		Science		Arts		Grand Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
PC	9	18%	8	16%	9	18%	26
Smartphone	8	16%	10	20%	17	34%	35
Both PC & Smartphone	32	64%	27	54%	18	36%	77
Computer Tablet	1	2%	1	2%	1	2%	3
Non-user	Nil	Nil	4	8%	5	10%	9
Total	50	100%	50	100%	50	100%	150

Table 3: The usage of devices to connect to the internet

Data in Table 3 shows that the respondents coming from Business Studies background, majority 32 (64%) of the respondents use both PC & Smartphone to connect to the internet. Respondents coming from Science background, majority 27(54%) of the respondents use both PC & Smartphone to connect to the internet. Respondents coming from Arts background, majority 18(36%) of the respondents use both PC & Smartphone and 17 (34%) of the respondents use Smartphone only to connect to the internet.

The places of using the internet

Places of using the internet	Business Studies		Science		Arts		Grand Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Home	37	74%	34	68%	35	70%	106
Work	1	2%	3	6%	3	6%	7
Home & Library	5	10%	7	14%	4	8%	16
Home & Work	2	4%	1	2%	2	4%	5
Home, Library & Cybercafé	2	4%	1	2%	1	2%	4
Home, Library, Cybercafé & Work	3	6%	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	3
Non-user	Nil	Nil	4	8%	5	10%	9
Total	50	100%	50	100%	50	100%	150

Table 4: The places of using the internet

Data in Table 4 show that the respondents coming from Business Studies background, majority 37 (74%) of the respondents use internet at their homes. Respondents coming from Science background, majority 34(68%) of the respondents use internet at their homes. Respondents coming from Arts background, majority 35(70%) of the respondents use internet at their homes.

The category of ISP (Internet Service Provider) usage to connect to the internet

ISP Usage	Business Studies		Science		Arts		Grand Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
49	17	34%	20	40%	12	24%	
Wi-Fi	11	22%	9	18%	19	38%	39
Mobile Operator	8	16%	5	10%	3	6%	16
Wi-Fi & Mobile Operator	3	6%	5	10%	8	16%	16
Wi-Fi & Broadband	3	6%	4	8%	1	2%	8
Broadband & Mobile Operator	2	4%	1	2%	1	2%	4
Broadband, WiFi & Mobile Operator	6	12%	2	4%	1	2%	9
Non-user	Nil	Nil	4	8%	5	10%	9
Total	50	100%	50	100%	50	100%	150

Table 5: The category of ISP usage to connect to the internet

Data in Table 5 shows that the respondents coming from Business Studies background, majority 17 (34%) of the respondents use Broadband to connect to the internet. Respondents coming from Science background,

majority 20(40%) of the respondents use Broadband to connect to the internet. Respondents coming from Arts background, majority 19(38%) of the respondents use Wi-Fi to connect to the internet.

Frequency of Internet access

Internet Access	Business Studies		Science		Arts		Grand Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Once a month or less	Nil	Nil	1	2%	Nil	Nil	1
Once a week	3	6%	1	2%	Nil	Nil	4
Several times a week	5	10%	9	18%	4	8%	18
Everyday	22	44%	20	40%	19	38%	61
Several times a day	20	40%	15	30%	22	44%	57
Non-user	Nil	Nil	4	8%	5	10%	9
Total	50	100%	50	100%	50	100%	150

Table 6: Frequency of Internet access

Data in Table 6 shows that the respondents coming from Business Studies background, majority 22 (44%) of the respondents access to the internet every day. Respondents coming from Science background, majority 20(40%) of the respondents use internet every day. Respondents coming from Arts background, majority 22(44%) of the respondents use internet several times a day.

Frequency of internet use in a day

Internet Usage in a day	Business Studies		Science		Arts		Grand Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Less than 1 hour	5	10%	9	18%	9	18%	23
1-2 hours	17	34%	10	20%	20	40%	47
2-3 hours	11	22%	11	22%	11	22%	33
3-4 hours	5	10%	9	18%	1	2%	15
More than 4 hours	12	24%	7	14%	4	8%	23
Non-user	Nil	Nil	4	8%	5	10%	9
Total	50	100%	50	100%	50	100%	150

Table 7: Frequency of internet use in a day

Data in Table 7 shows that the respondents coming from Business Studies background, majority 17 (34%) of the respondents use internet 1-2 hours per day. Respondents coming from Science background, majority

11(22%) of the respondents use internet 2-3 hours per day. Respondents coming from Arts background, majority 20 (40%) of the respondents use internet 1-2 hours per day.

Frequency of internet use in a week

Internet Usage in a week	Business Studies		Science		Arts		Grand Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
0 to 1 hour	2	4%	1	2%	Nil	Nil	3
2 to 4 hours	5	10%	7	14%	6	12%	18
5 to 6 hours	3	6%	6	12%	9	18%	18
7 to 9 hours	9	18%	5	10%	7	14%	21
10 to 20 hours	17	34%	15	30%	16	32%	48
21 to 40 hours	12	24%	10	20%	3	6%	25
Over 40 hours	2	4%	2	4%	4	8%	8
Non-user	Nil	Nil	4	8%	5	10%	9
Total	50	100%	50	100%	50	100%	150

Table 8: Frequency of internet use in a week

Data in Table 8 shows that the respondents coming from Business Studies background, majority 17 (34%) of the respondents use internet 10 to 20 hours per week. Respondents coming from Science background, majority 15(30%) of the respondents use internet 10 to 20 hours per week. Respondents coming from Arts background, majority 16 (32%) of the respondents use internet 10 to 20 hours per week.

Monthly cost for internet usage (In Taka)

Internet cost per month	Business Studies		Science		Arts		Grand Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
100-200	20	40%	23	46%	37	74%	80
200-400	7	14%	9	18%	5	10%	21
400-800	15	30%	7	14%	3	6%	25
800-1200	6	12%	5	10%	Nil	Nil	11
1200-2000	2	4%	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	2
More than 2000	Nil	Nil	2	4%	Nil	Nil	2
Non-user	Nil	Nil	4	8%	5	10%	9
Total	50	100%	50	100%	50	100%	150

Table 9: Monthly cost for internet usage

Data in Table 9 shows that the respondents coming from Business Studies background, majority 20 (40%) of the respondents pay Tk. 100-200

per month. Respondents coming from Science background, majority 23(46%) of the respondents pay Tk. 100-200 per month. Respondents coming from Arts background, majority 37 (74%) of the respondents pay Tk. 100-200 per month.

Purposes of internet usage

Internet usage purposes	Business Studies		Science		Arts		Grand Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Academic	4	8%	5	10%	5	10%	14
Communication	5	10%	3	6%	5	10%	13
Entertainment	3	6%	4	8%	6	12%	13
Academic & Communication	3	6%	Nil	Nil	3	6%	6
Academic & Entertainment	1	2%	1	2%	1	2%	3
Academic, Communication & Entertainment	10	20%	15	30%	10	20%	35
Academic, Communication, Entertainment & Online income	24	48%	18	36%	12	24%	54
Entertainment & Communication	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	3	6%	3
Non-user	Nil	Nil	4	8%	5	10%	9
Total	50	100%	50	100%	50	100%	150

Table 10: Purposes of internet usage

Data in Table 10 shows that the respondents coming from Business Studies background, majority 24(48%) of the respondents use internet for academic, communication, entertainment and online income purposes. Respondents coming from Science background, majority 18(36%) of the respondents use internet for academic, communication, entertainment and online income purposes. Respondents coming from Arts background, majority 12(24%) of the respondents use internet for academic, communication, entertainment and online income purposes.

Recommendations

Students coming from Science & Arts background must enhance the usage of internet to keep them up-to-date and facilitate studies. Students should extend their internet usage outside the homes to take the optimum advantage from using the internet. Students from all backgrounds should enhance the frequency of internet access per day. Students coming from all backgrounds must enhance the investment on internet usage. Proper vigilance in the computer laboratory should be ensured and also provide on-

line facilities for students and take some steps to increase the number of systems with higher configuration and speed of access internet. To prevent misuse of internet facilities, proper monitoring of services should be confirmed as restricted sites should be blocked. The students should ensure adequate and continuous constant power supply to have the internet connection uninterruptedly.

Implications, limitations, future research and conclusion

Implications for research and practice

In this paper, significant contributions have been made to the literature on the comparative study of internet usage among University students. Nowadays, the acceptance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is highlighted to ensure that internet services are available to both students and teachers of the university to enhance research, teaching and communication. It is usually regarded that once internet services are made available; the students will be the valuable users of these services with the aim of improving their academic work. That's why; the academic researchers have a special interest towards the internet usage by academic personnel. We do believe that this research advances the study of internet usage among University students that, in turn, will keep a significant contribution towards the theoretical and empirical basis for further studies on internet usage in other Universities of the world.

This study also contributes to generate some recommendations that will reduce the existing limitations for internet usage and ensure internet facilities for every student by the University authority. The proposed initiatives can ensure adequate internet facilities and enabling environment for students at University of Dhaka. If it is done then students will be able to search information quickly and complete studies and class related discussion properly.

From the practical point of view, the overall findings of the study will contribute to implement new ideas to ensure internet facilities for every student. This comparative study explores that students coming from Arts and Science background are less internet users comparing with the students coming from Business Studies background. So this research urges to adopt and increase internet facilities especially in the Faculty of Arts and Science. Finally we do believe that the overall findings of the study and the proposed recommendations will keep a significant contribution to the enhancement of academic performance of the students with reducing the existing drawbacks of internet usage.

Limitations and future research

Some limitations of the present study should be noted. First, the sample is rather small and has employed simple statistical analysis. Second, participation of female respondent is rather small 47 (31.33%) in the study. Future research should investigate further analysis of “Comparative Study of Internet Usage among University Students: A Study of the Public and Private University of Bangladesh” including more female respondents with a relatively large sample size to compare among the students between public and private university in case of attitudes towards using the internet.

Conclusion

This study aimed at identifying the percentage of internet usage among university students coming from Business Studies, Science & Arts disciplines at University of Dhaka, Bangladesh and the overall perceptions towards the internet usage. Internet is such a tool, which can affect every sphere of our life. So internet can be beneficial for students, teachers, researchers and also the other non-academic professionals. It is clear from the study that the students from all disciplines at Dhaka University accepted the internet as a means for accessing to the relevant information for academic and research work. Findings of the study suggest that the students from all disciplines should increase the usage of internet because it plays a key role to improve the academic performance.

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