

Using Internet: Technical and Health related Problems in Users

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Abstract: *The present study was conducted in Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana to assess the problems related to the internet. Proportionate random sample of 200 students was drawn from the four constituent colleges of the university. In this study, the students were given questionnaire to select the problems of using internet. Statistical analysis was done using frequencies, percentage. The results revealed that strain to eyes and headache as the major health related problems. Virus infestation and non-response of server were the technical problems faced due to internet surfing.*

Keywords: College students, Health problems, Internet usage, Technical problems, University.

1. Introduction

Advances in technology have caused vital changes in many domains of societal and individual life. The most effective technological advancement of the century has been the information revolution. Globalization and technological revolution have accelerated in tandem over the past fifteen years. It has created a new global economy, which is powered by technology fuelled by information and driven by knowledge. The internet has considerably changed our daily life, even precious individual life. College students use the internet nearly as much for social communication as they do for their education. But just as they use the internet to supplement the formal parts of their education, they go online to enhance their social lives (Jones, 2002). While making life easier, however, these technologies have brought with them new risks. For over a decade, problematic internet use has attracted unparalleled attention and has been widely researched. Some users use the internet reasonably as a required technological tool of daily life such as gathering information about a topic on sites and communication with real life contacts mostly. Some users may use internet unhealthy and incorrectly because they use internet for recreation and getting connected socially with unreal life contacts. As a results, overuse and misuse of internet have risen gradually and become a rather important problem while internet contributes people's lives positively. There are diverse examples indicating that the overuse of the internet can cause health problems and mental illnesses, which make people become isolated and antisocial. Internet problems can directly lead to unrestrained use of internet, which is the most remarkable root cause. Compulsive internet use has become epidemic among children, teenagers and adults as the internet provides so many types of entertainment, shopping, communication that they cannot control and it in turn lead to the overuse of the internet.

2. Review of Literature

Brenner (1997) studied the problems faced by internet users and reported that 80.0 per cent of 600 respondents indicated five use-related problems such as failure to manage time,

missing sleep and meals. Scherer (1997) while reporting the healthy and unhealthy internet use stated that the internet use interfered with the academic work, professional performance, or social lives of 13.0 per cent of the respondents. Among them, about 2.0 per cent perceived the internet as having an overall negative effect on their daily lives. Young (1998) conducted a study on student's internet addiction and the resultant clinical disorders. The excessive use of the internet resulted was found to results in personal, family, and occupational problems. Major problem was time distortion which resulted in disrupted sleep patterns and fatigue. Chou and Hsiao (2000) conducted a larger-scale investigation focused on pleasure experience and use gratification aspect of internet use on university and college students in Taiwan. The study identified 6.0 per cent of respondents as internet addicts. The addicts found entertaining to be interesting, interactive, and enjoyable on the internet. Such type of use was found to have negative impact on their studies and daily routines as compared to non-addicts.

3. Objectives

- To study the technical problems faced in accessing internet
- To study the health related problems faced due to internet surfing

4. Methodology and Procedure

The present study was conducted among the three degree programmes students of the Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana i.e. Bachelor, Master and Doctorate. All the four constituent colleges of PAU i.e. College of Agriculture (COA), College of Basic Sciences and Humanities (COBSc&H), College of Home Science (COHSc) and College of Agricultural Engineering and Technology (COAE&T) were selected. A list of the students, studying at three levels of degree programmes was obtained from the office of the respective colleges and office of Dean Post Graduate Studies of the PAU. Proportionate random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 200

students. Keeping in mind the objectives of the study, questionnaire was developed for collection of information. The collected data were analysed by using frequency and percentage.

5. Results and Discussion

Table1: Distribution of the respondents according to the technical problems faced in accessing internet, (n=200)

<i>Technical Problems</i>	<i>COA (n=91)</i>		<i>COBSc&H (n=40)</i>		<i>COHSc (n=34)</i>		<i>COAE&T (n=35)</i>		<i>Total (n=200)</i>	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Localized problems										
Location of information	15	16.5	6	15.0	2	5.9	2	5.7	25	12.5
Corruption of file	37	40.7	19	47.5	14	41.9	13	37.1	83	41.5
Virus infestation	68	74.7	30	75.0	27	79.4	26	74.3	151	75.5
System failure	37	40.7	9	22.5	8	23.5	11	31.4	65	32.5
Resolution changes	8	8.8	6	15.0	3	8.8	4	11.4	21	10.5
Failure of system to connect with other network	40	43.9	13	32.5	17	50.0	11	31.4	81	40.5
Bouncing of mail	2	2.2	1	2.5	1	2.9	7	20.0	11	5.5
Software problems	35	38.5	15	37.5	8	23.5	17	48.6	75	37.5
Crashing of window	24	26.4	8	20.0	6	17.6	7	20.0	45	22.5
Communication problems										
Broad band hardware failure	21	23.1	8	20.0	3	8.8	4	11.4	36	18.0
Cable failure in detection of the network	14	15.4	8	20.0	5	14.7	4	11.4	31	15.5
Failure of the internet service provider	59	64.8	21	52.5	20	58.8	14	40.0	114	57.0
Resource point problems										
Non response of server	58	63.7	27	67.5	29	85.3	17	48.6	131	65.5
Originality of the information	4	4.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	5.7	6	3.0
System hacking	16	17.6	4	10.0	15	44.1	11	31.4	46	23.0

*multiple responses

The data pertaining to problems faced in accessing internet was further divided into technical and health problems.

5.1 Localized problems

The data reveals that a large number of students (75.5%) reported virus infestation as a major problem. The failure of system to connect with other network and corruption of files were two important localized problems faced by nearly 40.0 per cent of students. The least reported problem was the bouncing of mail (5.5%) and resolution changes (10.5%).

Items wise data shows that location of the information was least reported in case of COAE&T (5.7%) and COBSc&T (5.9%) and maximum percentage in case of COA (16.5%). The corruption of files was reported to be a problem by 47.5 per cent in COBSc&H with least in case of COAE&T(37.1%), virus infestation was a problem for 79.4 per cent of COHSc and least by nearly equal percentage of students of other colleges i.e. approximately 75.0 per cent. Variation in system failure was a problem for 40.7 per cent of COA students as compared to approximately 23.0 per cent students of COBSc&H and COHSc. The variation was also obvious in case of failure of system in which 50.0 per cent of COHSc students reported this problem with approximately 30.0 per cent of the students of COBSc&H and COAE&T reported it.

A very sharp difference was found between the COAE&T (20.0%) and other colleges (2.5%) with regard to bouncing of mails. Only 23.5 per cent students of COHSc faced the software related problems again 48.6 per cent COAE&T. Crashing of windows was a problem for 26.4 per cent students of COA against the least (17.7%) of COHSc. Difficulty in findings relevant information also reported as the major technical problem by Miller et al (2006), Nath and sahu (2011), Sujatha (2011) and Thanuskodi and Ravi (2011).

5.2 Communication Problems

The university students (57.0%) experienced the failure of internet service provider with nearly 18.0 per cent reporting broad band hardware failure. Individually the problem of broad band hardware failure was reported by 23.1 per cent and 20.0 per cent of the students of COA and COBSc&H respectively against 11.4 per cent and 8.8 per cent of the students from COAE&T and COBSc&H respectively. Again the students of COBSc&H (20.0%) faced the problems with regard to cable failure in detection of the network and 11.4 per cent of COAE&T. The most experienced problem of the internet service provider was faced maximum by the students of COA (64.7%) and least by COAE&T (40.0%).

5.3 Resource Point Problems

Extreme variation in the experiencing of the three problems in this category can be seen from the data given in Table again 65.5 per cent experiencing the problem related to non-response of server only 3.0 per cent stated originality of the information as a problem. Nearly one fourth (23.0%) also reported hacking of the system as a problem. The non-response of server was faced maximum by the students of COHSc (85.3%) and least by the students of COAE&T (48.6%). None of the students of COBSc&H and COHSc reported the problem with regard to originality of the information with nearly 5.0 per cent of the other two colleges experiencing this. The differences in the percentage of students reporting system hacking as a problem are nearly obvious from the data only 10.0 per cent students of COBSc&H reporting this as a problem against 44.1 per cent of COHS. The results of the study are in line with the findings of Tikam (2011) and Mohhammad and Saraf (2006)

who also reported the authenticity of accessed information as one of the resource point related problem.

Table2: Distribution of the respondents according to health related problems faced by internet users', (n=200)

<i>Health Hazards</i>	<i>COA (n=91)</i>		<i>COBSc&H (n=40)</i>		<i>COHSc (n=34)</i>		<i>COAE&T (n=35)</i>		<i>Total (n=200)</i>	
Physical Problems	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Muscles and joints pains	10	11.0	2	5.0	4	11.8	2	5.7	18	9.0
Strain to eyes	53	58.2	23	57.5	20	58.8	19	54.3	115	57.5
Headache	56	61.5	22	55.0	22	64.7	17	48.6	117	58.5
Backache	36	39.6	15	37.5	19	55.9	8	22.9	78	39.0
Fatigability	17	18.7	12	30.0	9	26.5	8	22.9	46	23.0
Difficulty in breathing	3	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.9	4	2.0
Sneezing	3	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.9	4	2.0
Less appetite	7	7.7	3	7.5	1	2.9	0	0.0	11	5.50
Eating irregularities	12	13.2	3	7.5	4	11.8	2	5.7	21	10.5
Vomiting	3	3.3	1	2.5	0	0.0	1	2.9	5	2.5
Psychological Problems										
Shopaholic while using	6	6.6	3	7.5	2	5.9	0	0.0	11	5.5
Frustration in absence	10	11.0	8	20.0	11	32.4	6	17.1	35	17.5
Loneliness in absence	25	27.5	7	17.5	6	17.7	11	31.4	49	24.5
Inadequacy in absence	4	4.4	3	7.5	7	20.6	3	8.6	17	8.5
Sweating and shivering while using	6	6.6	0	0.0	3	8.8	8	22.9	17	8.5

5.4 Physical Problems

The data shows that majority of the university students (58.0%) reported headache and strain to eyes as a major health problems. The backache was another physical problem faced by 39.0 per cent of the students. The least reported problems were difficulty in breathing, vomiting (2.5%), sneezing (2.0%), and indigestion (1.5%).

College wise analysis with respect to each problem shows that muscles and joints pain was least reported by students of COBSc&H (5.0%) and COAE&T (5.7%) and maximum by students of COHSc (11.8%) and COA (11.0%). Strain to eyes was a common health problem of more than half of the students of all the colleges. The headache was reported as a problem of 64.7 per cent (COBSc&H) followed by COA i.e. 61.5 per cent and least in case of COAE&T (48.6%). One third (30.0%) COBSc&H students faced fatigability with least in case of COA (18.7%). None of the students of COBSc&H and COHSc reported the problem with regard to the difficulty in breathing and sneezing with only 3.0 per cent of the other colleges students experiencing this problem. Appetite loss was not a problem for students of COAE&T. However, 7.5 to 7.7 percent of students (COBSc&H and COA respectively) faced this problem.

Eating irregularities as a result of use of internet was most common problem of students of COA (13.2%) followed by COHSc (11.8%) and least in case of COAE&T (5.7%). None of the students of COHSc reported the vomiting as a problem with very less from other colleges experiencing this problem. Indigestion was not a problem of the students of COA and COHSc with approximately 5.0 per cent of the students of COAE&T and COBSc&H reporting it. The results clearly shows that headache, strain to eyes and backache are the problems faced by majority of the students. This can be attributed to many wrong factors like posture, maintaining correct distance from the monitor. Brenner (1997) found that 80.0 per cent of the users facing missed sleep and missed meals as a problem arising due to use of

internet. Kurtiyilmaz (2007) also found that staying online for hours caused physical illness such as hemorrhoid, ocular diseases and increase in weight.

5.5 Psychological Problems

Nearly one fourth of the university students (24.5%) experienced loneliness in the absence of the internet with 17.5 percent also getting frustrated. Only 5.5 percent reported becoming shopaholic as result of using internet.

6. Conclusion

Internet is used frequently for many purposes such as preparing assignments, searching information, communicating with others and having fun by university students. Therefore, university students' probability of being affected by negative results of internet seems to be higher. The present study tried to detect the internet related problems among university students. Students were worried about virus attacks, slow speed of internet and strain to eyes and backache. To minimize these problems computers with latest specifications should be provided at places of accessing internet within the university, university should maintain all computers with good anti-virus software. Students should maintain proper posture during internet use.

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