Attitude of Arts Students Towards Information Technology and Islamic Education

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Abstract

Information technology (ICT) has undoubtedly become the central drive for the evolution of a modern society. It is obvious without a modern and good education there can be no modern and good society. IT has connected the world including students with well known great scholars of the world. The Muslim world, like the rest of the world participates in the evolution. Muslims have learnt how to use IT to obtain Islamic materials such as translation of Qur'an, Tajweed, Hadith, and Tafseer.

This paper examines the attitude of Art students of Kashmir valley towards IT and Islamic Education. The results of this study provide information for policy makers and the researchers who are interested in understanding the role of IT in spreading Islamic education all over the world and clearing up the misapprehensions of non-Muslims about Islam.

Keywords: Information technology; Attitude, Islamic behaviour; Internet; software

Introduction

Islam has, from its inception, placed a high premium on education and has enjoyed a long and rich intellectual tradition. The importance of education is repeatedly emphasized in the Islam's most revered book Holy Quran evidenced by the more than 800 references with frequent injunctions, such as "God will exalt those of you who believe and those who have knowledge to high degrees" (QUR'AN 58:11), "O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge" (QUR'AN 20:114), and "As God has taught him, so let him write" (QUR'AN 2:282). Such verses provide a forceful stimulus for the Islamic community to strive for educati   on and learning. Education in the context of Islam is regarded as a process that involves the complete person, including the rational, spiritual,

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and social dimensions. Computers (Noordin, 2013) are the pivot for Information and communication technologies and the key player in today's globally interconnected human society. It is considered a tool for writing, storing, disseminating and sharing knowledge much similar to the concept of AL-QALAM in Qur'an as Allah(swt) mentioned: "Proclaim (or read) in the name of thy lord and Cherisher, who created, created man out of mere clot of congealed blood. Proclaim! And thy lord is most bountiful-He who taught (the use of) the pen. Taught man that which he knew not."(QUR'AN 96:1-5) The first verse revealed to our beloved Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) asks him to read. It puts the focus on the importance of reading or acquiring knowledge in Islam. The phrase 'the pen' is not restricted to its literal meaning but entails a wide scope. For instance 'the pen' is a means to write, store, distribute, share knowledge or even mere passing of information. Consequently, the computer could be regarded as technology with many similarities to the notion of 'the pen' as stated by the Allah (swt) in the first revealed chapter. In the Qur'an, Almighty Allah (swt) acquaints man with the concept of "information". The Almighty says: And He taught Prophet Adam (A.S) the names of all things; and placed them before the angels, and said: "Tell me the nature of these if you are right."(QUR'AN 2:31) This verse of the Holy Qur'an shows that the concept of information system has been demonstrated since the creation of man. Allah renders the quest for information part of human nature which distinguished man from angel. Therefore, man is able to love and understand love, and thus plan and initiate, as becomes the office of vicegerent. No wonder today it is the computer and its related technologies that have become an important and a popular means for sharing information and knowledge especially in an environment where user have access to thousands and thousands of gigabytes of databases.

In the past, Islamic literature was communicated throughout the muslim world through books and there were limited communication tools. The translation of the Holy Qur'an, Tajweed, Hadith, Tafseer, and Fiqh among others were available only in written texts. However, IT has created an environment whereby

Islamic resources can be converted into digital forms are easily distributed globally. In the early 21st century, the Internet has grown into the most popular medium of communication for any purpose throughout the Muslim World. Although initially the Internet became popular for messaging and chatting, it steadily became a more popular medium for training and education. People now have easy access to virtually any information they desired in the shortest of times. A couple of years prior, the Muslim world decided to utilize the World Wide Web (WWW) and Internet as the main medium through which to communicate Islamic literature globally. Different websites give Muslim scholars and organisations the opportunity to spread Islam globally through the web. The website whose main objective is to portray the commandments of Allah (SWT) in accordance with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is called an Islamic website (Mahmud et al., 2011). The website which offers significant and pertinent attributes attracts more users to learn/search information about Islam. These online services are evaluated by the facilities of free-software/applications, chats/blogs/forums, educational training, community development programs, online marriage opportunity, online donation, relief/assistance activities, and direct consultation with online scholars (Mahmud et al., 2013). Presently, the number of Internet users in the world is increasing and top ten countries of internet users contain a significant muslim population. Internet can be accessed for communication purpose through various devices such as a laptops, smartphones and/or tablets. Online services such as Skype, instant messaging services, e-mails and others can be used for communication. Synchronous communication (quick) and asynchronous (not in real time) communication happens over internet. Twitter is an example for the former and YouTube is an example for the latter. When two or more individuals communicate in real time via texting or chatting, it's a synchronous form of communication (Wood and Smith, 2001). Over time, internet has become (Cronin, 1995, Bandura, 2007, Ashitari et al., 2009, Jaffe, 2012) a platform for the public to communicate online with sophisticated devices. People from all over the world are able to discuss issues related to Islam through available online free

accessible softwares. Muslims and non-Muslims can take part in the online discussions. Different websites give Muslim scholars and organisations the opportunity to spread Islam globally through the web. The website whose main objective is to portray the commandments of Allah (SWT) in accordance with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is called an Islamic website (Mahmud et al., 2011). The website which offers significant and pertinent attributes attracts more users to learn/search information about Islam. These online services are evaluated by the facilities of free-software/applications, chats/blogs/forums, educational training, community development programs, online marriage opportunity, online donation, relief/assistance activities, and direct consultation with online scholars (Mahmud et al., 2013). The researchers are working very hard to classify Islamic and Unislamic (fake) sites. Some of the authentic Islamic websites are sunnah online.com, Islam-qa.com, Understand-Islam.net, Islam.com, Fatwa-online.com, Islamweb.net, Islamway.com, Islamhouse.com, audioIslam.com, aswatalislam.com and the unauthentic Islamic websites are answering-Islam.org.UK, convertstoislam.org, islam-watch.com, wikiislam.com, newislam.org, inthenameofAllah.org, thespiritofIslam.com, thequran.com, Islamic-exposed.org, jihadwatch.org. The list may not be complete all the time, as internet and websites are growing very fast. In this paper, we want to examine the attitude of art students of Kashmir valley towards the application of IT in spreading Islamic education.

Material and Methods
The present study was conducted in Kashmir valley of J&K State. In this paper we use a quantitative approach with survey design. The survey included 200 students from art subjects selected at random from different educational institutions of the Kashmir valley. To collect information a questionnaire was prepared keeping in view the literature available on the topic. The questionnaire developed was pre tested and validated by specialists and experts using appropriate statistical techniques. Each

participant selected at random was asked to fill out a questionnaire which asked questions about their habitat, education back ground, and source used for learning IT. The participants who participated in this study were given a verbal explanation regarding the purpose of the present study and were assured that confidentiality would be carried out throughout this study. The subject that was the focus of this study was use of IT by art students and Islamic Education. The data collected were tabulated and analyzed with the help of appropriate statistical tools using MINITAB software.

Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between male and female Art students in Attitude Towards IT and its use in Islamic Education

  In order to test Hypothesis 1, we use Mann-Whitney W test and test statistic is given by

$$W = N1 * N2 + \frac{Nx(Nx+1)}{2} - Tx$$

where N1 is the number of subjects in group 1; N2 is the number of subjects in group 2. Tx is the larger of the two rank totals and Nx is the number of subjects in this group.

Hypothesis 2 : There is no association between male and female respondents in case of usuage of IT Sources Used for Learning purpose and Entertainment. To test the Hypothesis 2, we use chisquare test (with usual   notations) as given by

$$X^2 = \sum_{i=1}^{2} \frac{(o_i - e_i)^2}{e_i}$$

where $X^2 \sim \chi_1^2$, o_i and e_i are observed and expected frequencies. We reject H_0 if
  p-value is less than specified level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data presented in Table 1 shows the distribution of study population as per the characteristics Gender, Family status,

Economic status, Habitation, Education Status and IT facilities available. It is observed that majority of the male respondents were from middle class families (81.54%), living in urban areas (56.15%), post graduate students (46.15%) and having computer with internet facilities (80.77%). Further, It is observed that majority of female respondents were from middle class families (81.43%), living in rural areas (67.14%), under graduate students (42.86%) and having computer with internet facilities (75.71%). Statistically, significant difference was observed between male and female respondents in habitation ($p < 0.01$).

Table 1: Characteristics of the studied population

Characteristics	Category	Male (%) n=130	Female (%) n=70	Chisquare	P-value
Economic Status	Lower Class	24 (18.46)	13 (18.57)	0.985	>0.05
	Middle Class	106 (81.54)	57 (81.43)		
	Upper Class	0 (0)	0 (0)		
Habitation	Urban	73 (56.15)	23 (32.86)	7.510	<0.01
	Rural	57 (43.85)	47 (67.14)		
Education	UG	45 (34.62)	30 (42.86)	2.101	>0.05
	PG	60 (46.15)	25 (35.71)		
	PhD	25 (19.3)	15 (21.43)		
Facilities Available	Computer	25 (19.23)	17 (24.29)	0.701	>0.05
	Computer with Internet	105 (80.7)	53 (75.71)		

The data presented in Table 2 shows that in case of male respondents (33.08%) use IT resources daily, (29.03%) use IT based on need/mood, (24.62%) respondents use IT resources 2-3 times in a month and (13.08%) use IT 1-2 times in a month. In case of female respondents (32.85%) use IT resources daily, (25.71%) use IT based on need/mood, (22.86%) respondents use IT resources 2-3 times in a month and (18.57%) use IT 1-2 times in a month. Statistically, nonsignificant difference between male and female respondents is observed in case of variable time spend in using IT resources (p>0.05). Further, in case of usuage of e-resources there is a nonsignificant difference between male and female respondents with respect to characteristics usage of e-resources. Finally, in case of variable preference of watching T.V there is a significant difference between male and female respondents (p<0.01). Majority of the male respondents (37.69%) give first preference to News channel(s) followed by sports (26.92%) whereas majority of the female respondents gave first presence to Islamic channel(s) (41.43%) followed by movie/entertainment channel(s)(27.14%). The results obtained in this study are in agreement with the earlier studies (Bilal et. al., 2015)

Table 2: IT Sources Used for Learning purpose and Entertainment

Characteristics			Male (n=130)	Female (n=70)	Chisquare	P-value
Use of IT Resources	Daily		43 (33.08)	23 (32.85)	1.176	>0.05
	2-3 times in a week		32 (24.62)	16 (22.86)		
	1-2 times in a month		17 (13.08)	13 (18.57)		
	Based on Need/Mood		38 (29.03)	18 (25.71)		
Gadget used for e-Resources	Desktop		51 (39.24)	18 (25.71)	0.288	>0.05
	Laptop		33 (25.38)	23 (32.86)		
	Tablet		13 (10.0)	08 (11.43)		
	Mobile		33 (25.38)	21 (30.0)		
	e-Book		0 (0) (0)	0 (0)		
T.V. Channels Watching (First choice)	Sports		35 (26.92)	04 (5.71)	24.701	<0.01
	Movie/Entertainment		16 (12.31)	19 (27.14)		
	Islamic		21 (16.16)	29 (41.43)		
	News		49 (37.69)	09 (12.86)		
	Any other		09 (6.92)	09 (12.86)		

The data presented in Table 3 shows that only in case of item (vi) statistically there is a nonsignificant difference between the male and female respondents ($p>0.01$). This means there is a difference between male and female respondents in knowledge about the role of IT in spreading wrong messages of Islamic. The results obtained are in agreement with the earlier studies.

Table 3: Attitude of Art students Towards IT and its use in Islamic Education

Characteristics	Male N=130	Female N=70	Mann-Whitney W	P-value
	Median	Median		
i) I believe that IT gives me opportunities to learn many new things	4.152	3.502	17206.0	<0.01
ii) I use Internet more for pleasure than for doing my assignments	3.1802	3.418	11680.0	<0.01
iii) Learning the Internet is enjoyable	4.726	3.889	16240	<0.01
iv) IT is useful for every Muslim student	3.764	4.160	10725.0	<0.01
v) IT help in spreading Islam	3.9220	3.2330	17398.0	<0.01
vi) There are website(s) that are spreading wrong message of Islam	2.5362	2.5142	13378.0	>0.05
i) IT and morality are related	3.9035	3.7527	14637.0	<0.01

Conclusion

Information Technology has witnessed a rapid growth and has influenced human relationships, especially in progressing new means of communication. This new technology offers a system for its users to communicate with each other disregarding time, place and distance. The current paper focused on the impact of IT in extending Islamic knowledge by means of online Islamic literature, Qur'an, its recitation, translation, Tafseer and the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH). Internet has provided a lot of opportunities for accelerating the pace of research activities in any field by providing a platform where a scholar can access, utilize and exchange information with other scholars scientists located in any part of the

globe. Internet offers many other services that can greatly help scholars in timely completion of research. These services include Usenet, Gopher, Telnet, Blog, World Wide Web, Web indexing, Internet Telephony, Virtual labs, etc. A scholar can utilize search engines for locating a particular piece of desired information. Knowledge of fake/unislamic websites and online Islamic websites such as www.islamonline.com and software, which can be downloaded from the web free of charge are very very useful for learning purpose. Information Technology gives Muslims the opportunity to gain Islamic education from their homes through virtual classes. Islamic games and videos are accessible for children to learn Islam. These interactive softwares motivate Muslim children to learn Islam. Today, every Muslim and non-Muslim can listen not only to Islamic talks by famous researchers of the Muslim world but can take part in online discussions on various Islamic topics. They have the opportunity to ask questions and convey their perceptions. The significance of IT in Islam is duly acknowledged in the Muslim world. From the perspective of the researchers, the Muslim world should generate a concentrated online accessible Islamic library to translate Islamic literature into every language for the global society. The study reveals that the number of Internet users in Kashmir valley is continuously increasing and students although less is number shows interest in learning Islamic through internet. The students although less in number (37%) are aware of the websites that are spreading wrong message of Islam. IT can be very helpful for students and teachers for teaching and learning purpose in Kashmir valley which is at present facing political disturbance. The results obtained in this study are in general coincide with the earlier studies conducted across the globe. The thrust of quality education by all standards of understandabilities should be on the wider use of modern information technology. This paper argues that IT not only makes Islamic literature globally accessible, but also assumes an essential role in spreading Islamic education all over the world and clearing up misapprehension of non-Muslims about Islamic teaching.

Limitation(s) of the Study

In this study the sample size is less so for future study needs more samples.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made based on the results and conclusions of this paper.

i. Further studies using the quantitative and qualitative approaches to find out the
   relationship between students' attitude towards IT with their Islamic Education.

ii. IT centre should be established in every institute and funds be made available to
   purchase computers and other IT equipment.

iii. This study has investigated the attitude of students towards IT and Islamic education,
   future research may focus on the other factors such as computer and Internet
   experience of the students.

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