

PERSPECTIVES AND USE OF RESEARCHGATE BY THE RESEARCH SCHOLARS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BURDWAN, BURDWAN WEST BENGAL, INDIA: A STUDY

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The paper aims to determine the use of the ResearchGate by the research scholars of the University of Burdwan, Burdwan, West Bengal, INDIA. For the study the survey method was employed and a questionnaire tool to collect the data from the research scholars. A total of 130 questionnaires were administered to the research scholars (only to those who had ResearchGate account) and 110 duly filled in questionnaires were received back with a response rate of 84.61%. The results indicate that 39 (35.45%) respondents started using the Research Gate since more than three years; 103 respondents (40 strongly agreed and 63 agreed) opined that the ResearchGate builds network with fellow professionals in their subject and was the main motivating factor to use the ResearchGate; 98 respondents (29 strongly agreed and 69 agreed) said that the ResearchGate allows them to get exposed to new research trends and the main benefit and 99 (25 strongly agreed and 74 agreed) respondents were satisfied with the performance of the Research Gate.

Keywords: Academic Social Networking Site, Communication, Research Collaboration, ResearchGate, Social Networking Site, Survey, University of Burdwan.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, social media plays a very important role in human interactions. Social media has influenced every sphere of human life. According to Statista, over 3.6 billion people were using social media worldwide in 2020, which is expected to increase to almost 4.41 billion by 2025. According to the same report on an average an internet user spends nearly 144 minutes per day on social media and messaging apps (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>).

Social Networking Sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have changed the way the society interact, communication between the people, the way people share their idea, marketing of product, dissemination of news and facts etc. Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNSs) play a vital role in promoting research and research publications. ASNS's allow its registered users to upload their research publications in full-text or bibliographic details or just links to the publications to share with the research community and to keep track of its use by others through citation tracking and view counts. These ASNS's allow researchers to get connected with other researchers and participate in online discussions with them.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The ASNSs are websites that seek to connect the social web mostly for academics (Thelwall and Kousha, 2014; Ortega, 2015). These ASNSs preferred to bring all the scholars from different disciplines under one platform. Collaboration and publicizing research output are the two hallmarks of these ASNSs (Thelwall and Kousha, 2013). Apart from these, ASNSs like ResearchGate, Academic.edu and Mendeley, attract millions of researchers (Giglia, 2011; Jordan, 2014). ResearchGate (RG) is one of the most reputable social networks available for free to discuss and debate. Due to its capabilities, this network has attracted a lot of users. These capabilities include: Creating private discussion groups on a specific topic, the possibility of asking and answering other questions in the field of specialization, observing related occupations in the field of user, searching for researchers and articles, ranking and

evaluating of the users, evaluating articles with the RG score index, calculating H-index and IF of the researchers / scientists etc. Hence, the current study aims to study the awareness and use of an Academic Social Networking Site i.e. ResearchGate in university set up in India.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In any subject, before creating a new knowledge, there should be an understanding on the background of the given subject. The reviews of the following literature deal with the various aspects such as use of the general studies on SNSs, Academic SNSs and also individual SNSs. There are numerous studies appeared in the literature on Academic SNSs. The studies conducted by El-Berry (2015); Asmi and Madhusudhan (2015); Meishar-Tal and Pieterse (2017); Kenchakkanavar et al. (2017); Ali and Richardson (2018); and Shettar and Angadi (2019) reveal the use of Academic SNSs in general. These studies were conducted to highlight the individual Academic Social Networking Sites like Academia, Mendeley etc. The authors have also made an attempt to review articles exclusively on Research Gate (henceforth RG), in the successive paragraphs.

ResearchGate is an ASNSs designed primarily for scholars to create their own profiles, communicate among peers and upload their scholarly publications. The RG enables them to connect with people who have similar interests in diverse subjects. RG also enhances the ability to stay updated with the latest developments in one's own field. Question & Answer (Alheyasat, 2015; Li et al., 2016) is a feature on RG that

allows users to exchange information. This platform has gone through several updates over ResearchGate's lifespan (Goodwin et al., 2014). Muscanell and Utz (2017) conducted a study and provided a glimpse at RG usage, perceptions, and career outcomes, particularly for academics in the USA and Europe. This is likely because many users are not actively making use of the various features that RG offers. The facilities and the features it offers have led to an increase in the number of research outputs indexed in this network (Asemi&Heydari, 2018). The ResearchGate (RG) has emerged as one of the first and best social networks for researchers.

ResearchGate (RG) is a scholarly social network that possesses an impressive array of reputational metrics and has the potential to supplant publishers as the prime deliverer of scholarly reputation (Nicholas et al. 2016). Meier and Tunger (2018) conducted a survey consisted of 19 questions and was conducted online with 695 scientists from the disciplines of physics, biology, medicine, and neuroscience. Shettar and Angadi (2019) conducted a study on the awareness and use pattern of RG by the full-time research scholars of NITK. It was found that the ResearchGate is highly used ASNSs with more than 60% respondents rated it as Excellent. Ramhani and Asnafi (2017) assess the role of RG in the development of scientific and scholarly activities among the faculty members of the University of Tehran's Engineering College. It reveals that among seven groups ResearchGate capabilities, "assessment researchers' activity" and "Introduce researcher and identify other researchers" are in order from the highest usefulness.

In India, very few studies are conducted purely on the use of the ResearchGate in the university environment. Most of the scholars in the university set up in India are not fully aware of many ASNSs including the Research Gate and its usefulness. Such studies are pertinent to the beginners in research. Hence, the present study is conducted to bridge this gap.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to determine the use of the ResearchGate by the research scholars of the University of Burdwan, Burdwan, West Bengal, INDIA. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. know the frequency of use of the ResearchGate by the research scholars of the University of Burdwan, Burdwan, West Bengal, INDIA;
2. study the period from which the research scholars used the ResearchGate;
3. know the factors that motivated to get connected to the ResearchGate;
4. identify the purposes of using ResearchGate by the research scholars; and
5. determine the benefits of the ResearchGate.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The ResearchGate, an ASNS designed primarily for scholars to create their own profiles, upload their scholarly work and communicate with their peers. Such studies may help the students, research scholars, faculty members, scientists, in toto, to the academic fraternity to gauge the benefits of RG in many ways. This would be particularly pertinent in

regard to early career researchers, post-graduate students and also to the faculty members. Research of this type could assist efforts by a number of university stake holders in supporting the entire life cycle of scholarship.

METHODOLOGY

For the present study the survey method was employed and a questionnaire tool to collect the data from the research scholars of the University of Burdwan, Burdwan, West Bengal who had the ResearchGate account. All the research scholars' information was collected from all the departments and each one of them asked about the possession of RG account. It is observed that only 130 research scholars were having account in the ResearchGate and hence 130 were considered for the study. To collect the data, online questionnaire was prepared using Google Form and distributed to the research scholars via emails. Out of 130 questionnaires administered to the research scholars, 110 duly filled in questionnaires were received back with a response rate of 84.61%. The data was collected during August, 2019. The data collected was then exported to Ms-Excel for simple frequency calculation.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Subject wise break of the respondents

The table 1 depicts the subject wise break of the respondents. It reveals that the highest number of respondents were from the Department of Chemistry (13), followed by 11 respondents were from Microbiology and 9 respondents were each from Biotechnology, Environment Science and

Computer Science. There were less number of respondents each from the Department of Statistics, Mathematics and Mass Communication.

Table 1: Subject wise break of the respondents

Subject	No. of questionnaires received	Percentage (%)
Mathematics	3	2.72
Physics	7	6.36
Chemistry	13	11.81
Biology	5	4.54
Zoology	7	6.36
Biotechnology	9	8.18
Microbiology	11	10.00
Statistics	1	0.90
Environment Science	9	8.18
Computer Science	9	8.18
Commerce	4	3.63
Management	5	4.54
Economics	4	3.63
Library and Information Science	8	7.27
Mass Communication	3	2.72
Law	5	4.54
Geography	7	6.36
Total	110	100

Gender wise distribution of the respondents

The table 2 indicates the gender wise distribution of the respondents. It reveals that there were 87 (79.09%) respondents belong to the male category, whereas, 23 (20.91%)

Table 2: Gender wise distribution of the respondents

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	87	79.09
Female	23	20.91
Total	110	100

respondents were female. Like the other studies the male respondents were higher than the female respondents.

Frequency of use of the ResearchGate

A question was posed to the respondents on the frequency of use of the ResearchGate. The study reveals that 48 (43.64%) research scholars used their ResearchGate on weekly basis, whereas, 25 (22.73%) respondents used the ResearchGate every day, followed by 23 (20.91%) respondents used the ResearchGate every alternate days. The other details are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Frequency of use of the ResearchGate

Frequency of Use	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Everyday	25	22.73
Alternate days	23	20.91
Weekly	48	43.64
Fortnightly	9	8.18
Monthly	5	4.54
Total	110	100

Period from which the respondents used the ResearchGate

The table 4 indicates the period from which the respondents used the ResearchGate. It reveals that 39 (35.45%) respondents started using the

Table 4: Period from which the respondents used the ResearchGate

Period	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Less than 6 months	17	15.46
6 - 12 months	23	20.91
1 -3 years	31	28.18
More than 3 years	39	35.45
Total	110	100

ResearchGate since more than three years, whereas, 31 (28.18%) respondents started using the ResearchGate between 1 and 3 years, followed by 23 (20.91%) respondents started using the RG between 6 and 12 months.

Factors that motivate to get connected to the ResearchGate

A question was raised to the research scholars on the factors that motivate to get connected to the ResearchGate. The study reveals that 40 respondents strongly agreed about the factor that RG builds network with fellow professionals in their subject. The other factors like RG enhances their professionals' visibility (32) and RG keeps the track of others' research are the factors that motivate the Research scholars. The other details are presented in table 5.

Purposes of using Research Gate

The ResearchGate is one of the academic SNSs loaded with so many benefits. A question was asked to the respondents on the purposes of using RG. The study reveals that 98 respondents used the RG because it allows them to expose to new research trends, followed by 89 respondents used the RG to get articles which are not subscribed by the University library, 82 research scholars used the RG to share their research publications and to enhance the growth of their research publications through usage and citations. The other purposes are detailed in the table 6.

Table 5: Factors that motivate to get connected to the ResearchGate

Factors	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Keeps track of others' research	31	71	8	--	--
Observe Q & A in my research field	24	65	20	1	--
Participate in discussion in area of my interest	15	62	29	4	--
Builds network with fellow professionals in my subject	40	63	7	--	--
Get exposed to academic social networking	21	39	39	11	--
Expand networking opportunity with experts from other subject areas	14	52	32	9	3
Helps to create academic collaboration	21	54	28	6	1
Enhances my professional visibility (reputation)	32	59	14	5	--
Recommended by colleagues to create RG account	11	31	42	21	5

Table 6: Purposes of using the ResearchGate

Purposes	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Networking opportunity with researchers across the globe	12	41	40	13	4
Keeps my research profile updated	9	39	30	29	3
Share my research publications	17	65	13	9	6
Enhances the growth of my research publications through usage and citations	25	57	18	7	3
Get exposed to new research trends	29	69	6	5	1
Participate in the research discussions in my subject area	10	33	44	21	2
Share the full-text of my recent publications	19	57	25	8	1
Get articles which are not subscribed by my university library	28	61	10	10	1
Look for the job opportunity	3	14	43	31	19

Satisfaction level among the research scholars in using the ResearchGate

It is imperative and important to study the satisfaction level of RG among the research scholars. A question was posed to the respondents on the satisfaction level of the RG among the research scholars and the data is presented in table 7. It is observed from the data that 100 (90.90%) (15 Very much satisfied and 85 satisfied) respondents are satisfied with the RG. Only 6 (5.45%) respondents are neutral about the satisfaction level, whereas, 3 (2.72%) respondents are dissatisfied and only 1 (0.90%) respondent is very dissatisfied about the performance of the Research Gate.

Table 7: Satisfaction level among the research scholars in using the ResearchGate

Satisfaction level	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very much Satisfied	15	13.63
Satisfied	85	77.27
Neutral	6	5.45
Dissatisfied	3	2.72
Very dissatisfied	1	0.90
Total	110	100

Benefits of the ResearchGate

A question was posed to the research scholars on the benefits of RG and the data is presented in table 8. Majority of the research scholars agreed and strongly agreed for the different benefits of RG compared to other ASNSs. 99 respondents (25 strongly agreed and 77 agreed) opined that RG helps them to keep abreast in their research areas, followed by 94 respondents (27 strongly agreed and 67 agreed) opined that RG creates greater potential to get the collaboration opportunity, 88 respondents (24 strongly agreed and 64 agreed) opined that the RG increases the readership and 86 respondents (21 strongly agreed and 65 agreed) opined that RG increases the number of research publications.

CONCLUSION

ASNSs have become a part of the most of the scholar's academic life. Communication and Research Collaboration are the two main reasons why the researchers access these ASNSs. Through these platforms the people meet the professionals

Table 8: Benefits of the ResearchGate

Benefits	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Greater potential to get the collaboration opportunity	27	67	10	5	1
Increases the professional interaction	14	69	24	3	--
Increases the number of research publications	21	65	23	1	--
Helps to keep abreast in my research area	25	74	11	--	--
Motivates to share my research publications	5	17	53	31	4
Increases the readership of my research	24	64	18	4	--
Enhances my professional reputation	12	67	24	7	--
Increases my citation count	17	63	19	11	--

of their respective subjects as well as other subject scholars. The scholars can upload or download articles, books or other scholarly materials using these platforms. The current study was undertaken with the aim of analyzing the awareness and use of the RG by the research scholars of the University of Burdwan, Burdwan, West Bengal, India.

The Academic Social Networking Sites will contribute to the overall growth of the professionals. Many Social Networking Sites and ASNSs have been introduced every now and then and keeping track of these ASNSs have become the major hurdles and poses many challenges too. In this regard, the libraries of the respective universities should conduct orientation / training programme for the better usage of these ASNSs. It is also recommended to the research scholars of the University of Burdwan, Burdwan to make use of these Academic Social Networking Sites in their research activity because advertising of oneself in the academic environment through these ASNSs (especially through ResearchGate) has become the need of the hour.

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