

Use of Internet among Youth and its Effect on Library Attendance

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Internet in the last few decades has revolutionized the world and this revolution has also influenced university students. This study was conducted to explore the relationship between use of online sources and library attendance. By using simple random sampling technique 72 female students from the Department of Sociology, International Islamic university Islamabad were selected as respondents for this study. The data was collected through structured questionnaire. Findings were coded and given quantitative interpretation. The findings indicate that the usage of library has decreased due to the availability of internet facility. Students reported to prefer online sources due to the fact that they are conveniently available without the need to visit the library. Constraints in using the library were also reported. Nevertheless the respondents acknowledged the importance of library and the fact that it gives more authentic knowledge compared to online sources.

Keywords: Students, Internet, Library attendances, Effect, Pakistan.

Introduction

It is an established fact that a library is a treasure house of knowledge and is one of the most authentic sources of information in academia (Foster, 2000).

However, with the advancement in technology there has been gradual change in the use of library in the recent decades. Research has found that due to the revolution of internet information can be easily retrieved by just at a click of the button. A large number of resources can easily be accessed via the internet irrespective of time and space i.e. in dorm rooms, or apartments, coffee shops, or nearby bookstores. The convenience of availability of information at any time of the day or night has reduced personal visits to research libraries (Nie & Erbing, 2000; Usun, 2003). It has also limited student's knowledge to that acquired only through online sources (Bertot & MacClurle, 2008).

However, researchers have argued that access to E-library is not available widely and the information provided on the internet through other search engines is not always authentic (Issac, 1994). Sturges (2002) supports this argument by saying that there is not check on the authenticity of the information on internet. That fake, pirated and misrepresented literature creates problems for researchers and students.

When it comes to the use of online sources it has been found that students often do not use E-library, instead they depend on search engine like Google and yahoo search engine among others (Darriers, 2003). Though these are excellent in providing basic information but these do not up to date academic material for the benefit of students. Besides, the dependence on internet is believed to adversely affect students. For instance students are likely to be addicted to the internet which adversely affects their studies (Sturges, 2002).

Previous studies have also established that use of internet is not necessarily found to be useful for academic excellence among the youth. Olson's survey of 130 university reference librarians in Australia revealed that for 23% internet had no value at all in helping them complete their daily reference tasks, while another 61% said that the internet was only of moderate value in aiding them with their daily reference duties. Only 16% described it as "very useful" (Olson, 1995).

Despite the fact that the data accessed through internet is not to be trusted the use of internet in academia is increasing rapidly. This demands an exploration into the association between online sources and library attendance. When it comes to the literature on library use and internet the existing literature looks separately on youth's use of library and youth's use of internet (D'Elia et al, 2007).

There is evidence to support the fact that library attendance has reduced recently. A nationwide report in March 2004 in the United Kingdom has indicated that over the previous 10 years period, overall library usage declined 21% and circulation fell 35% (OCLC, 2002). Similarly, a study by Odera (2007) and a research by the Council on Library and Information Resources (2003) concluded that college and high school students use the internet more than the library for research. These findings indicate that decrease in library attendance is related with the increase in online sources. Research shows that often the low turnout in libraries is due to unawareness about the availability of services in libraries (Bertot et al., 2005). Likewise it has been found that the large scale shift to digital libraries and increase in sources such as E-journals, the physical use of libraries has declined (Dalglish & Hall, 2000).

To adapt to the modern demands of students and academics and the challenges of the modern world libraries too have started to focus on internet. This in turn has revolutionized the concept of library in recent years. Information technology in recent years plays an important role in improving the library facilities (Wollcott & Goodman, 2000). Libraries now along with books give access to electronic journals, e-books, magazines and other research materials which are considered vital for academic support of students. This shows the penetration of internet in our daily lives and the need to update libraries to meet the challenges.

In the context of Pakistan, library use among students has been investigated. For example, a study by Saleem (2010) explored the factors conducive for the effective use of library among university students.

The study concludes that university teachers should motivate students through library related tasks for the use of library. Student's own interests, library environment, librarian and other staff's attitude and availability of necessary facilities are various important factors for the use of library. Nevertheless, there is dearth of data in Pakistan exploring the relation between internet and library use.

Keeping in view the above discussion the present study is being conducted to explore how the use of internet among youth affects the library attendance in universities in Pakistan. The findings of the study will help to promote the significance of library use among students as a more authentic source of information as compared to internet. Though the significance of internet is acknowledged yet it cannot replace the importance of personally visiting library.

Literature Review

The recent few decades have witnessed a major technological transformation. According to estimates there are over 3 billion internet users in the world (World Internet Users and 2014 Population Statistics). There are 5.9 billion google searches every day and more than a billion users watch 6 billion hours of video everyday on You Tube (You Tube Pressroom). This has resulted in flow of information across the world in various forms and internet is one of the providers of such information (Griffiths & King 2008).

As a result of the technological advancement the behavior of students towards library use has changed the web (OCLC, 2002). Research has found that 89% students start searching their information from Web search engine as compared to 2% who start from E-library. A survey conducted by OCLC highlighted that 71% students considered online sources cost-effective, 87% considered them easier to use, 90% considered them faster and 63% considered them more trust worthy than libraries (Sadeh, 2007).

Findings of Abosede and Ibikunle (2011) also support the argument that access to internet sources and E-resources affect the library attendance. Likewise, according to Bravy and Feather (2001) electronic resources have declined the visits to library as majority of students know how to use computer and get information from it. It has been argued that students often use search engines mostly Google to retrieve information as their first priority rather than personally visiting library. This is despite the fact that libraries offer access to scholarly articles (OCLC, 2002).

Sadeh (2007) has outlined different characteristics which urge students to use these online sources more.

These characteristics include easy searching which gives more precise and relevant results, availability of recommendations related to the articles or information which they are searching. Students consider searching in library as challenging and complex process.

Hartmann (2001) has illustrated that students often face difficulty in searching their required information from library resources and they have limited knowledge of how to retrieve information from journals. Therefore, internet is considered the most crucial resource for getting academic related information among students (Ajiboye & Tella, 2007) which allows them easy access to the required information from search engines (Josiah et al., 2007; Kerins et al., 2004; Mittermeyer, 2003).

Different studies done in different areas of the world indicate that a large number of students use internet than searching information in traditional way (Tiemo, et al., 2011). A study conducted by Osunade and Ojo (2000) in University of Ibadan revealed that students preferred internet over library. According to research of Audu (2006) at University of Nigeria Nsukka, 100% respondents reported to use internet, while 87.41% at Federal University of Technology Owerri according to Anuonbi (2006). 93.83% at University of Benin, Delta State University and Igbinedion University in Nigeria considered using internet as time saving (Obuh, 2007).

To support these findings research conducted by Philip M. Davis (2002) has revealed that book citation has decreased and website citation has increased. Likewise, it has been reported that students often prefer internet due to its easy availability they become frustrated in accessing materials in print form (Akanda et al, 2013). The findings of other researchers also confirm that students' ability to look for information is effected by speed, convenience and easy accessibility (e.g. Ellis, 1989; Kerins et al., 2004; OCLC, 2002; Steinerova & Susol, 2005).

It has been argued that completion of course assignments motivate students to use sources that are easily available and internet is one of such sources (Benson, 1994; Browne et al., 2000; Lubans, 1999; Ryan, 1994). The use of internet does not require to get any training or formal support for searching information. Research has also found that although students use internet for getting information but they often compromise on quality (Kulviwat, 2004; Lubans, 1999; Metzger, et al, 2003).

Franscotti et al. (2007) have revealed different factors which can increase the visit of students to the libraries. These factors can be opening and closing

hours of library, its staff services, better library environment and presence of related collections. An increase library hour is believed to enable students to work according to their own convenience. In addition to this another factor that is reported to attract students towards the use of library is the availability of information and material. If the required materials are not easily available or if they are outdated students tend to feel reluctant to visit the library (Oseghale, 2008)

Theoretical Framework

This research is inspired by the theory "Principal of the Least Effort" presented by George Kingsley Zipf (1949) in "Human Behaviour and the Principal of Least Effort: an Introduction to Human Ecology." This theory explains that humans along with machines and animals choose the path of "least effort." It argues that the information seeking client uses the method which is most convenient and in which not enough effort is applied. The behaviour to get more and more information stops as soon as the person gets the required and acceptable information.

The theory also states that the information seeker will use those search tools which are mostly familiar to him and are easy to use. This theory clearly supports the present research that the availability of information on internet required by students reduces their library attendances. As the theorist explains that the people select the path of least effort therefore students prefer online sources for information making their academic assignments instead of visiting libraries and involving themselves physically for getting the desired information. This results in less hard working attitude among them.

Methodology

The data for this paper comes from a survey conducted at the International Islamic University, Islamabad Pakistan (IIUI). Female students from the Department of Sociology aged 18 – 22 and enrolled in BS programme were selected as respondents by using simple random sampling technique. The total number of BS students in the department of Sociology was 89 at the time when this research was conducted. Out of the total number 72 respondents were selected according to the following formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2} \quad \text{Where } N=89, e=0.05$$

Putting the values in above equation, $n=72$

A well structured questionnaire was designed in the light of the objectives of the study (attached at the appendix). The questionnaire consisted of three sections: socio-economic characteristics, impact of excessive use of online sources on the library

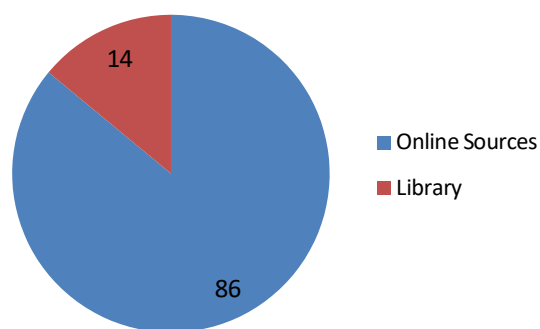
attendances of the students and impact of online sources on the knowledge of the students. The respondents were asked how convenient it was for them to visit the library, the number of times they visited the library whether they considered library as a source of authentic information, the reliance of students on online sources and the reasons for low use of library.

The questionnaire was pre-tested on 15 respondents to access the weaknesses, strengths and acceptability of the questions. It was then finalized in the light of experience gained during pre-testing. After the collection of data, it was analyzed by implementation of coding, tabulation and statistical method. Tables, bar graphs and pie-charts were used for continuity of the process. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. Further data was entered on Microsoft Excel sheet. Then Chi-Square test was applied to get results and to check the association of hypothesis.

Results and Discussion

The findings explain the perceptions of the respondents about availability of library and online sources. Figure 1 below reveals that 86% of respondents considered online sources as more convenient as compared to 14% respondents who believed that library sources are more conveniently available for completing their assignments.

Figure 1: Convenient Availability



The majority 99% of the respondents who participated in this study had access to internet both at home and at university and they reported to use the internet for completing their assignments. However, on campus the students who did not own laptops had access to internet in two places; i.e. the library and computer laboratory. Yet those who owned laptops had access to internet throughout the week via wifi. This shows

that for students who did not own laptops even access to internet required the need to visit library.

The respondents reported to use internet for a variety of reasons e.g. to look for horoscopes, to use SNS facebook, tweeter, to read news, to check emails, to communicate with friends via skype and so on. In terms of educational purpose almost all the respondents reported to use internet to read online articles commentaries, reviews. None of the respondents reported to read online books. Only few respondents reported to use internet to gain access to E-library/digital library via the university website and to look for and download research articles.

Here it is worth mentioning that the university website does have a list of all search engines related to the different disciplines. Since the library offers special training sessions on the use of these engines especially to MS and PhD students the majority of the respondents were aware of the available search engines. Only some of the students acknowledge not to have adequate know how to use them. Some reported that they could not access the required articles through such engines. Hence they relied on other sources like googlescholar.

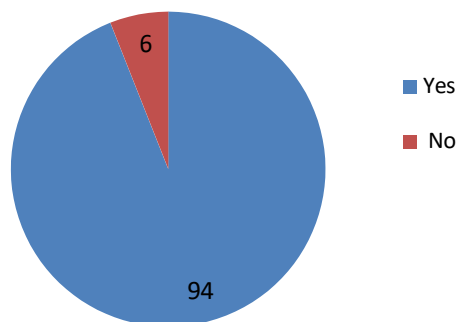
Table 1 shows that the majority of the students visited the library quite rarely. The data shows that 21% of the respondents reported to have visited the library during last week while 31% reported to have visited the library during last month. The least number of respondents i.e. 3% reported to have visited the library on the day of the interview for this research. This clearly indicates that the majority of the students who took part in this study rarely visited the library.

Table 1: Use of Library by Students

| Variables | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------|-----------|---------|
| Today | 2 | 3 |
| Two days before | 12 | 17 |
| Last week | 15 | 21 |
| Last month | 22 | 31 |
| Two month before | 14 | 19 |
| One year before | 7 | 10 |

Source: survey

Table 1 illustrates that the decrease in the use of library by the respondents clearly seems to be as a result of their access to internet. The respondents had great faith in internet and the majority (94%) considered the internet as a source of knowledge as illustrated in figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Internet as a source of knowledge

The researchers asked the respondents about their opinion regarding online sources as the cause of reducing library attendance. Figure 3 given below depicts that majority of the respondents i.e. 56% agreed to a great extent that online sources were reducing library attendance while 40% agreed to some extent. Only 4% respondents did not agree to the statement.

When the respondents were asked about the authenticity of the online sources and materials found in the library some (14%) of them were of the view that library is more authentic as compared to online sources while online sources were considered authentic according to 86% of the respondents (figure 4). While speaking about the authenticity they regarded online sources to be more up to date and the books in the library to be outdated in terms of providing information.

Hence, an important factor for unwillingness to visit the library was the absence of up to date information, i.e. latest books, journals. The graph below reveals that when the respondents were asked about the preference for university assignment 68% stated that they didn't prefer library and 32% reported to prefer library. Searching the library is a time consuming work and students prefer easy work.

These findings are also supported by the report published in 2003 by The Council on Library and Information Resources which concluded that high school and college students use the internet more than the library for research (Ordero, 2007).

Among the reasons chosen by students for not preferring library, 29% found it time consuming while 32% found it difficult to get the required information from large collection of books. Along with that 51% responded that library use can be increased due to presence of journals, periodicals and current books. Also 47% of respondents agreed that good guidance

in library and its environment attract the students towards library.

The research reveals that 93% students used online sources for university assignments and 90% for research work which indicates higher dependency of students on these sources. This clearly reveals the decline of library visits by the students. Likewise, Sturges (2002) has explained in his research that students do not do their home work with their own effort but with entire dependency on internet sources.

The increasing dependence of students on internet also seems to point out the drawbacks. In terms of disadvantages of the usage of online sources, 31% respondents agreed that it limits student's knowledge, 49% agreed that it promotes less hard working attitude among them as they do not do any effort to visit library. 50% respondents acknowledged that they become addicted to internet. Also 38% agreed that these sources indulge students in other activities rather than studying and getting knowledge. However the easy availability of information can often be abused as they just drag, copy and paste the information they get from any website or blog without looking thoroughly in to the material, resultantly involve in plagiarism and present it as their own work. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies. King (2006) has argued that majority of students use internet for their university assignments and other activities and they have forgotten "library" and the purpose of books placed there.

In this study one of the barriers for the use of library was the fact that female reported to have access to the library only three days a week on the 'female only days.' They reported that often they had classes on those days and they did not manage to visit the library. Nevertheless, this was not stated as the major cause of low library attendance. Some of the other reasons are stated below.

The respondents reported that the world is becoming a global village due to fast and easy access to information technology. To support this 58% of the respondents agreed that easy access of information technology is responsible for the decline of library usage while 57% expressed that careless and casual attitude among students is also responsible for the decline in library usage. Students do not tend to make efforts to visit the library and search for books manually since it is a time consuming task. Instead they prefer shortcuts through the internet which is a factor for the decline in library attendance.

The questionnaire addressed the factors which can motivate students to use library, 51% were of the view

that teacher's motivation is an important factor. 64% explained that teachers need to play their role here by persuading students to visit libraries more frequently. 58% believed that proper guidance in searching books was required while 68% commented that the education system was responsible for motivating or de-motivating students to use library.

Testing of Hypothesis

Table 3 shows cross tabulation between reliance of students on online sources that is reducing library attendance. The hypothesis was tested by using chi-square test at significance level of 0.05. The value of significance level was 0.01 which showed rejection of null hypothesis and concluded that students rely more on online sources for making university assignments which in turn is leading to low library attendance. Majority of the respondents (64%) selected online sources for making university assignments due to which they visited library less and mostly relied on online sources. The level of significance confirmed

the association between the two variables. Value of the chi-square was 16.746.

Table 3 also depicts the preference of students for making assignments with level of significance 0.000 which showed a close relationship. When the respondents were asked about their preferences for using library or online sources it was reported that they didn't prefer library because it was time consuming and students preferred to get their work done with minimum effort. The value of significance level confirmed the association between the variables and value of the chi-square was 47.266. The findings are in consistent with previous studies. For example in the [United Kingdom](#) a nationwide report in March 2004 indicated that the library usage over a period of ten years had declined 21% and the circulation had fallen 35% (OCLC, 2002).

Table 2: Reasons for decline of library usage

| Variables | SA | A | N | D | SD |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Teachers are not motivating students to read books that leads to the decline of library usage | 14% | 32% | 31% | 18% | 06% |
| Easy access of information technology is responsible for the decline of library usage among students | 32% | 58% | 08% | 01% | 01% |
| Less hardworking attitude among students is responsible for the decline of library usage | 22% | 57% | 14% | 05% | 01% |
| Non availability of latest books and editions in library is responsible for the decline | 03% | 26% | 54% | 15% | 01% |
| No proper guidance to find books in library is responsible for the decline | 17% | 17% | 26% | 24% | 1% |

SA= Strongly Agree; A=Agree; N=Neutral; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree

Source: survey

Table 3: Reliance of students on online sources is reducing library attendances of students

| Variables | Number of students using online sources for making assignments | | Total |
|---------------------------------|--|---------|-------|
| | Online sources | Library | |
| Extent of using computer/laptop | Daily | 46 | 51 |
| | Often | 18 | 19 |
| | Rarely | 0 | 1 |
| | Never | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 64 | 8 | 72 |

Chi-square:
 $\frac{\sum(O-E)^2}{E}$
= 16.746

df: 3 **Significance level(SL)= 0.01**

Limitations

The findings in this paper are drawn on the basis of data collected from students. Data on decrease in library attendance and if it is related with the use of online sources from the perspective of officials working in the library could not be accommodated. This is an area which can be explored by future researchers. Also the data for this paper was collected from female students only. For a more in-depth exploration into the problem a separate study on male can be carried out.

Conclusions

The participants of this study had universal access to the internet from a variety of sources and they appeared to enjoy this facility. The study has highlighted that a large majority 97% of the respondents used computer to search for material relevant to their assignments instead of visiting library personally. Among these students 93% reported to use computers at home. Since students do not have access to E-library at home this shows that they relied on other search engines to complete their assignment. This raises question on the quality of world produced and the skills and knowledge acquired during the university time. The data also shows that 88% of the respondents acknowledged that the internet promotes plagiarism.

It is concluded that the electronic availability of information online has been a prime factor in the decreasing number of personal visits to libraries. Students prefer online sources as these are convenient and easily available, thus preventing students to visit libraries and get authentic information. Students do not visit libraries for making university assignments as they consider it time consuming and difficult to get the desired information.

The paper argues that it is not necessarily the availability of internet alone that is the cause of low library attendance among youth but the fact that the library does not adequately provide the required material to the students is a factor that cannot be ignored. In addition, access to library for female was reported to be only for three days a week which was a major hurdle for the students to gain regular access to library.

This research indicates that there are a number of strategies that could be adapted for ensuring library attendance. These could include proper guidance for searching books and journals and availability of relevant books and journals among others. In addition, teachers can play an important role here. Teachers can

motivate student to visit library and they can give compulsory assignments which can only be done by visiting library. The library can also provide support by arranging seminars and workshops from time to time. The library staff can be trained to address the needs of students in friendly manner to encourage their participation. Finally, in the context of this study a separate library for female students is very important to ensure their maximum participation.

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