An Analytical Study on Information and Communication Skills of Students

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Abstract :It is an analytical study on the ability and capacity of our college students in handling the Information technology equipments. This study aims to get an idea on how to these technological skills can be used for academic purposes and especially for library purposes. 500 under graduate and post graduate students were selected as a sample and different set of questionnaires were distributed among them. The variety of information technological equipments which are used by our college students were identified through the questionnaires. The depth of their ability to explore these equipments was also discussed. The study ends with a question how we can use their ability to handle the IT equipments and IT softwares for information retrieval and dissemination process effectively.

Index Terms - Information Technology skills - Communication skills – Information retrieval skills - Social media and social networking sites – Depth of ICT usage

I. Introduction

We know that the students are well versed with technological skills, their use, and. An international study conducted by Dahlstrom Walker and Dziuban (2014) 75,306 university students from five US states and 15 countries participated in a cross-sectional survey which examined their uses and expectations of information technology. The study concluded that information technology was deeply integrated into the personal, social, and academic lives of students. Laptops, Tablets, Smartphones became a part of their lives. These hand-held devices are mainly used for communication purposes and entertainment. To what extent they are being used for academic purposes? Do the Information Centers as academic libraries depend upon this technology? These growing Information skills of our modern students must be used to develop their academic qualities by incorporating their abilities in the field of academic libraries too. Information services through the internet are also reaching their maximum level so that any information can be received or sent at any time irrespective of place and quantity.

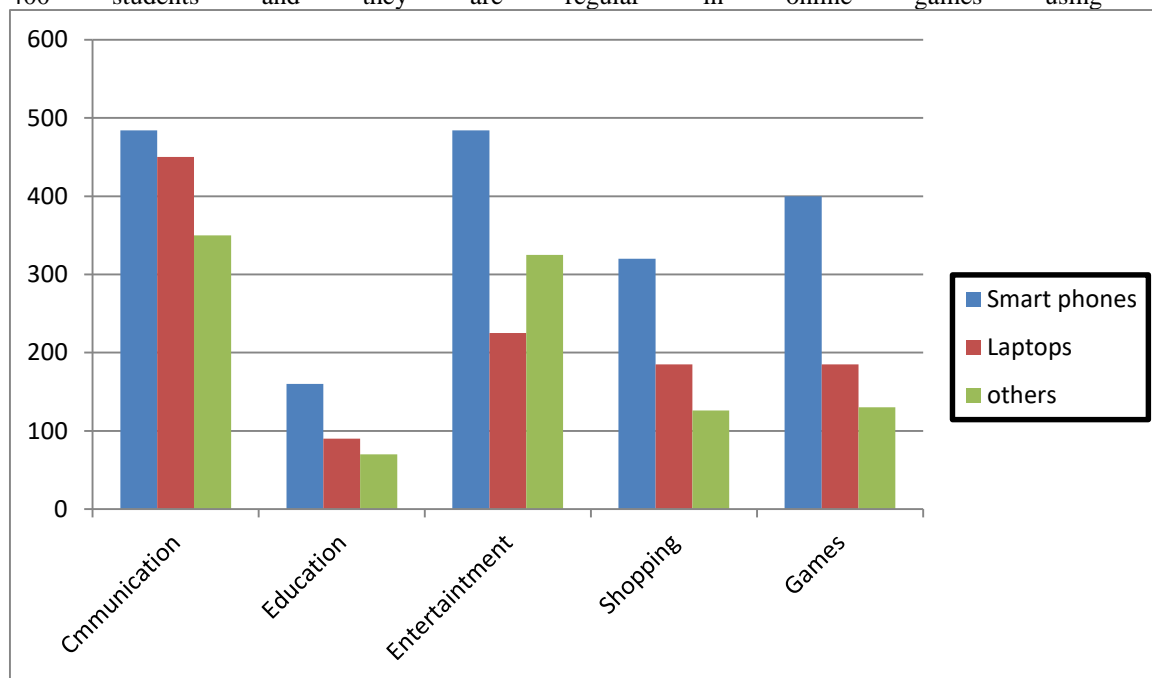**Information retrieval skills of academic students**

Rapid changes and developments are happening in the field of Information and Communication Technology, and these changes demand the updating of information retrieval skills of students and information professionals. Are we aware of the highly appreciated information skills of our Teenagers and Youth? "Googling" became very popular among the youth which shows the trends of information-seeking talents of our sparkling young generation. The influence of Social Media is increasing day by day in spreading all types of information through the fast-moving electronic platform. Our students are very competitive and talented in using these social media technologies and they are well-versed in handling the software and hardware. What about the navigational skills of our 21st-century library professionals? These soft skills should be incorporated with the academic activities, especially in academic libraries to increase the academic performance of our students. Here we are finding out how deep are the Information Technology skills of our college students when they are using it for communication, entertainment shopping purposes.

II. IT Skills for Communication and Entertainment.

As part of this study, a questionnaire was prepared and distributed among 500 final year Degree and Post Graduate students of different universities in Kerala which enquired the depth of their information skills and the various digital ways they are used for getting information. Out of 500 students, 484 students responded to the questionnaire and the following are conclusions:
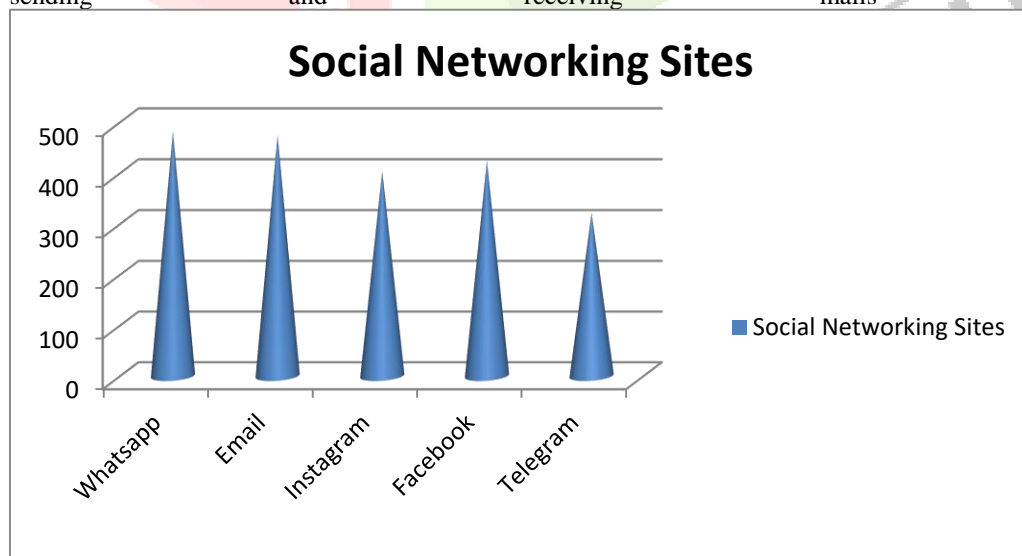
100% of the students are using smartphones for communication and entertainment. Phone calls, text messages, and WhatsApp messages are flowing from smartphones across the entire world regardless of time and place. Out of 484 students, 160 students are using their smartphones to communicate with their fellow students to update the class-related matters outside the class sessions. These 160 students are regularly visiting their institutional websites to check academic grades using their smartphones. Learning Management Systems (LMS) are always accessed using smartphones. These 160 students responded that they are using smartphones to register for University examinations, to search for their examination results, to register for different types of

events in their institutions and universities. 125 students commented that they are using smartphones for downloading the previous question papers and e-documents for the preparation of their examinations. All of them are using smartphones to watch movies, youtube videos, and live sports items. Responses to the questionnaire show that as an entertainer smartphones play a vital role in the lives of around 92% our student community. The majority of them are using these smartphones for business, shopping, etc. 320 students are using their smart phones and other equipments for online shopping. Online games are very popular among 400 students and they are regular in online games using the smartphones.

Another study was on the information technology equipments that the students use. Out of 484 students who responded to the questionnaire, 335 students are having their own laptops. They are using these laptops for surfing the internet for different types of information. The studies show that how rich is our students having the modern information equipments. 90 students responded that they are using the desktops and laptops from the college library. All the 484 students who responded to the questionnaire replied that they are having their own high profile smartphones. 118 students replied that they are having either tablets, ipads or other equipments together with these laptops and smartphones.

Another important question in the questionnaire was the involvement of the students in Social Networking Sites. All the 484 students, who responded to the questionnaire, were very active in either one of the modern social networking sites such as Email, Facebook, Twitter, Orkut, Whatsapp, Telegram, Instagram, hangout, Snapchat, share chat. What's app and Instagram users among college students are increasing day by day. Out of 484 students, 482 are using WhatsApp and they are very interactive in it. Studies proved that almost all of them are online day and night in these social networking sites. 425 students are very active in Facebook and they are also in touch with their facebook friends always round the clock. 404 are accound holders in Instagram and 322 students are very active in telegram. 475 of them have at least one email account and they are regularly sending and receiving mails from friends.
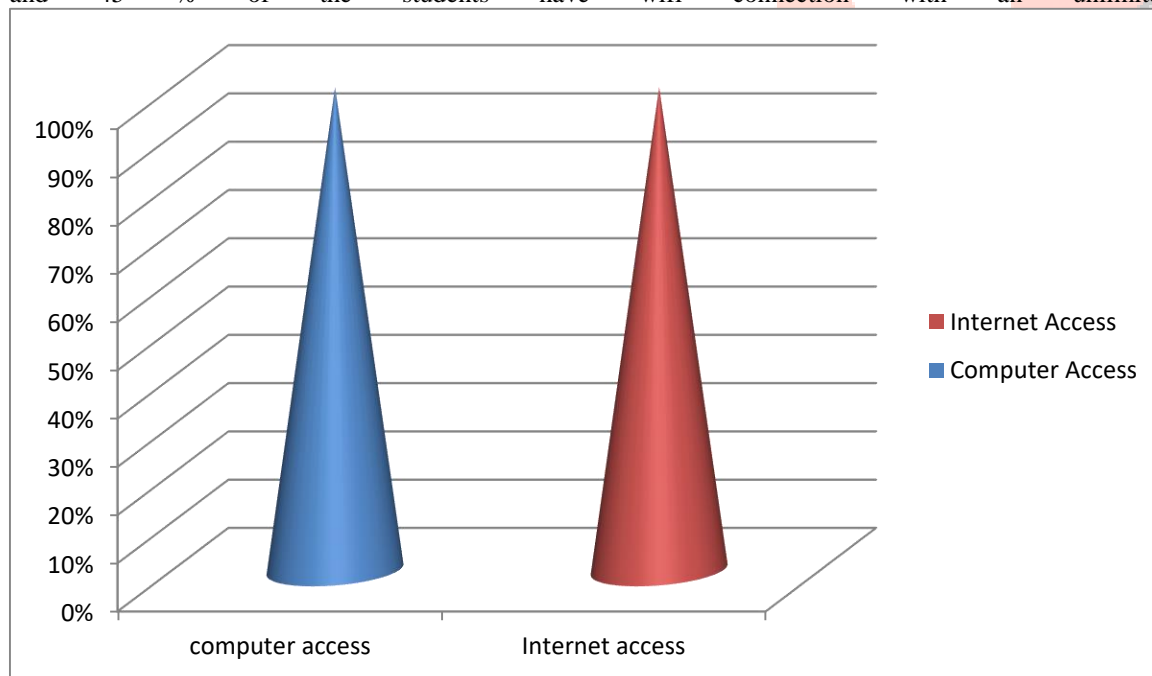

Questionnaire proved that online shopping sites are also equally important to the students and they are very active in this field too. Online shopping sites like Amazone, Flipkart, Snapdeal, myntra, ebay, etc are being regularly visited by these students for their day-to-day needs. 422 students responded that they are using Amazone shopping sites for their purchases. Online and offline gaming applications are also important. 402 students are using their leisure time for playing these online and offline games using their smartphones or laptops. Bsharah, Gasaymeh, and Abdelrahman, (2014) examined students' use of Facebook in a Jordanian university. For the purposes of the study, 286 undergraduate students completed a questionnaire. The great majority of participants (96.2%) were Facebook users. The most common reasons for using Facebook were for social and communication purposes. If we are considering gender statistics SNS was more popular among male students than female students. The field of

ICT undergoes changes day by day because of the regular emergence of new tools and applications.

The questionnaire also discussed the challenges in the field of ICT technology. Almost all the respondents replied that due to the fast developments in the field of ICT, the applications and Social networking equipment are becoming outdated in a short period. The majority of the students are not capable to have this costly equipment and applications as they are students. This shows that our academic libraries must be equipped with modern applications of ICT and updated equipment to serve the students in the fast pacing world.

An important question in the questionnaire was to enquire the possibility of accessing computers and the internet for college students. The practice of ICT skills depends, to a large degree, on having access to a computer to work on. Of the 484 students surveyed, 85.4% of them responded that they have access to a computer (desktop or laptop). Out of these 85.4% students, 70% of students have the computer facility in their own homes. 95% of the students agreed that they have an internet connection and 45 % of the students have wifi connection with an unlimited data facility.

'Tools for learning' by Davis (in 1993) illustrates the magical formulas for motivating students in their studies. Some of them are interested in subject matter, perception of its usefulness, general desire to achieve, self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as patience and persistence. Since the students are having a digital mindset, colorful and attractive graphics, meaningful and illustrative animations, appropriate sound effects, ICT-based multisensory stimulations, and real-world experiences are the most influencing factors.

Survey proved that the learning methods of the students were also totally changed. They are using experimental methods. Students are enthusiastic and fascinated when using electronic tools to solve problems. In his study on 'Computers in schools', Dalton (1998) proved that computers changed the student's knowledge, experience, skills, and attitudes completely.
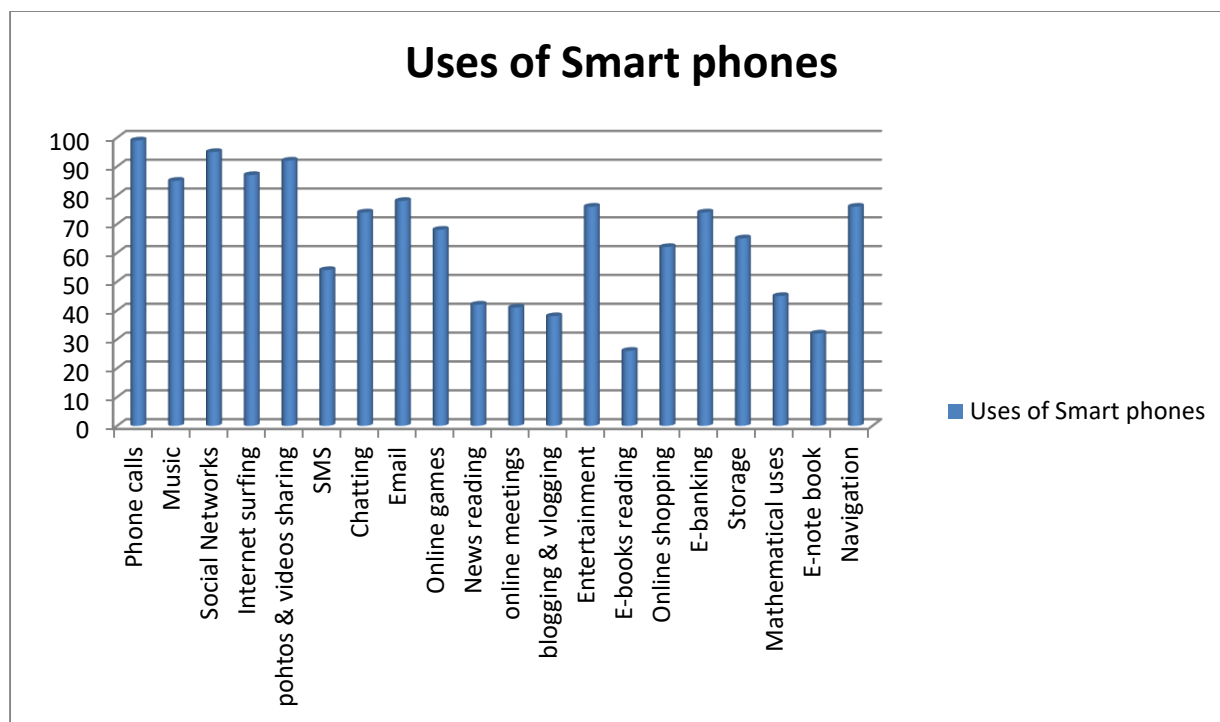
III.   Student's Use of ICT at a glance

The studies proved that almost all the students have access to mobile phones, desktop computers, and the internet. Using these ICT tools the students are creating and editing texts, playing music, watching other entertainments and creating multimedia presentations, and uploading on youtube. They are not only using their smartphones to communicate with people through voice calls or text messages but also taking digital photos and videos. Web-based technologies are also very familiar and popular to these students. Now the students are creating their own youtube channels and websites using their smartphones. These students are depending upon internet search engines for educational purposes and Wikipedia for getting more deep information. Many students are using Facebook for group works and Learning Management tools as educational tools. Using smartphones and social media they are engaging in educational collaborations and workgroups. The studies prove that the students are using these ICT tools for social activities than educational activities.

IV.   Depth of ICT Use for Personal Purposes

As per the survey, it is clear that almost all areas of the life of our student community are under the influence of these ICT tools. On holidays they are using their smartphones and computers for 16 hours. Even on class days, they are using it for 8 hours. How did modern students become so active in the ICT field? It is only by the outburst of smartphones. A possible explanation for the popularity of smartphones among university students in comparison with other electronic devices is that current versions of smartphones have software and hardware capabilities to replace tablets, memory sticks, MP3 players, game consoles, digital cameras, electronic organizers, and other electronic devices. In addition, smartphones can be used like computers and can accomplish many personal, social, and academic tasks. Furthermore, smartphone brands vary in price from cheap to expensive. Therefore, most university students can afford one. All the mobile networks give attractive data plans so that the students are being attracted to these plans. These data plans help the students to access the internet at any time and anywhere. Nowadays the academic youth are more interested to use smartphones than computers because of this internet freedom.

V.   Why not Academic Purposes?

The questionnaire enquired about the various uses of smartphones by the college students and came to the conclusion that there are around 20 types of uses among the students. The above graph shows the depth of the use of smartphones among college students. All these discussions must lead us to ask the question to what extent our students are exploring their IT talents to gather information for the academic purposes. Technological skills of our academic community are very sharp and competitive. In the field of communication, entertainment and online shopping they are very active. But these skills should be used more powerfully for the development of academic performance. Multimedia and social media services have become increasingly important carriers of information and the students have potential ability to handle these media. Unless the library management takes initiative to make our college libraries as a place where the students can use their technological skills to generate, retrieve and disseminate the information, our learning management system will be a failure.