Internet and students: a case study of Nalbari and Kamrup Metro Districts of Assam, India.

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Abstract

The internet has been a major boon to students for it influences them in various ways, be it in search for data and material for their studies, as a means of communication and entertainment or in keeping pace with the current political, economic and social scenario at the national and international levels. On the other hand, spending too much time on the internet can affect the students’ academic and social lives. It is in this backdrop that the present study tries to investigate the positive and negative influences of the internet on students’ lives in Nalbari and Kamrup (Metropolitan) Districts in Assam. The study has been carried out mainly by primary survey with the help of questionnaires. The respondents have been selected by stratified random sampling from different educational institutions. Responses from the parents and teachers have also been taken into account while arriving at the findings of the study.

Keywords: Internet, students, academic, entertainment, dependent.

1. Introduction

Information technology is being perceived as one of the golden keys for the progress and prosperity of mankind today; of which the internet occupies a pivotal role (Singh, 2009). The internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks that serves billions of users worldwide. (Makwana, 2014). It is seen that the relation between the students and the Internet is increasing day by day. While communication technology is progressing at an ever increasing pace, research into the impact of this progress has been few. (Appa Rao, 2013). It is in this backdrop that the present study tries to investigate the positive and negative influences of internet on students’ lives in Nalbari and Kamrup (Metro) Districts of Assam.

2. Objectives

The principal aims of the study are:
(i) to assess the influence of internet on the educational achievements of students in Nalbari and Kamrup (Metro) Districts in Assam,
(ii) to investigate the impact of internet on the behavioural aspects of the students in the two districts,
(iii) to examine the gender disparities in the positive and negative influences of internet among the students,
(iv) to examine the causes of such disparities in the influence of internet on students’ lives, and,
(v) to suggest suitable measures for improving the positive influences and mitigating the negative influences of internet on the lives of the students.

3. Methodology

The research work is mostly based on primary data which has been collected with the help of a questionnaire prepared for the purpose. Separate questionnaires have also been designed for teachers and for the parents/guardians of the students.

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Secondary data and information has been collected from sources such as books, journals, newspaper articles, various published and unpublished works of scholars from libraries and other sources.

The collected data has been evaluated with the help of various statistical techniques. Software like MS-Excel has been used for tabulation as well as for calculation of data. The results have been interpreted with the help of tables and graphs and inferences have been drawn based on them.

4. Analysis and discussion

4.1 Socio-Economic attributes of the students

Age: The students in this study are in the age group of 10 years to 24 years with the average age of the surveyed students being 17 years.

Sex: A total of 142 students were surveyed in both the districts. In Nalbari District 92 students were surveyed out of which 48 (52.17 per cent) were male and 44(47.83 per cent) were female. In Kamrup (Metropolitan) District 50 students were surveyed out of which 16(32 per cent) were male and 34(68 per cent) were female.

Educational background: Students studying in Class- V up to Post graduate classes were included in the study.

4.2 Positive and negative influences of Internet on students.

The internet helps the students in broadening their knowledge regarding various subjects. It provides instant information at the click of a mouse. On the other hand, it also has some negative aspects. Some of the positive and negative influences of the internet as indicated by the surveyed students are stated below:

4.2.1. The majority of the students use the internet for collecting school and college related references and notes. In Nalbari District 46.74 per cent and in Kamrup (Metropolitan) District 80 per cent of the students make use of the internet for searching references related to their academics. However, in Kamrup (Metropolitan) district a considerable number of the students use it for social networking (58 per cent).

4.2.2. Among the surveyed students belonging to the two districts, it is seen that in the majority of the cases (90.14 per cent), internet seems to play a positive role in their studies. The reasons stated by the students include convenience in collecting notes, study materials, etc. for study as well as data and information for projects and assignments [90.22 per cent in Nalbari District and 90.00 per cent in Kamrup (Metropolitan) District]. Gender-wise, in Nalbari District, 93.75 per cent of the males and 86.36 per cent of the females believe that the internet helps them in their studies. In Kamrup (Metropolitan) District, 87.50 per cent of the males and 91.18 per cent of the females feel the same. (Table: 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Nalbari</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Kamrup Metropolitan</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male_%</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female_%</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male_%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>93.75</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>86.36</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>48</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Survey, 2014-15

4.2.3. The study shows that majority of the students in Nalbari district (46.74 per cent) feel that the internet does not hamper their studies. But in case Kamrup (Metropolitan) District the picture is quite contrasting as 54 per cent of the students believe that the
internet hampers their academics. 35.42 per cent of the males and 31.82 per cent of the females have stated that internet hampers their studies. In Kamrup (Metropolitan) District, 43.75 per cent of the males and 58.82 per cent of the females have stated that the internet does affect their studies negatively. (Table: 2)

Table 2: Internet hampering in studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>NALBARI</th>
<th>KAMRUP (METROPOLITAN)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>45.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Survey, 2014-15

4.2.4. In terms of their academic performance a majority of the students have stated that considering both the positive and negative aspects of the internet, their academic performance have improved in the last two years [58.70 per cent in Nalbari and 58.00 per cent in Kamrup (Metropolitan) Districts]. On the other hand, 30 per cent of the students in Nalbari and 19.57 per cent of the students in Kamrup (Metropolitan) District have stated that their academic performance have remained the same, while 8 per cent in Nalbari District and 3.26 per cent in Kamrup (Metropolitan) District have stated that their academic performance degraded in the last two years. Gender-wise, 60.42 per cent of the males and 56.82 per cent of the females in Nalbari District have stated that their academic performance have improved. In Kamrup (Metropolitan) District also, 50 per cent of the males and 61.76 per cent of the females have given similar response. (Fig.: 1 & 2)

Source: Primary Survey, 2014-15
4.2.4 The study has revealed a positive relationship between duration of internet use and incidence of anger. It is seen that in Kamrup (Metropolitan) District, 15 per cent of the surveyed students who use internet for more than 3 hours per day get angry very often. In Nalbari District the figure is 5.8 per cent. But a majority of the students have stated that they get angry sometimes which may be due to other factors. (Table: 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time(Hrs)</th>
<th>Students(Kamrup-M)</th>
<th>Students %</th>
<th>Students (Nalbari)</th>
<th>Students %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.87</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32.61</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.04</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38.04</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4.2.5. It has also been found that the majority of the students consider internet as a means for getting over their depression. 55.43 per cent of the students in Nalbari and 66.00 per cent in Kamrup (Metropolitan) District regard internet as a tool for getting over their depressing thoughts. In Nalbari District, 47.92 percent of the males and 63.64 per cent of the females regard internet as medium of combating depression. In Kamrup (Metropolitan) District 68.75 per cent of the males and 64.71 of the females feels the same. (Table: 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>NALBARI</th>
<th>KAMRUP METROPOLITAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>47.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Primary Survey, 2014-15

4.4 Views of teachers regarding Internet use by students

Along with the students, the views of the teachers were also acquired. Following were the responses of the teachers.

4.4.1. Majority of the teachers (57.14 per cent) are of the view that internet hampers the students as they have observed that the students remain pre-occupied with the thoughts of the internet, mainly social networking, even during class hours. They feel that the same thing happens to the students in their homes also when they sit down to study. Besides, they have also stated that the students now-a-days waste a lot of time in internet surfing and hence
there has been a significant decrease in the amount of time spent in studying as well as in reading off-curricular books and literature as well as in social interactions.

4.4.2. However, not all the teachers are of the view that the internet hampers the students as 57.14 per cent of the surveyed teachers believe that the internet can replace library services.

4.4.3. Majority of the teachers have also stated that they have observed certain behavioural changes in the students (85.71 per cent). Most of them have pointed out that the students have become less attentive in the class. However, some positive aspects have also been indicated by the teachers as some of them feel that students have become smarter and are also able to speak and write good English. Besides they have also mentioned that students are presently taking a keen interest on the latest updates on prospective higher studies through the internet.

4.5 Views of the parents regarding Internet use by their children

4.5.1 It has been observed that the majority (93.33 per cent) of the parents have provided mobile phones to their children many along with internet facility out of sheer necessity.

4.5.2 The study reveals that the parents are not very keen in regulating the time of their children’s internet usage. 33.33 per cent of the parents have stated that they regulate the time daily, while 33.33 per cent of them regulate the time some times and 33.33 per cent of the parents never regulate the time period of internet use by their children.

4.5.3 Most of the parents are satisfied with the amount of time spent by their children on the internet as 66.67 per cent of them are happy with the time spent by their children on the internet.

4.5.4 According to the study, 66.67 per cent of the parents feel that their children are not neglecting their studies.

4.5.5 There has to be a strict regulation of the time period for which the students use the internet as well as close monitoring of websites.

5.2. There has to be a proper monitoring as well as censoring of what is being said or written online.

4.5.4. Students who show signs of internet addiction must be given proper counselling by teachers, parents or through professional counsellors.

4.5.5. Sites providing only entertainment should be blocked in the institutions so that the students cannot use the computer unnecessarily. (Kumar, et al., 2006)

4.5.6. Internet use in schools should be encouraged, particularly in the rural areas where many students are not very much familiar with the internet at present.

4.5.7. Teachers and students may create academic communities within the social networking sites that will be able to collaborate on academic topics like projects, assignments, laboratory works, etc.

4.5.8. Schools and universities may promote the academic usage of social networking sites by giving or submitting assignments through them instead of using syllabus management systems.

6. Conclusion

The present study has indicated that the internet has occupied an unwavering place in the personal as well as academic lives of the students Nalbari and Kamrup (Metro) Districts in Assam as more and more students are depending on it for fulfilling academic assignments, for entertainment as well as for social networking. The most significant attribute of the internet is that students receive information regarding a variety of topics within seconds. But students have to be wary as the all the information provided in the internet may not be true or may be misleading. Therefore, it is imperative that students should be thorough with their books and only look towards the internet for additional information which they should not blindly quote.

The fact that browsing the internet can make students happy and keep depressing thoughts at bay, as indicated by some students in the study is a major positive influence of the internet. But at the same time, parents and guardians should ensure that students socialise more with friends and relatives than chatting with on-line friends. There is no sign of internet addiction among the surveyed students which is worth mentioning.

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References


