

An Empirical Research on Internet Usage among Students of Theology

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ABSTRACT

Today Internet is preferred medium of communication for everybody. We use the Internet in almost everything we do. One feels totally helpless if he or she is not able to access internet even for a day. The Internet impact on society can be felt in almost everything and everywhere. The study examines the use of Internet among students of Theology, Dharmaram College, Bengaluru. The volunteer participant of this study consists of 55 students of Theology. The research design is the descriptive survey and questionnaire was constructed to collect data from the respondents. The aim of this study is to investigate the internet usage pattern and to find out the opinion of students of Theology about the Internet. As the study was quantitative research based upon a descriptive survey research design a simple descriptive statistics was used to summarize and describe the basic features of the data in this study. This study used SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Scientists) to analyze the data and the results of this study is presented on tables and graphs. The results of the study show that there was a very low level of Internet use among the students of Theology. The study also found that only 43.6% students strongly disagree and somewhat disagree that the Internet does more harm than good.

Keywords: Internet, Theology, Church, Seminarian, Priest, Student.

I.INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, Internet is the most significant realities of our times. It affects directly or indirectly people's opinion, habits and behavior. The Internet has influenced the way people work, access information, communicate, entertain, and relate to each other. It has made an enormous impact on people's life, including those who have offered their lives to serve God and other. The Internet is a global system of connections between millions of computers that allows almost instant access to and dissemination of information [1].

The Internet has provided much positive impact on people throughout the world. It can be informative, convenient, resourceful and entertainment. People can do almost everything with it just by one click. However, the internet can also offer harmful influence on human such as pornography, security and privacy [2].

The issue of the use of the Internet and new information communication technologies has always posed some challenges to the Church and the Church has generally shown lack of interest in the use of new information communication technologies. Considering this fact this study aims at investigating the attitudes of students at the faculty of Theology, Dharmaram College towards the Internet; mainly Internet usage years, purpose of using

the Internet, how frequently they using Internet, how much time spend in Internet, what social network sites use and where they use Internet.

According to the recent report of Statista incorporated company (2017) there are over 460 million internet users in India and India is the second largest online market after China. It also added that by 2021, there will be about 635.8 million internet users in India. This shows a significant increase in the internet penetration rate in India. Furthermore, the report noted that men dominated internet usage in India with 71 percent to women's 29 percent. The report also noted that about 323 million people in India access the internet through their mobile phones [3].

This paper presents the survey results of students of Theology, Dharmaram College, Bengaluru and the objective of the study is to investigate the Internet use behavior of students. The purpose of this study is to explore the attitudes of students at the faculty of Theology, Dharmaram College towards the Internet; mainly Internet usage years, for what purpose they use the Internet, how frequently they use Internet, how much time spend in Internet, what social network sites use, where they use Internet and their opinion about Internet.

II.BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF DHARMARAM COLLEGE

Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram (DVK) or Dharmaram College, Bengaluru is Pontifical Athenaeum for higher learning and formation, established by the Congregation for Catholic Education, Vatican, as an independent institute, empowered to grant degrees, including Licentiate and Doctorate in Philosophy and Theology, Licentiate in Oriental Canon Law, Licentiate and Master's in Formative Spirituality and Counselling. Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram is a Registered Society under the Karnataka Societies of Registration Act 1960 [4, p. 14].

Dharmaram College was formally inaugurated on 23 February 1958 by Most Rev. John Robert Knox, the Papal Internuncio to India, although started functioning on 1 June 1957 itself. Dharmaram, true to her name, was from its inception giving special attention to Indian orientation in the academic, spiritual, liturgical, and cultural endeavors and promoted inculturation, dialogue, and ecumenism in the Church and in the country [4, p. 15].

Simply we can say that Dharmaram College is an educational institution of higher learning devoted to students (also called *seminarians*) mainly in theological education. Generally Dharmaram College prepares the students aspiring to become a priest or clergy. The academic study in Theology at Dharmaram College aims to deepen the student's appreciation of the mystery of God revealed in the Sacred Scripture and the development of Christianity and Biblical studies and the history of Christianity [5].

III.REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Issues relating to the Church and Internet have raised concerns in different parts of the world among Church leaders and theologians because of misuse of Internet. However, the Church has stated an overall positive approach to Internet and views it as effective medium of communication. It considers media such as the Internet

to be a “gift from God” [6]. Therefore, there are number of websites available in Internet which provide information about Christian traditions, doctrine, and commentaries on scripture [7].

In 2002, the Church has produced two brief documents entitled *The Church and Internet*, along with *Ethics in Internet. The Church and the Internet* speaks specifically about the usage of the Internet and the Internet’s role in the life of the Church for the sake of human development, justice and peace, for the up-building of society at the local, national, and community levels in light of the common good and the spirit of solidarity [8]. While *Ethics in the Internet* argues that the Catholic Church, along with other religious bodies, should have a visible, active presence on the Internet and be a partner in the public dialogue about its development [9].

Beside Church documents, different scholars have conducted studies on the link between the Church and the Internet. For instance, in a study conducted by Agnes Mae D. Solatan in 2013 titled “The Catholic Church and Internet use: An evolving perspective from Pope John Paul II to Pope Benedict XVI”, it was revealed in the study that Roman Catholic Church has accepted, incorporated and continues to encourage Internet use as tool for communication, evangelization and teaching without compromising its belief that “direct human relations should always remain fundamental for the transmission of the faith” [6].

In a similar line a study was conducted by Jim Rice in 2011 titled “New Media Project at Union Theological Seminary”, it was discovered that the church and its leader do not use new media just because everyone uses it, rather members of the church use it to communicate and connect with other members for building and nurturing their community of faith, and so they use it [10].

Furthermore, in 2015, a study titled “Cyber Church: Pastors and the Internet” was carried out by Barna Research Group. The study examined at pastors’ use of the Internet and their attitudes toward it. The results of the study revealed that 96% pastors use computer at church, 39% use it for accessing the Internet and for email 46%. Additionally, 97% Pastors use the Internet to find information, 88% use for buy products, 80% use for keep up on existing relationships, 39% use it for spiritual or religious experience, 71% check our new music or videos and 26% pastor’s use for make new friends. The findings further show that more than half of pastors (54%) agree that the Internet is a powerful tool for effective ministry [11].

Igbeneghu & Aderinto in 2011 conducted a study titled “Utilization of Internet by students of Nigerian Baptist Theological seminary Ogbomoso, Nigeria”. The sample of the study was 300 students. The study revealed that 73.9 % of the students use Internet for educational and academic purpose, while 6.0% of the respondents use internet for entertainment. In addition, study revealed that the level of Internet use among students is very low, majority 54.34% of the respondents spend an average of between 1 and 2 hours weekly using the Internet [12].

In 2016, a study entitled “Awareness, Access, and Use of Electronic Information Resources among the Seminarians in Nigeria” was conducted by Adeyoyin, Idowu & Sowole. The subjects of the study were 140 respondents. The results of the study revealed that respondents were fully aware of electronic information resources, they have unrestricted access to electronic information resources and they make use of them for course assignments, broaden their knowledge, and expose them to other peoples’ ideas, opinions, and views [13].

IV. AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the study is to investigate the internet usage of students in the faculty of Theology of Dharmaram College, Bengaluru and also to learn for what purpose they are using Internet. The study attempts to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the Internet usage years' habits of students of faculty of Theology?
2. How often do the students of faculty of Theology use the Internet?
3. How much time is spent per day in Internet by the students of faculty of Theology?
4. What social network site is mostly preferred by the students of faculty of theology?
5. From what location do students of faculty of Theology use the Internet most?
6. For what purpose do students of faculty of Theology use the Internet?
7. What is the opinion of students of faculty of Theology about the Internet?

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

Concerning the nature of this study a quantitative research based upon a descriptive survey design is used. A descriptive survey design seeks to find out certain facts concerning an existing phenomenon.

5.2 Population & Sample

The study population consisted of all the 285 students of the Dharmaram College, Bengaluru [4, pp. 201-211]. The volunteer participants in this study consisted of 55 bachelor of Theology students attending the Dharmaram College, in Bengaluru. The sampling procedure that is used in this study is the purposive sampling technique.

5.3 Research Instrument

To collect the data from the sample size questionnaire was constructed. The questions were asked about Internet usage years' habits, how often and how many hours students of Theology spend in the Internet. The questions were also asked about which social network site is mostly preferred, from what location, for what purpose and what is their opinion about Internet were asked to the students.

5.4 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Face validity technique was used to validate the research instrument. The instrument was given to the expert, Dr. Kennedy Andrew Thomas, Director, Total Quality Management System, Christ University, Bengaluru for validity purposes.

In checking for the reliability of the instrument, the Test-Retest Reliability technique was used to validate the research instrument. A total of 20 students from the Dharmaram College Bengaluru participated in the study. An instrument was administered to the group of 20 students, after one month, it was re-administered second time to the same group. The findings show Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5.5 Data Collection and Analysis

A total of 65 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents out of which 55 copies were returned and found valid for analysis. The analysis techniques and procedures for this survey instrument were based on the Likert format. In this format, the respondents were given a set of statements on the Internet usage years' habits, how often, how many hours, which social network site preferred, from what location, for what purpose and what is their opinion about Internet were asked to the students. Which they suppose to answered in terms of five alternatives. These options were scored by giving weights like 5,4,3,2, and 1. This gave a benefit to the researcher to elicit the opinions of the students on use of the Internet. As the study was quantitative research based upon a descriptive survey research design a simple descriptive statistics was used to summarize and describe the basic features of the data in this study. This study used SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Scientists) to analyze the data and the results of this study is presented on graphs.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Internet used years

On the question of Internet usage years, 5.5% of the respondents have been using the Internet for a less than a year, 3.6% of the respondents have been used it for 2 year and 3 year, 87.3% respondents have been using the Internet for more than 4 years. This results show that 87.3% of the participants have been used the internet for more than 4 years. This results show that the Internet adoption rate among the students of Theology is high (Figure 1).

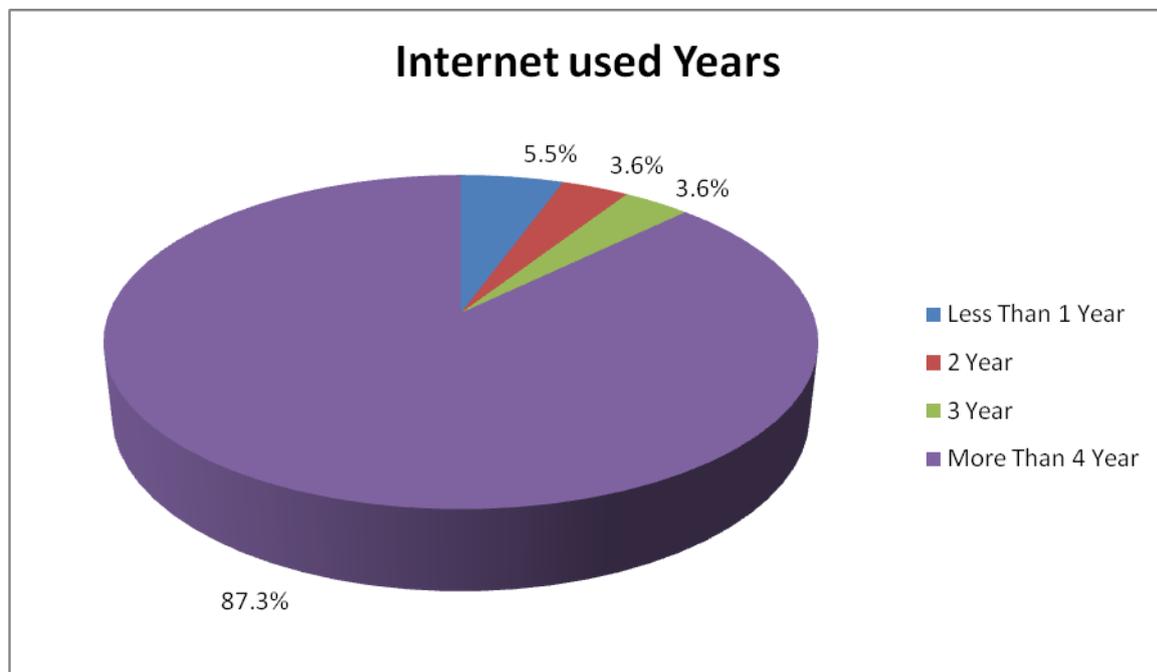


Figure 1. Percentage of internet used years among respondents

6.2 Internet usage

As regards the usage of the Internet, 1.8% participants said that they are using the Internet once a month, 20.0% of them said two or three times a week and 5.5% of them said once a week, 12.7% of them use more than once a day and 60.0% of them use the Internet every day. Results show that most of the participants 72.7% use the Internet daily. This result shows that internet play an important role in the life of Theology students (Figure 2).

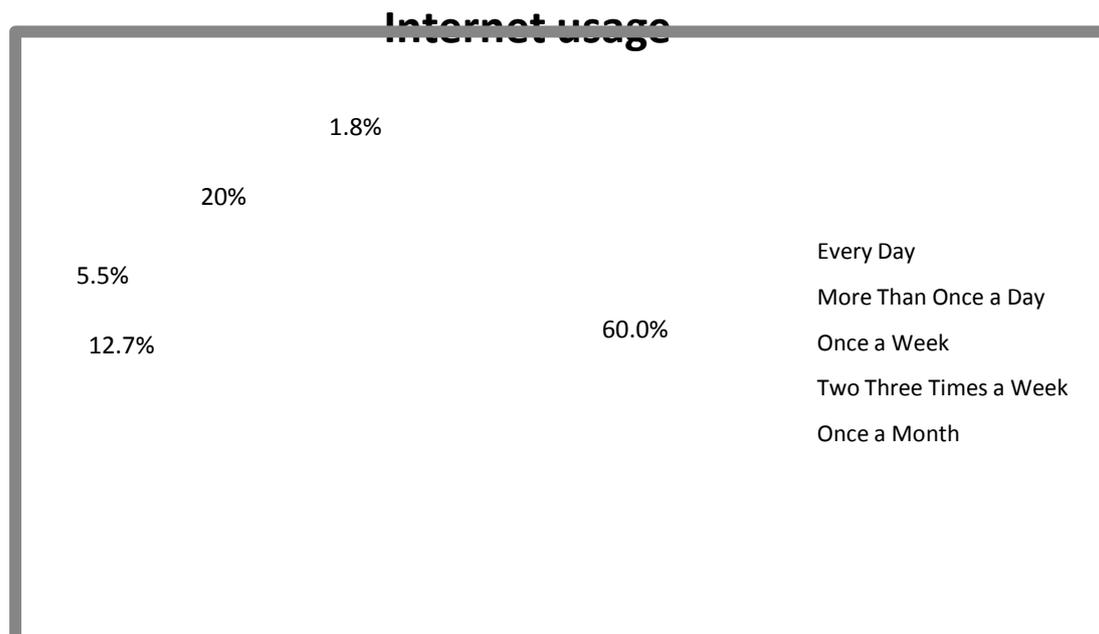


Figure 2. Percentage of internet usage among respondents

6.3 Time spend in the Internet per day

On being asked the time spend in the Internet, 47.3% respondents said that they are using the Internet less than 1 hour in a day, 34.5% respondents said 1 hour, 9.1% respondents said 2 hours, 3.6% respondents said 3 hours and 5.5% respondents said they spend more than 4 hours per day in the Internet. Results show that most 47.3% of students spend less than 1 hour in a day in the Internet (Figure 3).

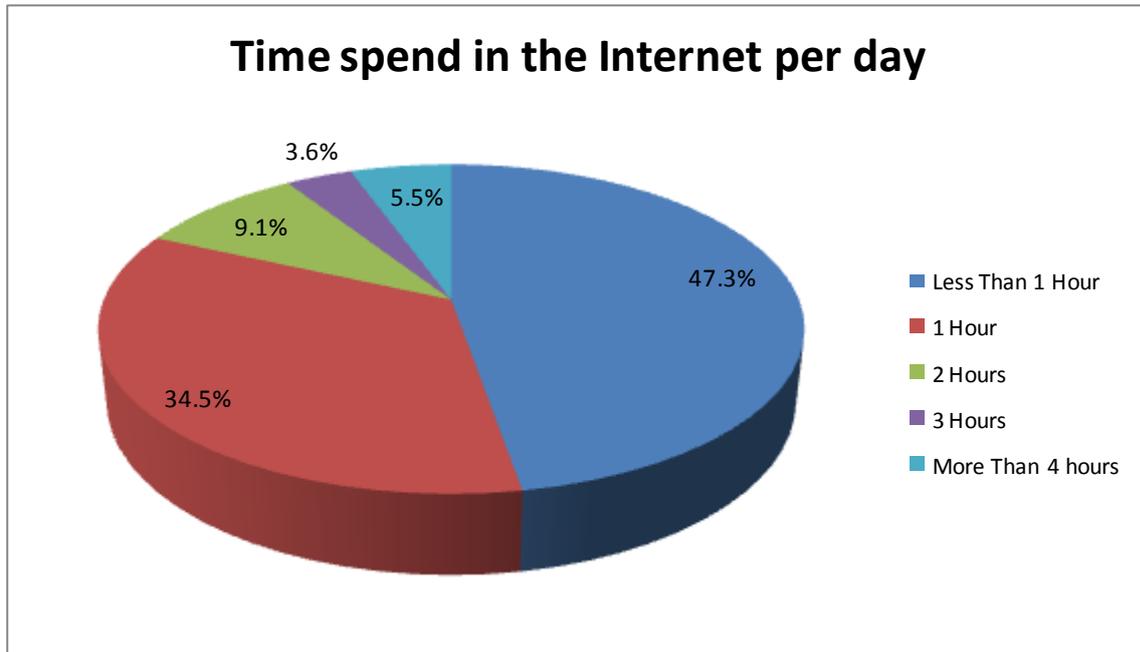
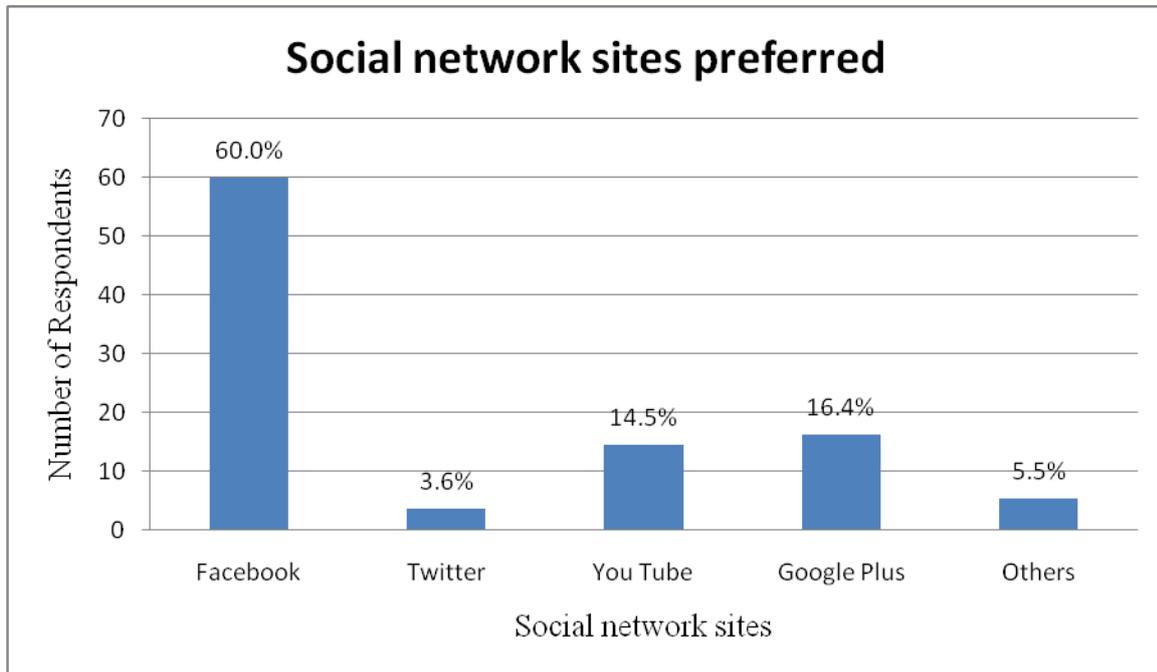


Figure 3. Percentage of time spend in the internet per day by respondents

6.4 Social network sites preferred

On being asked the popular forms of social network sites which the respondents preferred the most, 60.0% respondents said that they prefer Facebook social network sites most, 3.3% respondents gave their preference for Twitter, 14.5% respondents for YouTube, 16.4% respondents preferred Google plus and 5.5% respondents preferred other social network sites. Results of the study indicate that large majorly of students of Theology prefer to use Facebook. Statista Incorporate companies also suggest that Facebook is the most popular network site in the world, it is seen that 2.06 billion people use Facebook [3] (Table 1).

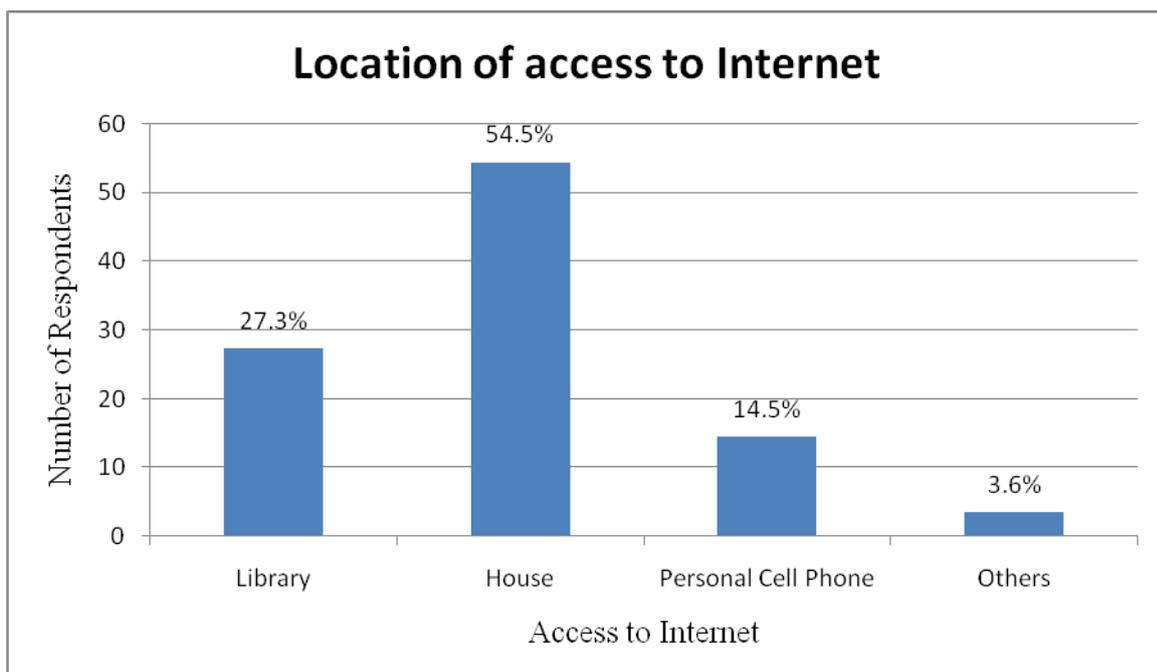
Table 1. Percentage of preferred social network sites by respondents



6.4 Location of Access to Internet

As regards the access to Internet, 27.3% respondents said that they access Internet at library, 54.5% of them at home, 14.5% of them using a personal cell phone to access Internet and 3.6% of the respondent access the Internet at other places. It can be inferred from the data that majority of students access the Internet at home (Table 2).

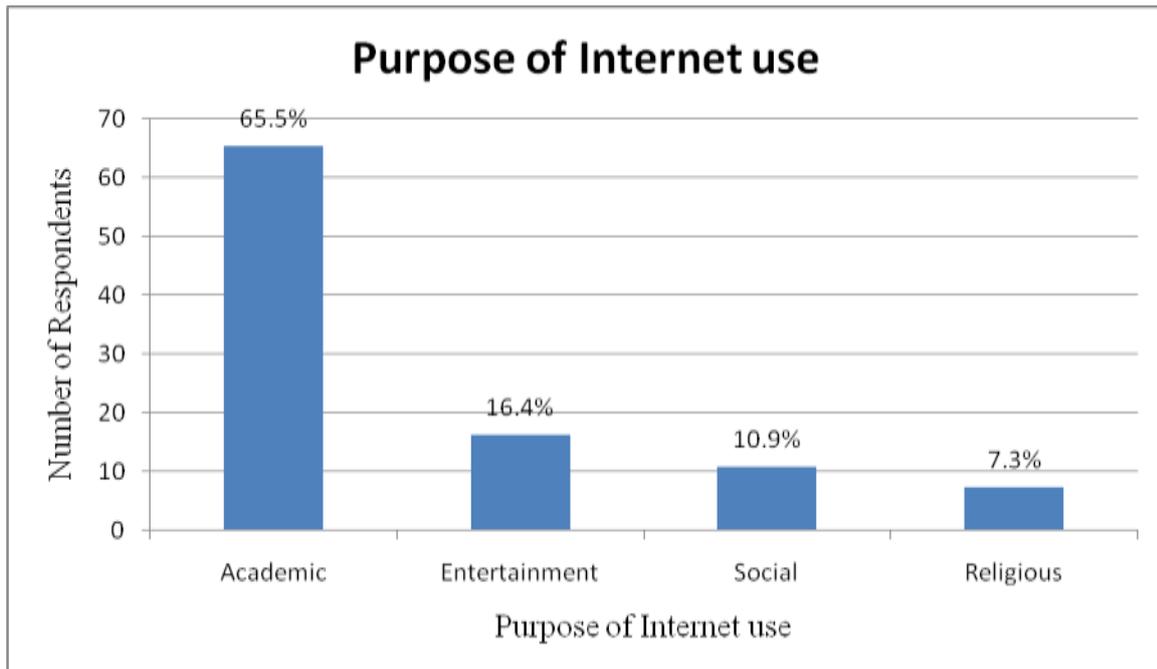
Table 2. Percentage of location of access to internet by respondents



6.5 Purpose of Internet use

On the question of purpose of the Internet use, 65.5% of the respondents said that they use Internet for academic, 16.4% use for entertainment, 10.9% use for social, and 7.3% use Internet for religious purpose. It can be inferred from the data that majority of students use Internet for academic purpose (Table 3).

Table 3. Purpose of internet use by respondents



6.6 Opinion about Internet

On the question of opinion about the Internet, 7.3% respondents strongly agree that Internet does more harm than good, 34.5% somewhat agree, 14.5% have no opinion, 23.6% somewhat disagree and 20.0% respondents strongly disagree that the Internet does more harm than good. Results show that majority 43.6% students of Theology strongly disagree and somewhat disagree that the Internet does more harm than good (Table 4).

Table 4. Percentage of opinion about the internet by students

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	11	20.0%
Somewhat disagree	13	23.6%
No opinion	8	14.5%
Somewhat agree	19	34.5%
Strongly agree	4	7.3%
Total	55	100.0

VII. CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

The study indicates that in spite of a lot of new opportunities offered by the Internet to its users such as social, learning, entertainment and free online access to resources and information there is a low usage of Internet among the faculty of Theology students of Dharmaram College.

Based on findings, the following recommendations are made. First, The Church leaders should realize the importance of Internet and its advantage and should introduce Internet training program and workshops for students how to access information from the Internet. Secondly, students should be allowed to have cell phone and personal computers since majority of them do not own. Thirdly, students and Church leaders need to adjust their opinion and practice with regard to the Internet, since the world is changing fast and most people specially youth are now using the new media of communication for accessing information.

A new study could be undertaken on the Internet effect on the Theology students and how it affects their psychological, behavioral and religious life. Some Church leaders consider internet as a distraction to a person's spiritual journey. Future study may be undertaken to focus on the Church leader's perception of Internet and explore some of these ideas that leads to distraction on a person's spiritual journey.

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