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IMPACT OF WEB TECHNOLOGIES ON STUDENT-LECTURER EXPERT POWER RELATIONSHIP

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Abstract

Expert power is “the power that comes from having knowledge and expertise in a particular area” (Nazarko, 2004). In the history of the development of higher education, the relationship between the lecturer and the students has changed because of many different factors. Before the internet and web revolution, the lecturer used to be the main information source for his/her students. The web as a modern source of knowledge is now used universally and this spreading trend might affect the relationship between the lecturer and his students. Understanding the impact of this change appears to be important as it would be employed in improving teaching techniques. In this area, many studies have focused on the impact of using the internet and web applications on students and lecturers. These studies have widely investigated this impact on student’s achievements, attitude and also have shown how the role and performance of the faculty have changed. This paper aims to investigate the impact of using web resources as a source of knowledge on the student-lecturer relationship from students’ perspectives. The investigation focuses on how students’ knowledge gained from using websites has impacted on the relationship with their lecturer as a knowledgeable person which theoretically means Expert power. 1661 students from 30 universities/ educational institutions participated in this research.

Keywords: Power, Expert power, TPUS, PASW and thematic analysis

Brief literature review

This research focuses on student-lecturer relationship while other researchers have shown the impact of the web on both lecturers and students (Alturki and Alfadda, 2007, Sait et al., 2008, Al-Ghaith et al., 2010, BritishCouncil, 2011, Altraounah, 2012). Although previous studies have contributed to creating background research for this study, none of these studies have focused on the web technology impact on student-lecturer relationship.

This paper is part of a study that measures many aspects of the impact of website technologies in student lecturer relationship. It focuses on expert power relationship. Expert power as explained in the abstract is the ability to provide another with needed information, knowledge or expert advice that comes from experience or education (Zheng, 2010) (Nazarko, 2004) (Phillips and Gully, 2011) (Coon and Mitterer, 2008). The lecturer should have enough knowledge in a particular area that qualifies him/her to be a lecturer. However, on the other hand websites as a source of knowledge has proven that it expands students’ knowledge (Grace-Martin and Gay, 2001). This fact indicates that the cognitive gap between students and lecturers is changing. Lecturer expert power is important as it gives students confidence and enthusiasm to learn (Savage and Savage, 2009).

Methodology

A Semi-structured questionnaire was distributed to a wide range of students in higher education to gather data about their experience of using web technology in their education.

Teacher Power Use Scale (TPUS) instrument with minor amendments was used to measure how students’ knowledge gained from using websites has impacted on the relationship with their lecturer as a knowledgeable person. The instrument consisted of 7 liker-scale questions. An open ended question was added to get possible reasons why students feel that websites impacted/do not impact in their relationship with their lecturers. In total, 1361 participations have been accepted as valid. 969 were males and 377 were females and 15 did not mention their gender. PASW (Predictive Analytics Software) was used to analyse close ended questions and thematic analysis was used to analyse open-ended questions.

Results

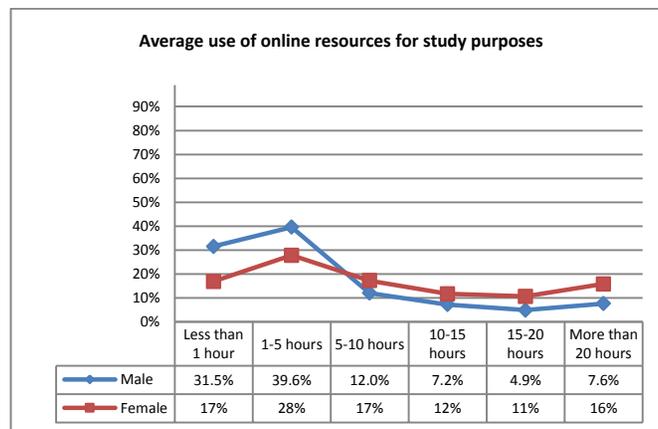


Figure 1: Average use of online resources for study purposes per month

As shown in figure 1, the use of web pages for the purpose of study is very low among students in both genders. More than 60% of students use websites only for 1-5 hours or less per month. However, this amount of use has impacted on their association with their lecturers in terms of their perception of the lecturer as a knowledgeable person. Nevertheless, the results show a noticeable impact on student-lecturer relationship due to the students' access to online knowledge resources. There is only a small difference between male and female results of the impact. Mostly, the level of impact among females is slightly higher compared to that of males.

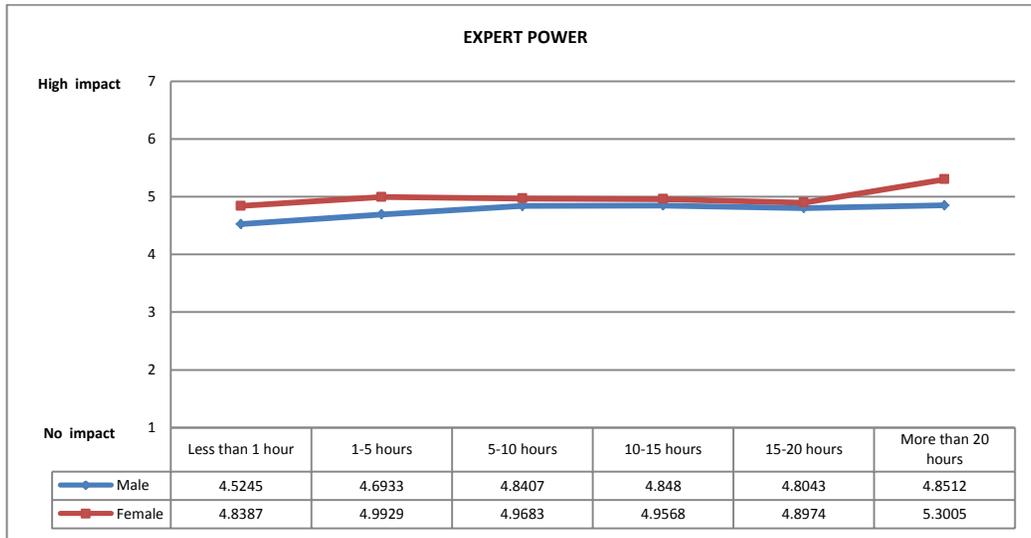


Figure 2: Level of impact of websites on student-lecturer expert power

Figure 2 shows that there is an impact on student-lecturer relationship when students rely on the websites to find necessary information. The impact is rated as follows; 1- No impact to 7- High impact. This sorting came from analysing 7-likert scales, 1- strongly disagree to 7- strongly agree, close-ended questions.

Reasons why students feel that the internet websites impact on their relationship with their lecturers	Gender	
	Male	Female
information is available in the internet	0.72 %	1.33 %
The internet information is more organized and easily delivered.	6.81 %	10.61 %
The internet contains more resources or variety of information	1.96 %	3.98 %
The internet has more detailed information	5.47 %	9.28 %
The internet information is more accurate, updated and important	2.68 %	3.71 %
The internet has more evidence and is more trustworthy	1.03 %	2.39 %
The lecturer is not available or does not have time	1.65 %	2.12 %
The lecturer's knowledge is limited or his/her information delivery is not comprehensive	2.06 %	5.04 %
The lecturer is not available (the internet is the second choice)	0.21 %	0.53 %
The lecturer speaking language is not clear	0.31 %	0 %
The student has a lack of confidence to ask the lecturer	0.10 %	0 %
The internet is always available and information can be reviewed (quicker)	0.52 %	1.06 %
The lecturer is restricted to specific information (course material)	0.31 %	0.27 %

Table 1: Why using websites has impacted on student-lecturer expert power relationship

Table 1 above explains the results of the open ended questions. The open-ended question which was attached at the end of the questionnaire was to justify the impacts. Analysing this question summarised the main reasons from student's perspective. From table 1 it

is noticeable that male and female justifications are consistent. 6.81% male and 10.61% female believe that their relationship and interaction with their lecturers has decreased because they believe that the information they gain from the internet is more organised and easily delivered. 5.47% male and 9.28% female believe that the internet websites have more detailed information. Students evaluate their lecturer's knowledge by comparing the internet information to what they are provided with by their lecturers in the class. 2.06% males and 5.04% females justified their aspiration to search for information from the internet due to the limitation of their lecturers' knowledge. For quite similar reason 2.68% males and 3.71% females have confidence in the internet information and they consider it more accurate, updated and important than lecturer's information. Unavailability of some lecturers when students need them was one of the reasons for students to prefer online information. However, this is not a main reason as only less than 1% of students mentioned it.

Reasons why students feel that the internet websites do not impact on their relationship with their lecturers	Gender	
	Male	Female
Because the lecturer has the information	0.21 %	0.8 %
Because the lecturer information is more organized and easily delivered.	3.41 %	2.92 %
Because the lecturer has more detailed or enough information	1.34 %	2.92 %
Because the lecturer's information is more accurate, updated and has more important information	1.86 %	3.71 %
Because the lecturer has more evidence and is more trustworthy/ the internet is not trustworthy	2.17 %	3.71 %
Because the lecturer is not available or does not have time	0.41 %	0 %
Because the internet language is difficult to read or to understand.	0.1 %	0 %
Because the internet access is unavailable or the information is not available on the internet.	0.31 %	0.27 %
Because interaction with the lecturer is important.	1.75 %	1.59 %
Because there is no difference in information provided by the lecturer and the internet	0.21 %	0.27 %

Table 2: Why using websites has NOT impacted on student-lecturer expert power relationship

Results show a minority of students believe that the information from the internet websites does not impact on their relationship with their lecturers. 2.17% males and 3.71% females believe that the lecturer provides them with more accurate and trustworthy information. They consider most of the information on the internet as unknown source so it is not trustworthy. Also a similar percentage of students considers lecturer's information as more accurate and update than what is available online.

Conclusion

Pervious researches showed the importance of student-lecturer expert power relationship and how the lecturer's expert knowledge impacts on students' confidence and enthusiasm to study. Also studies have proven that student access to online resources increase student knowledge. Results of this research paper show that online resources are impacting negatively on student-lecturer expert power. This paper shows that the student-lecturer expert power relationship is changing because of students' access to online resources and it illustrates the main reasons that led to weakness student-lecturer expert power relationship.

The role of lecturer should not be focused on providing knowledge only as knowledge has become available globally. Each reason mentioned in tables 1 should be taken into account when training higher education lecturers to avoid weaknesses in lecturer expert power in classroom.

Brief biography

Dr Rupert ward, "Having studied for a MPhys (Hons) Physics with Theoretical Physics at the University of Manchester (graduating 1997), I studied for both a PhD in Atomic Physics at the University of Manchester (graduating 2001) and a PGCE in Further, Adult and Higher Education at Manchester Metropolitan University (graduating 2000), before completing a Masters in Business Administration (2010). I am currently completing an MSc in Technology Management focusing on aspects of higher education development in Africa. I am a Chartered Physicist of the Institute of Physics, as well as a Fellow of the British Computer Society, a Chartered IT Professional and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy". Mr Saeed Alshahrani has completed a diploma in computer science between 1993 and 1997. He worked in computing and technology sector from 1997 to 2008. During this period he finished his undergraduate degree at Open University in London by distance learning (graduating 2007) and worked as a part-time teacher in Saudi Arabia. In 2010 he completed a MSc in Information System Management at University of Huddersfield. Currently he is a third year PhD candidate at the University of Huddersfield. His research is about how technology has impacted on student-lecturer relationship. He has published several papers discuss the relationship.

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