Female Students’ Experiences of Using Internet Websites: A phenomenological Study

Yousef Adib
Associate Professor in Educational Sciences, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran

Eskandar Fathiazar
Professor in Educational Sciences, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran

Somayeh Keshavarzi
Ph.D. Candidate in Educational Psychology, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran

Received 2 November 2013          Accepted 14 May 2014

1- Introduction
Considering the prevalent presence of the internet in all aspects of people’s lives, it’s no surprise that university students resort to it more than ever, in order to get something done. It’s clear that if students, who are potential human resources in labor market, spend the preponderance of their time doing unscientific and tangential tasks, the result will be but their academic failure. This will, in turn, translate into degradation of universities’ scientific level which, consequently, will inflict harm on the economy and socio-cultural norms. This issue, brings to the fore the importance of studying the students’ experiences of the internet in depth. In this respect, studying the experiences, thoughts, and perceptions of dormitory students, specifically female dormitory students who are more likely to feel the absence of their families and loneliness, can be of paramount importance and this is what the present research aims to study.

2- Theoretical Framework
Nowadays we live in a world heavily influenced by the capabilities of virtual world and the internet. These capabilities enable us to communicate on a much wider scale, compared to the past, in all the essential aspects and facets of life. The impressive growth of utilization of the internet in doing almost every task is quite clear and remarkable. Considering the vast amount of data available on the internet in various fields such as scientific, cultural, political, artistic, social, etc., the way in which these data are used can portray the internet as a positive or a negative tool. Today, scientific research, receiving news, sending e-mails, registration, banking, downloading movies and music, etc. can all be done through the internet. This way we can save both money and time and get engaged in other activities. However, the internet is not always beneficial and, regardless of its many advantages and capabilities, has created some problems including internet addiction, amassing and

* Corresponding Author: keshavarzi.somaye@gmail.com
explosion of data, presenting uncouth images and information, and lack of privacy. Some researchers assert that unique characteristics of the internet such as ease of access, availability around the clock, ease of use, low cost, and users’ anonymity have all led to its popularity all over the world. But the same characteristics, in addition to being counted as advantages of internet, can be regarded as its disadvantages too. Many researches, most of which have been quantitative, have demonstrated the advantages and disadvantages of the internet. With the arrival of every new product and tool, the proper way of using it should be taught as well. Now that the internet is prevalent everywhere and in doing everything, like all other technologies, it requires the proper etiquette of use, too. Through teaching the proper etiquette of using the internet, we can hope that it turns into an exclusively useful technology among various strata of society, specifically students.

3- Method
The present research was conducted qualitatively, with a phenomenological approach, taking individuals as units of analysis. The thematic analysis proposed by Brown and Clarke (2006) has been used to investigate the experiences and perceptions of female dormitory students of the internet and the content of the websites they visited and to pinpoint the main and secondary themes. Participants were twelve female students living in dormitories in Tabriz studying in various academic grades during 2012-2013 and were selected purposefully. All of the participants were familiar with the computer and the internet and allocated some hours during the week using them. Ten of them had personal computers. Gathering information continued to the point of saturation. After assuring the participants of their anonymity and confidentiality of the recorded conversations, semi structured interviews were conducted using verbal and non-verbal communication. In order to assure the quality, accuracy, reliability, and validity, common methods in the qualitative research were used.

4- Findings
Analyzing the data revealed five main themes for female students’ experiences of the internet, each having some sub-themes. The following table demonstrates these themes.

5- Discussion and Conclusion
This research revealed the experiences and hidden notions in the students’ encounters with the internet. Thus, its findings can contribute to the proper and authentic interpretation of the incentives and the consequences of target groups’ usage of internet. The findings showed that students use the internet to achieve various goals (scientific, pastime, friendship, etc.). Considering the fact that students are potential human resources in the labor market and that the main
objective of their studies is to improve the educational quality, the majority of their internet usage should be allotted to scientific subjects; however, the findings of the present research revealed that the main and foremost objective of the internet usage among students is not related to scientific goals and there are a lot of tangential tasks that consume students’ time. This highlights the importance of awareness of and education in the proper use of the internet in making informed decisions with regards to sources and data. Moreover, it became evident that using the internet can have positive and negative consequences in students’ lives; hence it is suggested that, considering the experiences and perceptions of female students, positive consequences be reinforced and negative ones be mitigated.

**Keywords:** Internet websites, People’s experiences, Female students, Phenomenology.

**Reference**

5. Ershad Sarabi, R., & Mirzazdeh, A. (2007). The rate of using internet and full-text databases by academic members referring to the IT center of Kerman University of Medical Sciences. *Journal Strides Development Medical Education, 4*(1), 57-63. [In Persian]


23. Lashgarara, B., Taghavi Shahri, M., Maheri, B., & Sadeghi, R. (2012). Internet addiction and general health of dormitory students of Tehran University of
Medical Sciences. *Journal of School of Public Health and Institute of Public Health Research, 10*(1), 67-76. [In Persian]


