

STUDY ON CELL PHONE USAGE AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS: AS A LEARNING TOOL

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Abstract: The present study was carried out to assess the extent of cell phone usage “in” and “off” the campus and also extent of use of social media by the undergraduate students of Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Veterinary Education and Research (RIVER), Pondicherry.

Data were collected with structured questionnaire from all the undergraduate students for this study. Out of 203 students, cell phones using off the campus, in the campus and during class was 100, 54 and 51 per cent for an average one hour and 45 minutes, 32 minutes and 22 minutes respectively. 95 per cent of the students use internet in cell phones, WhatsApp was the most penetrated social media application.

Keywords: Cell phone, Students, WhatsApp.

Introduction

One of the most important technologies that has wide spread and accelerated diffusion among the people in the last decade is the cell phone. The type and nature of this technology are undergoing drastic changes to suit various types of users. From a luxury status, it is rising to be a need of every person. As the policies like cashless transfer of money and transactions of different types, the role of mobile phone has grown beyond the connectivity through “talking” alone. Considering the direct and fast penetration of this technology among the student community, a study was undertaken among the undergraduate students of Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Veterinary Education and Research (RIVER), Pondicherry, India to understand the use of cell phones among them.

We share the results of this study in this article mainly to raise certain critical questions/issues on the findings, that has direct implications on the ‘learning situation’ as well as on the need for changing pedagogical perceptions of the faculty.

Objectives

1. To understand the extent of cell phone usage “in” and “off” the campus.
2. To understand the extent of use of social media by the students.

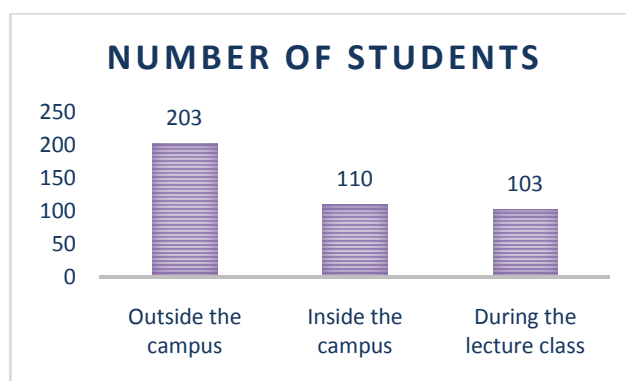
Methodology

The study was undertaken in 2017 among 203 undergraduate students of RIVER, who were studying in the 1st year to 4th year. A structured questionnaire was developed for this, which was pilot tested. The questionnaire was distributed to the students in the classroom by the investigator, who explained the purpose of study to the students and collected it from them there itself. Since the names of the respondents were not be identified in the questionnaire, the responses were found to be frank and truthful.

Results and discussion

The sample comprised of 203 students, of which 108 were girls and 95 were boys. All of them own cell phones, of which 88% have smart phones. All the students definitely use it off-campus but almost 50% of the students use it in the campus and classrooms (Figure 1). The cell phone is being widely used for chatting, browsing, music & videos, apart from talking of course.

Fig: 1 Number of students using cell phones



Use of cell phones outside the campus/day

Understandably all the students use cell phones off the campus – on an average one hour and 45 minutes is being spent on cell phone use off-campus per day. Students' daily cell phone usage ranges from 20 minutes to 4 hours.

Use of cell phones inside the campus/day

More than 50% of the students (110 out of 203), use cell phones in the campus for 32 minutes on an average every day. The usage pattern is almost similar for boys and girls (boys 35 minutes and girls 30 minutes). It is largely being used during leisure time, like during lunch break or between classes.

Use of cell phones during classes/day

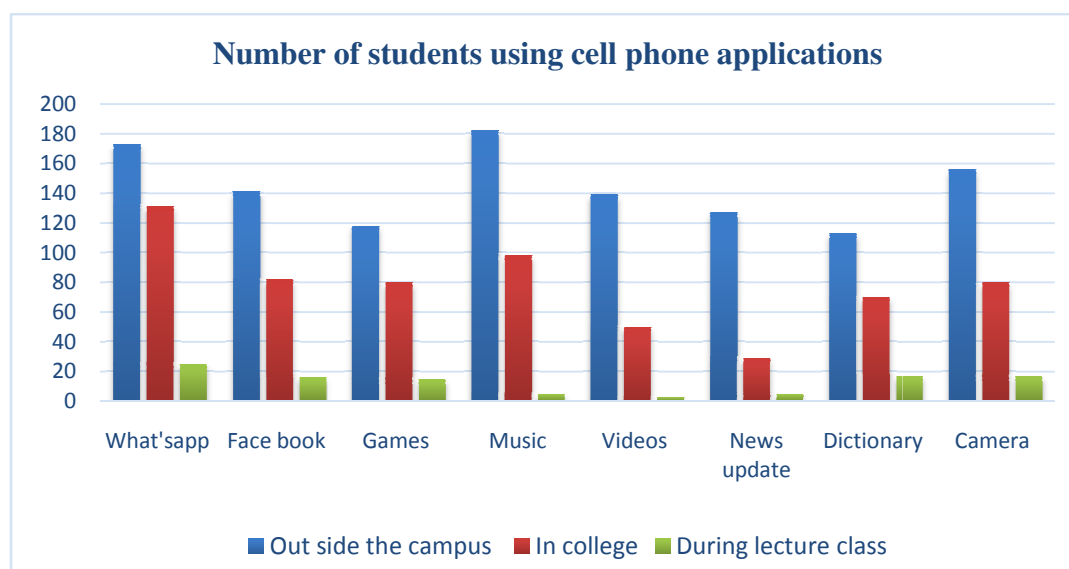
Only 10% of the students (20 out of 203) responded that they do not use cell phone at all during lectures/classes. 103 students affirmed using a cell phone during lectures/classes. 80

students did not respond to this question. On an average students use a cell phone for 22 minutes a day spread over different times. They use it for checking their messages and calls. The main reasons the students give for using cell phones during lectures are: (i) the sessions are not interesting enough; (ii) sometimes they use it to keep awake during lectures; and (iii) occasionally when they can't understand what is being taught. A study on medical students of Madhya Pradesh by Dixit *et al.*, (2010) found 38.5% students responded they keep on checking their mobile phones for messages and calls during class. Results are not in with the findings of Brenner (2015) reported that students in Harvard University, Cambridge using cell phone on an average of 11 times per day in class. 92% of college students reported using their cell phones to send text messages during class. 80 % of students agreed that using mobile phone in class decreases their ability to pay attention in.

Major activities for which cell phones are used

It was observed that 95% of the students use internet in cell phones. On an average, per day 1 hour 40 minutes are spent by students on social media, music and videos, information seeking, playing games (Figure 2). According to Ghatge (2015), Dixit *et al.* (2010) college students spent considerable time in social media in India.

Fig: 2 Number of students using different cell phone applications

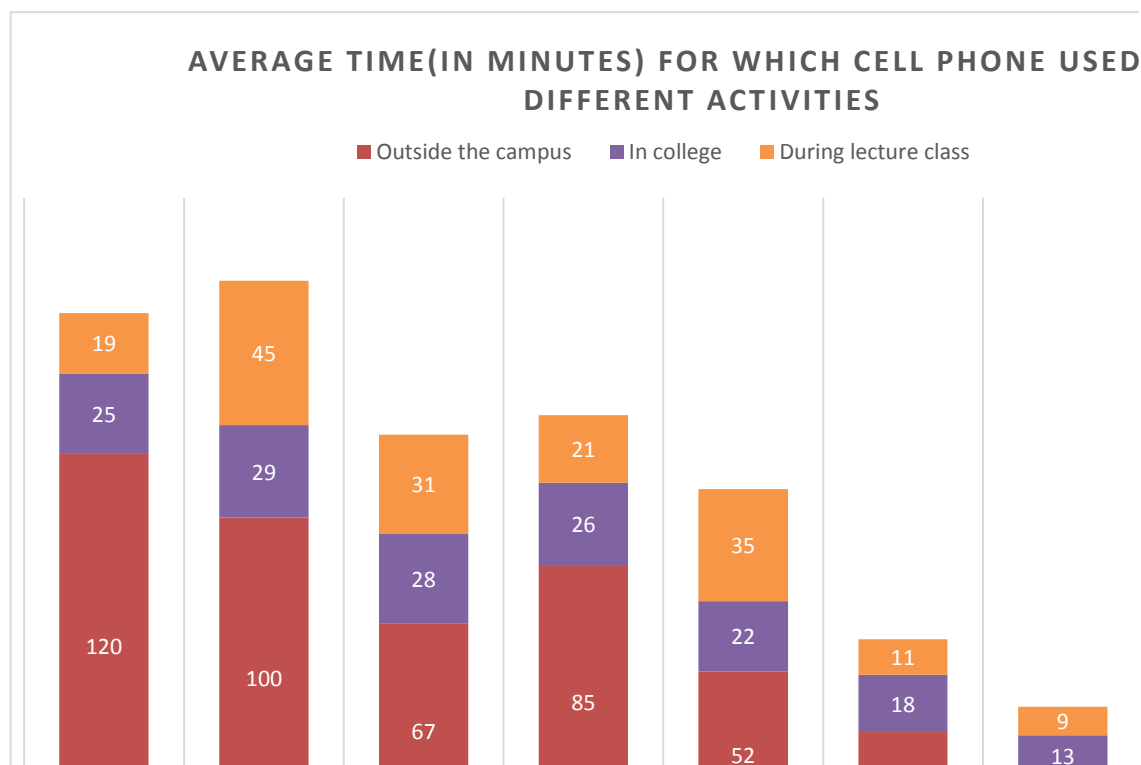


WhatsApp & Facebook

The study revealed that 110 students spend on an average 2 hours per day on WhatsApp, in and off the campus and during lectures. WhatsApp is an internet applicable application for sharing information, images, videos, songs, and also has a facility for calling. It is because of

these facilities that most of the students use this application, both in and off the campus and during lectures. Results are similar to the findings of Kasch *et al.*(2016) who reported that 44 per cent of veterinary students said WhatsApp as their favourite application in Germany. Facebook is the platform where students can share their emotions, pictures and activities. The study revealed that 80 students spend on an average 1 hour 40 minutes on Facebook daily (Figure. 3). This was similar to the findings made by Alexander (2011).

Fig: 3 Average time (in minutes) for which Cell phone used for different activities



IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY

We need to accept that cell phones play an important role in the life of students, as it does for everyone else. It is synonymous with information seeking and sharing in all domains of life – private, social and academic. Cell phones offer instant connectivity to information and entertainment. Many functions of a computer are being replaced by the cell phone. In this context, it is important to view the opportunities for using a cell phone as a teaching aid.

How best can the cell phone be used as a learning tool

Since all the students are using cell phone the potential of this ICT can be explored in areas of “learning”. Video graphing lectures and having it as repositories can facilitate students to access classes in advance or which they miss. This demands “technology-friendly” faculty who need to position themselves in the emerging scenario of ICT becoming a prominent teaching tool. ‘Internet searching’ exercise on a specific theme for a short while in selected

lectures can be used purposively to stimulate the students and help them to participate more in the learning process. Recently studies are emerging in the use of cell phones in the teaching learning process. Smart phones are the effective tools in teaching and learning purposes in Bangladesh (Bashir *et al.*, 2014).

Use of cell phone during lecture classes

Majority of the students are using cell phones while class is on. They use it on average for 22 minutes spread on a day. It is used for chatting, music, videos and information seeking. The question is whether this will add to an effective learning situation, or how best we can use this as a learning tool. ‘The Traffic signal approach’ proposed by Rao (2012) in school education breaks down mobile device usage in the classroom into three manageable components – that is when a teacher is taking class he/she may show any one of three different coloured cards like red, yellow and green. Red card means students must keep their cell phones completely away. Green card means as directed by the teacher for a search & discussion activity. Yellow card to clarify doubts students may use cell phone in between a lecture class. Distractions arising from the use of a cell phone can be limited by approving its use by students for specific purposes that will aid teaching in a class.

Opportunities

1. The cell phones can help students recording notes at least certain points of talk
2. Helpful in immediate doubt clearance by internet searching, to further follow a class.
3. For knowing effectiveness of teaching encourage the students to feed back through applications like “Poll Everywhere” in mobile phone

Opportunity and scope for cell phone in enhancing capacity building in student’s life

The instant connectivity to information and entertainment is facilitated through the cell phones. Many of the functions of a computer is being replaced by the cell phone, and studies increasingly depend on these.

In this context it is also important to view the opportunities of cell phone as a teaching aid/ tool connected to the real world. We need to accept that the cell phones play an important role in the life of students, like that of others. It is ubiquitous with information seeking and sharing in private, social and academic life.

Off and on campus use of cell phone by the students is not a matter of concern; however, the use required classroom needs rethinking. This requires a mindset change among the teachers on accepting learning opportunities, if present though the use of cell phones and judicious

combination of conventional methods like lecture with cell phone applicable pedagogic approaches.

Limited, purposive use might be beneficial. It also needs increased involvement of the teachers in identifying the degree and nature of use of this teaching by students. For students day starts with a cell phone, ends with a cell phone & sleeps safe with a cell phone beside.

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