INTERVENTION OF INTERNET AS A NEW TREND IN PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH: A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF BALOCHISTAN, QUETTA

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ABSTRACT

The focus of the paper is to study the intervention of internet in psychological research as a new trend. As the internet vastly extends the power of experimental manipulation and has changed communication, commerce, and the distribution of information, so too it is changing psychological research. Psychologists can study new or rare phenomena online and can do research on traditional psychological topics more effectively, enabling them to expand and develop new scale and scope of their research. Though these, facilities and opportunities may comprise of risk both to research quality and human subjects yet this intervention has more positive effects on psychological research. Internet research facility is inherently no more risky than traditional observational survey or experimental methods. Yet the rapidly changing the nature of technology and different latest and modern invasions have given new dimensions and trends in psychological research tool. This paper describes the utility of intervention of the internet in psychological research, challenges and recommendations for researchers. A survey was conducted on the intervention of internet as a new trend in psychological research. The total number of sample was n = 70 including male and female teachers of University of Balochistan, as there are approximately 35 departments, two teachers from each department were taken, either both males, male and female or both females. A checklist was developed for data collection. The results were analyzed and calculated in percentage.

INTRODUCTION:

Generally speaking research is a component of learning and expansion of knowledge. It can be beneficiary not only for the researcher but also for the society. One research opens many doors for new researchers. In

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every science, including psychology, there is a distinction between basic and applied research. In psychology, basic research uses the scientific method to try to understand fundamental laws of mind and behavior; applied research tries to solve specific problems by applying scientific principles and knowledge.

Hassett James & White M. Kathleen (1989) explained that for example, basic research might look for fundamental laws of learning, while applied researchers would try to find the best way to teach IBM employee to use a new computer. Or basic researchers might look for differences in the brain chemistry of schizophrenias versus other clinical patients, while applied researchers would focus on evaluating a particular drug used to treat schizophrenia. Similarly, basic research might investigate the nature of intelligence, while applied researchers would try to improve a particular IQ test (Hassett James & White M. Kathleen (1989).

According to Myers G. David (1998) the out come of the phenomena is that the applied researchers focus on a more immediate problem, while the basic researchers provide the foundation for applied work. Thus understanding of the nature of intelligence tests and knowledge of the brain chemistry of schizophrenia may lead to the discovery of new drugs to treat or even cure it. Some psychologists conduct basic research that builds psychology's knowledge base and applied research takes practical problems (Myers G. David 1998).

Myers G. David (1998) further elaborated that psychology is a meeting ground for different disciplines, and thus a perfect home for those with wide-range interests. In their diverse activities, from biological experimentation to cultural comparisons, psychologists share a common quest: describing and explaining behavior and the mental processes that underlie it (Myers G. David 1998). Sue D. W. et al (1999) also described that as psychology strives to be the science of all behavior and mental processes its research will increasingly look at ethnicity, gender and other socio cultural variables (Sue D. W. et al. 1999).

In general, Kimble G. A. (1998) describes that the goals of psychological research as a science are to describe, understand, predict, and control behavior (Kimble G. A.1998). Like other researches the ultimate goal of psychological research is to gather knowledge to benefit humanity. Then of course, new trends in psychological research would be beneficiary for general public and institutions equally. The hallmark of the truly creative thinker and researcher is the discovery of new truth that moves society and science in better direction.

In simple terms, research is away of going about finding answers to questions. Saif M. Iqbal (2000) holds the view that a researcher combines theories or ideas with facts in a systematic way and uses his or her imagination creatively. He or she quickly learns to select the appropriate technique to address a question (Saif M. Iqbal 2000).

According to Zimbardo G. Philip and Gerrig J. Richard (1996) the research process in psychology, as in all sciences can be divided into two major categories that usually occur in sequence: getting an idea (discovery) and then testing it (justification). The context discovery is the initial phase of research during which observations beliefs, information, and general knowledge lead to come up with a new idea or a different way of thinking about phenomena (Zimbardo G. P. & Gerrig J. Richard 1996).

Bernstein A. D., Roy J. E., Srull K. Thomas, and Wickens D. Christopher (1991) explained that the research adventure in psychology, as in all other sciences, often begins simple with curiosity. Sometimes curiosity frequently provokes very interesting, very stimulating questions, but often these questions are phrased in terms that are too general to be investigated scientifically. Curiosity about important everyday phenomena such as what determines whether two people will be attracted to each other is often basis for psychological research. Often, the results not only contribute to knowledge about phenomena originally studied, but by provoking additional questions, helping clarify principles governing other aspects of human behavior as well (Bernstein A. D., Roy J. E., Srull K. Thomas, and Wickens D. Christopher 1991).

The phenomenon of research taken by Zimbardo G. Philip & Gerrig J. Richard (1996) is that historically findings were based on predictions, assumptions, or self-assessment reports but since last two decades many interventions in psychological research has been practiced and these theoretical assumptions are being tested with some new psychological tools like different psychological tests, inventories etc, and it is the credential of present era that it does not leave any question unanswered and it also tries unfold mysteries of any phenomena. Researchers also assume that behavior and mental process follow lawful patterns that can be discovered and revealed through research. Psychological theories are typically claims about the causal forces that underlie such lawful patterns (Zimbardo G. Philip & Gerrig J. Richard 1996).

The internet as a research vehicle presents both opportunities and challenges for psychological research. The findings of Cummings J. N. & Kraut R. (2002) yielded that in 1985, only 8.2% of US households had a personal computer, and the internet as we know it, with its rich array of

communication, information, entertainment and commercial services, did not exist. Since then, this exotic technology has become domesticated and is now used by the majority of Americans for personal and economic reasons (Cummings J. N. & Kraut R. 2002). According to the report of U. S. Department of Commerce, (2002) by September of 2001, 66% of the US population used computer at home, work, or school, and the vast majority of these, 56% of the US population, also used the internet (U. S. Department of Commerce, 2002).

The intervention of internet is playing an important role in all fields of research including the field of psychology. Its positive role is helping the researcher and on the other hand its negative perspective might be violating the rules of copy rights reservations. The internet and the widespread diffusion of personal computing have the potential for unparalleled impact on the conduct of psychological research.

For example, in a study Walsh J. P. & Maloney N. G., (2002) found that the internet has changed the way scientists collaborate, by increasing the ease with which they can work with geographically distant partners or share information (Walsh J. P. & Maloney N.G. 2002). This article will focus on the way the internet is changing the process of empirical research.

Another concept of "impact factor" as a new trend in all researches including psychological research has been introduced. It is related to the international criteria of publishing of the research articles and journals. Only those research papers, articles and publications will be acknowledged and accepted which meet with the prescribed criteria of publication.

The expansion of research is also another new trend in psychological research; it has broken its nutshell and is looking for new frontiers.

HYPOTHESIS

Null Hypothesis
There is no significant role of intervention of internet in psychological research as a new trend.

Research Hypothesis
There is significant role of intervention of internet in psychological research as a new trend.

METHOD

SAMPLE

The total number of sample consisted of n = 70 with the mixed sample of male & female teachers of University of Balochistan. As the total number of departments in university is approximately 35, two teachers (male & female) from each department were taken. The whole number of sample was selected from university because the university is highly research oriented institution and mostly teachers are involved in research activities of M Phil and PhD and they are also utilizing the facility of internet.

TOOL

A structured checklist, with some comments at the end was constructed for the collection of data, keeping in view that these comments would help in the analysis of the data.

PROCEDURE

The checklist was given personally to the sample, each sample was asked to tick YES or NO with the time limit of 10 minutes and if they have some opinion other than yes or no, they can comment at the end of the checklist questionnaire, the collected information was calculated in percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table showing responses and calculated percentage

Sample from Arts Faculty (M & F)	Sample from Science Faculty (M & F)	Total Number of Sample (M & F)
46	24	70
Number of Yes Responses (From both faculties)	Number of No Responses (From both faculties)	Total number of Responses & Calculated Percentage
50 out of 70 = 71.42 %	20 out of 70 = 28.58 %	71.42 % and 28.58 %

*   (M for male teachers & F for female teachers)

The calculated percentage value on the intervention of internet in psychological research as a new trend on Yes responses is > 71.42 % greater than the percentage of No responses 28.58 %. The calculated percentage 71.42 % shows the rejection of null hypothesis that there is no significant role of intervention of internet in psychological research as a new trend. The greater percentage 71.42 % of Yes responses shows the acceptance of research hypothesis that there is significant role of intervention of internet in psychological research as a new trend.

Already mentioned in the introduction, historically the findings were based on predictions, assumptions, or self assessments and even some of the questions remained unanswered but the latest techniques and interventions are trying their best to answer each and every query and to pave the way for gathering more information promptly. This promptness is only accessible due the manipulation of internet in any research. Previously it was a great limitation of psychological research to collect information of different cultures from distant places, the modern tool of internet and Web-sites have facilitated the researchers in getting more information in less time.

Zimbardo G. Philip & Gerrig J. Richard (1996) proposed that a trend in psychological research, a paradigm is a model of the behavior, mental processes, or physiological process under study. However, before a new theory, hypothesis, or paradigm makes a difference in science, it has to undergo an ordeal of proof by the scientific community. It then moves into the public eye, where ideas are tested and proven or discarded as false. Another important of the context of discovery/research is the special attitudes and values required for participation in research. Science demands an open minded-critical and skeptical-attitude toward any conclusion until it has been duplicated repeatedly by independent investigations (Zimbardo, G. Philip & Gerrig J. Richard 1996).

Psychologists face a difficult challenge when they try to get accurate data and reliable evidence that will generate valid conclusion. At this situation the use of internet works as a tool for researchers. The intervention of internet in psychological research can reveal answers to those questions that once seemed impossible to study. The proper methodology should be strictly observed while conducting research whether it is the use of internet or any other intervention.

The findings of Riva G., Teruzzi T., and Anolli L., (2003) suggest that in conducting cross-cultural studies/researches, as the influence of socio cultural variables is of growing interest to psychologists in general the internet can be an effective medium for the posting, exchanging, and collection of information in psychology-related research and data (Riva G.,

Teruzzi T., and Anolli L. 2003). The relative ease and inexpensiveness of creating and maintaining Web-based applications, associated with the simplicity of use via the graphic-user interface format of form-based surveys, can establish a new research frontier for the social and behavioral sciences (Riva G., Teruzzi T., and Anolli L. 2003). This paper is an attempt to explore the possible use of internet in psychological research has lessened the difficulties for the researchers.

Another research by Kraut Robert et al. (2003) supports the results of present survey in the way that the internet presents empirical researchers with opportunities. It lowers many of the costs associated with collection data on human behavior, can host on line experiments and surveys, allows observers to watch online behavior, and offers the mining of archival data sources. For example, on line experiments can collect data from thousands of participants with minimal intervention on the part of experimenters (Kraut Robert, Judith Olson, Mahzarin Banaji, Amy Bruckman, Jeffery Cohen, and Mick Couper, 2003).

The findings of many researchers Glaser, Dixit, & Green, (2002), (Orlikowski, (2000), (Kraut, Rice, Cool, & Fish (1998), and Kaurt Robert, Judith Olson, Mahzarin Banji, Amy Bruckman, Jeffry Cohen and Mick Couper, (2003) suggest that internet chat rooms and bulletin boards provide a rich sample of human behavior that can be mined for studies of communication, and prejudce (Glaser, Dixit, & Green, 2002), organizational behavior (Orlikowski, 2000), or diffusion of innovation (Kraut, Rice, Cool, & Fish 1998), among other topics (Kaurt Robert, Judith Olson, Mahzarin Banji, Amy Bruckman, Jeffry Cohen and Mick Couper, 2003). The internet is also a crucible for observing new social phenomena, such as the behavior of very large social groups, disturbed collaboration, and identity-switching, which are interesting of their own right and have the potential to challenge traditional theories of human behavior. (Glaser, Dixit, & Green, 2002, Orlikowski, 2000, Kraut, Rice, Cool, & Fish 1998, and Kaurt Robert, Judith Olson, Mahzarin Banji, Amy Bruckman, Jeffry Cohen and Mick Couper, (2003)

At the same time, the internet raises substantial challenges in terms of quality of data and treatment of research participants. For example, researchers often lose control over the context in which data are procured when subjects participate in experiments online. Insuring informed consent, explaining instructions, and conducting effective debriefing may be more difficult than in the traditional laboratory experiment.

The findings of Robert Kruat, et al, (2003) revealed that in one sense, the internet has democratized data collection. Researchers do not need to access introductory psychology classes to recruit research subjects and often

do not need grant money to pay them. The findings of Robert Kraut, proposed that internet has opened to those with fewer resources. One consequence is that faculty at small schools; independent scholars, graduates students, and undergraduate can all potentially contribute to psychological research (Robert Kruat, et al, 2003).

Many on line forums make visible psychological phenomena that would be more difficult to study in traditional settings. Some phenomena like the evolution of groups or long term learning are ordinarily difficult to study in controlled settings because of the difficulty of bringing subjects back to the laboratory many times. Research in social psychology on groups larger than three or four are again difficult to study in the laboratory. Studying large groups over time merely compound these problems. The intervention of internet has provided a new venue for such long term research on groups. In a study Baym N., (1998) was able to explore the way groups develop a sense of community over an extended time period, by examining the use of an electronic mail distribution list about soap operas (Baym N. 1998). In other study Butler B., (2001) was able to study the impact of participation on the attraction and retention of group members, by creating an archive of all messages sent to 206 online groups over a three-month period (Butler B., 2001).

CONCLUSION:

As the technology is developing more people are exposed to it so as a result of this advancement many aspects of our world are changing. These changes are taking place due to many interventions like internet and cyber or the use of mobile phones in our daily life.

As a result, disciplines that deal with people and their worlds will have to make a shift in their subject of study, and it will have to encompass a number of phenomena that have not existed before and somehow changed or caused by the intervention of IT (internet and web etc). Though it has been argued that psychology is being quite slow to catch-up with the progress, but research is being done, as psychologists realize that not only their main subjects of interest (namely people) are changing but also that psychology as a discipline with its methods and practices is being affected.

The most important issue related to the use of internet in psychological research is that there should not be the violation of reserved rights of publications. The intervention of internet itself is not bad, the right use of the thing plays positive role yet the word "right" still is connotative.

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