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Strategies of Knowledge Sharing Among the Postgraduate Students of University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya: A Study

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Abstract

With the emergence of knowledge based society and knowledge based economy, it has become very important for the knowledge seekers to manage and utilize knowledge to achieve their goals. This research paper highlights the knowledge sharing strategies adopted by the postgraduate students of University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM). It also discusses the problems faced by the students while sharing knowledge. Survey method of research was carried out to collect the data from the post graduate students of USTM using a self-constructed questionnaire to investigate different aspect of Information Communication Technology and their effectiveness in knowledge sharing practices. Findings reveals that the post graduate students of USTM prefers web 2.0 tools such as wikis, social media, and blogs to facilitate effective knowledge sharing.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Knowledge Sharing, Knowledge Management Practices, Web 2.0, Social Network

1. INTRODUCTION

In this modern information landscape, knowledge sharing is considered as a key factor that supports and facilitates lifelong learning which enables people to develop skills, knowledge throughout their life. Sharing of knowledge within any kind of organization has led to an effective learning process, improved creativity among the individuals and eventually an improve performance at the individual as well as organizational level. It is expected from all kind of organization as well as individuals to encourage knowledge sharing and to show an interest to share knowledge among them. Knowledge sharing is mainly concerned with

knowledge creating, coding and disseminating among knowledge seekers or knowledge providers.

With the development of Information and Communication Technology, a comprehensive knowledge network has been created that provides fast access, interaction and immediate value to the user. The development of web based technologies such as internet, intranet and interactive tools like websites, web portals, and social media (Facebook, twitter, blogs etc.), and YouTube facilitate knowledge sharing in an effective and user-friendly way. Most of these technological tools are available to disseminate or share knowledge and assist knowledge creation by enabling participation across the globe. Most recently, these interactive tools and multimedia presentations, electronic database, audio and video recording file have become more effective and popular than the traditional practices such as face-to-face discussions and paper based tools.

2. OBJECTIVES

The present study has been carried out to fulfill the following objectives.

- To find out the different tools and techniques used in sharing knowledge among the students at University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya.
- To find out the problems faced by the students while sharing knowledge and suggest a better platform to share knowledge effectively.
- To find out the effectiveness of different aspects of Information Technology to share knowledge in the era of Information explosion.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Nair and Munusami (2020) explored the knowledge sharing practices adopted in higher education institutes and investigated whether those knowledge management practices helps to improve teaching and learning environment among employees of Malaysian higher institutes. Patel and Patil (2019) discussed the two perspectives of knowledge in higher educational institute in as academic knowledge and organizational knowledge. This also highlights characteristics of knowledge workers to construct knowledge management. Das and Mahapatra (2018) found out the trend of posting, sharing, commenting and like a Face book post, and also to explore the different types of content created by library and information science community through Facebook Group. The result explored that major group posts in a group are sharing photos, links and statuses and members hardly posting videos and create

events for the community. Widen (2017) discussed about the three different theoretical approaches in library and information science which are used to discuss knowledge sharing in the workplace. The approaches are information behavior, social capital, and information culture, and these are considered as important from a holistic management point of view when it comes to knowledge sharing. Osman and Kamal (2015) carried out a study to identify the factors that may affect the knowledge sharing among undergraduates in UiTM Johor. The study focuses on the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) concept with the aims to produce knowledgeable students who are critical and creative in their thinking and can compete at the international level. Wangpipatwong (2009) studied with the objective to investigate the factors that influence knowledge sharing among students. The factors covered individual, classroom, and technological aspects. It was found that technology support, student's ability to share, and degree of competition with the classmates significantly influences knowledge sharing of students respectively. In contrast, student's willingness to share, instructor support, and technology availability have no influence on knowledge sharing of students. Ghani (2009) provided a framework for characterizing the various tools and techniques available to knowledge management practitioners. It provides an overview of a number of key terms and concepts, describes the framework, provides examples of how to use it, and explores a variety of potential application areas. The stress of knowledge management tools and techniques has been maneuvered to share knowledge through communication and collaboration tools which specify the shift from process to practice. Tsui (2006) in the book *"A Handbook on Knowledge Sharing: Strategies, Recommendations for Researchers, Policymakers and Service Providers"* mention some recommendations that can be made to assist researchers, policymakers, and service providers in working together to maximize knowledge-sharing success.

4. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

This chapter discusses about the key terms of the paper which are the definitions of knowledge, types of knowledge, management of knowledge, sharing and tools.

4.1. DEFINITIONS

According to Allee (1997), "Knowledge experience or information that can be communicated or shared."

According to Davenport and Prusak (1998), “Knowledge is a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert’s insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. It originates and is applied in minds of knower’s. In organization it often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories but also in organizational routines, processes, practices and norms.”

According to Wilson (2002), “Knowledge is defined as what we know: knowledge involves mental processes of comprehensive, understanding and learning that go on in the mind and only in the mind, however much they involve interaction with the world outside the mind, and interaction with others.”

4.2. TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

There are two basic types of knowledge, one is reflected in individual’s internal state and cannot be recorded and the other is articulated and can be recorded.

- I. Explicit knowledge** is articulated knowledge and has been captured in various forms such as texts, diagrams, tables and so on (Mahapatra & Chakrabarti, 2002). It is codified and formalized and also referred as know-what (Brown & Duguid, 1998). Therefore explicit knowledge is very easy to identify, store and retrieve and very effective at facilitating modification of documents and texts (Wellman, 2009).
- II. Tacit knowledge** was originally defined by Polanyi in 1966. It is sometimes referred to as know-how (Brown & Duguid 1998) and refers to intuitive, hard to define knowledge that is largely experience based. Because of this, tacit knowledge is often context dependent and personal in nature. It is hard to communicate and deeply rooted in action, commitment, and involvement (Nonaka 1994).

4.3. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Gartner group defines “*Knowledge Management an emerging set of processes, organizational structure, applications and technologies that aims to leverage the ability of capable, responsible, autonomous individuals to act quickly and effectively. KM achieves that end by providing them ready access to the companies` entire store of knowledge, including much of what not documented. KM requires an integrated approach to identify, manage, and most importantly share the company`s information assets, including database, documents, policies and procedures(explicit knowledge) as well as undocumented expertise resident in individual workers(tacit knowledge).*”

4.4. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

With the emergence of knowledge based society, knowledge sharing has become an important component for any organization or society to move towards its growth. Collaborative technologies play vital role in facilitating knowledge sharing and it also helps in fostering relationships between knowledge providers and knowledge seekers. Therefore, it has been seen that organization are developing such collaborative tools and adopting such technologies to foster information sharing among the seekers.

4.5. KNOWLEDGE SHARING PRACTICES

Knowledge is information along with experiences, interpretation and applies for decisions making or actions. In the knowledge based economy, knowledge is recognized as a source of competitive advantage. Earlier knowledge sharing practices are based on community practices but now a days with the advent of technology, different web based tools and technologies has implemented to foster effective knowledge sharing.

4.5.1. Community based practices

To shift towards knowledge sharing, most of knowledge sharing practices done through building a repository of knowledge collection where people can share their common interest or experience to improve their work effectiveness. It helps in collecting, storing and sharing knowledge between knowledge providers and knowledge seekers.

Storytelling is also considered as one of the community practices to impart knowledge through moral, motif and good will. Presenting real life story also allows individuals to get inspired and encouraged. In early childhood education, these were much more effective way of communicating the value of knowledge sharing.

4.5.2. Technology based practices

The connecting power of Information Technology has been leading to creation of knowledge network. With the availability of IT technology different web based tools and services has adopted to share knowledge. Widely available tools like telephone, e-mail, video-conferencing, instant messaging has been playing a central role in knowledge sharing activities. The combination of technology tools and human practices has become more successful than other programs and community practices.

4.6. Knowledge Sharing Architecture and Tools

Building knowledge networks among the knowledge hunters is a continuous process. Apart from community practices and knowledge survey building knowledge networks also encompasses knowledge creation or acquisition methods, groupware and workflow tools which impart dissemination of knowledge. It involves different processes of developing collaborative working, sharing mechanisms such as intranet, tools, and technologies like text analysis, search tools, data mining, web crawlers and processes.

4.6.1. Knowledge sharing tools

- ***Intranet*** is the private or internal network based on internet to communicate with people, disseminate information by using WWW technology.
- ***Data warehousing*** are the repository and tools which store current and historical data extracted from different sources with the help of various operational systems.
- ***Virtual classrooms*** are web based classrooms that allow to access to various courses. These are incorporated with discussion forum to response to the participants. Online tutorials have also been conducted over the intranet.
- ***Video conferencing*** is a conference conducted between two or more persons over a computer network from different site to transmit audio visual data.

4.6.1.1. Intranet as a knowledge sharing tool

Intranet is a private network which is accessible an organization. Due to its low cost and ability to work on many machines, institutes or organizations are now adopting or planning to use intranet as their platform for a wide range of application.

Intranet offer several facilities such as easy access, promote corporate culture, immediate updates, employee engagement to facilitate knowledge sharing. Due to these intranet have become a powerful communication tool which helps in dissemination of knowledge.

4.6.1.2. Web 2.0 as a knowledge sharing tool

Web 2.0 is a collective term which covers certain application of World Wide Web inclusive of wikis, blogs, YouTube and social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace etc. It mainly focuses on social use of web. Web 2.0 was introduced by Tim O'Reilly in 2004.

In this changing landscape of information, web 2.0 tools has been playing a vital role in disseminate knowledge among the knowledge seekers. The increasing use or access of

internet and World Wide Web have changed the communication and learning habits of people.

Among various web 2.0 tools, Blogs are the latest form of personal communication and sharing information. It provides value added services to the users. Due to its applicability, adoptability, low cost and flexibility, has become an effective tool to disseminate knowledge.

As a result due to the communicating power of the Information and Communication Technology leads organization as well as the individuals to believe that these technologies can facilitate effective knowledge sharing among the communities. The implementation of Web-based technical solution provides fast as well as easy access, user friendly and also easy to handle.

5. METHODOLOGY

The present study has been carried out by using survey method. For collection of data, questionnaire has been used as a primary tool of data collection along with observation and informal interview through telephone or face to face conversations. For the purpose of this study, information are also collected from different sources such as by visiting different websites related to the topic, from library and consulting with people.

5.1. AREA OF THE STUDY

The area of study undertaken is the University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya (USTM). The University of Science & Technology, Meghalaya (USTM) is the first State Private University on Science & Technology in the North East India, sponsored by ERD Foundation, Guwahati.

5.2. SAMPLE OF THE STUDY AND SAMPLE DESIGN

Purposive sampling method have been applied to collected data from the entire student's population of four departments from four different schools have been selected. The following table provides department wise information about the samples.

Table 5.1: Department wise population of the study

Sl. No	Name of the department	No of questionnaire distributed	Male	Female
I	Biotechnology	10	6	4

II	Computer science and electronics	22	14	4
III	Social Work	18	5	13
IV	Economics	20	7	13
Total		70	32	34

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The analysis of data and findings are presented on the following sections.

6.1. Response rate of the respondents

Total number of 70 questionnaire were distributed among the post graduate students of USTM and out these 70 questionnaire 66 numbers of questionnaire was returned back by the respondents. Therefore, overall response of the respondents is 94.29 %.(Table-6.1, Figure-6.1)

Table 6.1: Distribution of questionnaire for response from the respondents

Sl. No	Questionnaire	No. of Questionnaire	Percentage
I	Received	66	94.29 %
II	Not received	4	5.71 %
Total		70	100 %

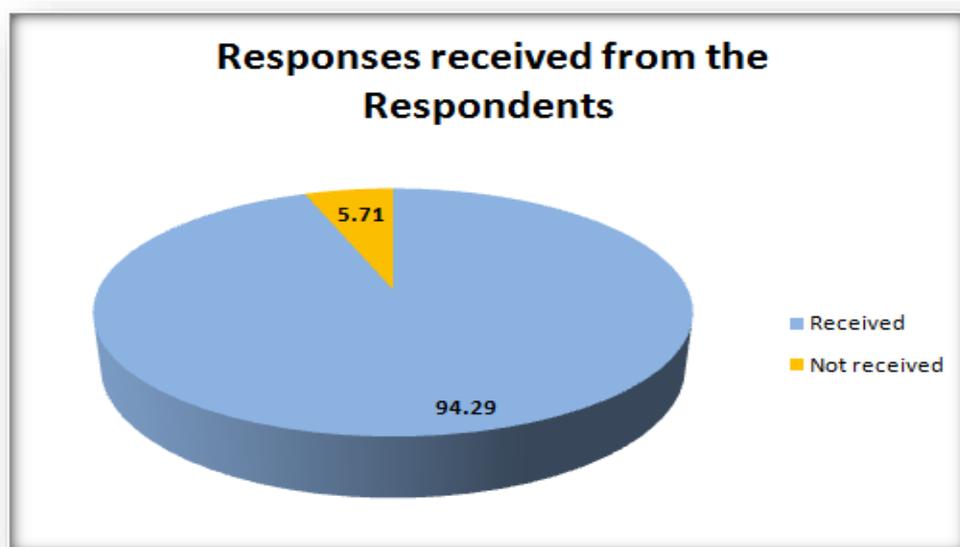


Figure6.1: Response received from the respondents

6.2. Department wise distribution of questionnaire

Four departments have been selected for the study among which 70 questionnaire were distributed and 66 questionnaire were return back. Out of these 66 questionnaire maximum response is from department of Economics(30.30%) followed by Department of Electronics and Computer Science(28.79%), Department of Social work(27.27%) and Department of Biotechnology (13.64%).(Table-6.2, Figure-6.2).

Table 6.2: Department wise distribution of questionnaire

Sl. No	Department	No of distributed questionnaire	Received	Percentage
I	Department of Economics	20	20	30.30 %
II	Department of Social Work	18	18	27.27 %
III	Department of electronics and computer science	22	19	28.79 %
IV	Department of Biotechnology	10	9	13.64 %
	Total	70	66	100 %

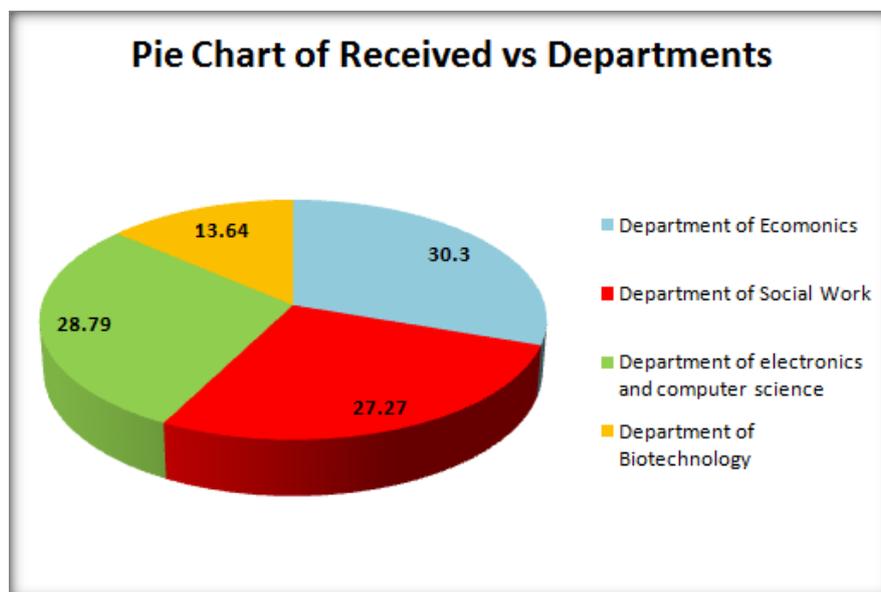


Figure 6.2: Department wise distribution of questionnaire

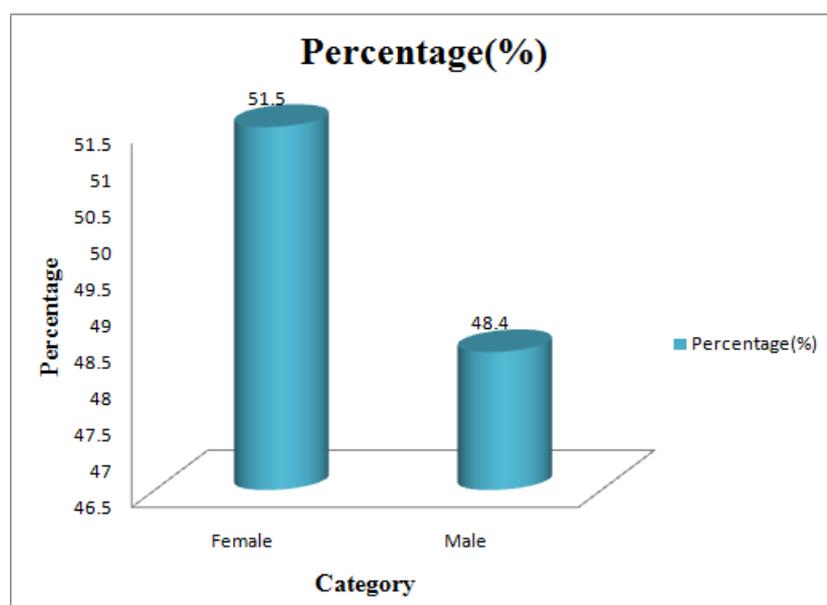
6.3. Gender wise distribution of questionnaire

Out of 66 no of respondents 34 responses are received from female and rest 32 responses from male. Table 3 shows percentage of male and female responses where female response is more than the male. (Table 6.3 and Figure 6.3)

Table 6.3: Respondent Category

Sl. No	Category	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
I	Female	34	51.5 %
II	Male	32	48.4 %
	Total	66	100 %

Figure 6.3: Gender wise response



6.4. Methods of sharing and gathering information/knowledge among themselves.

Table 6.4: Different methods of gathering and sharing knowledge among themselves

Sl No	Methods	No of choices	Percentage (%)
I	Through discussion	54	59.34
II	Seminar and talks	21	23.07
III	Telephone	12	13.18
IV	E-mail	4	4.39
	Total	91	100

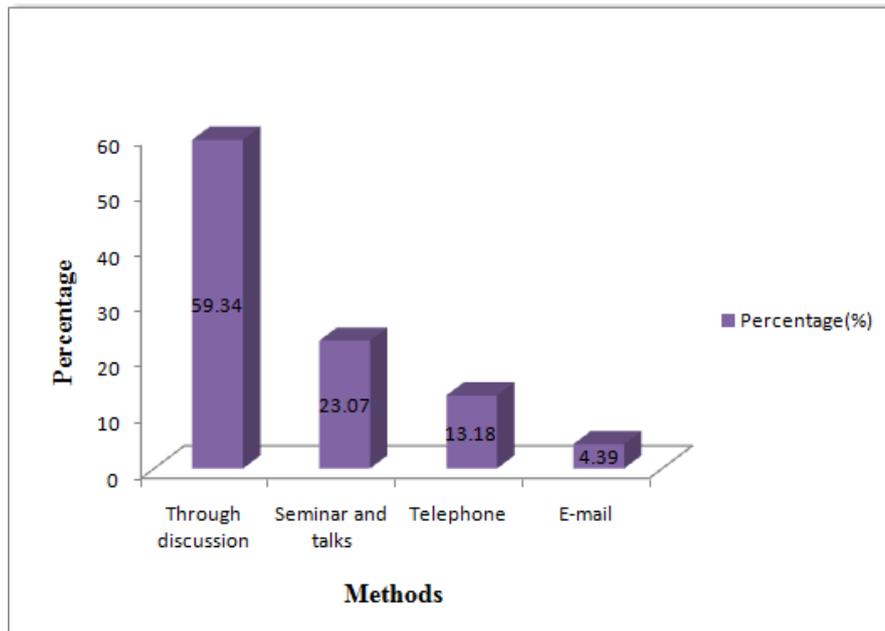


Fig.6.4: Different methods of gathering and sharing knowledge

From the table 6.4 result shows respondents uses various methods to share their knowledge. Most used method is discussion (59.34) followed by seminar and talks (23.07), telephone (13.18) and E-mail (4.39). The fig.6.4 graphically shows the rate of respondents on different methods.

6.5. Different platforms of ICT being used to disseminate their knowledge.

Table 6.5: Different platforms of ICT being used to disseminate their knowledge

Sl no	Methods	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
I	E-mail	8	11.26
II	Social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, blogs Instagram)	61	85.91
III	Video telephony	2	2.81
	Total	71	100

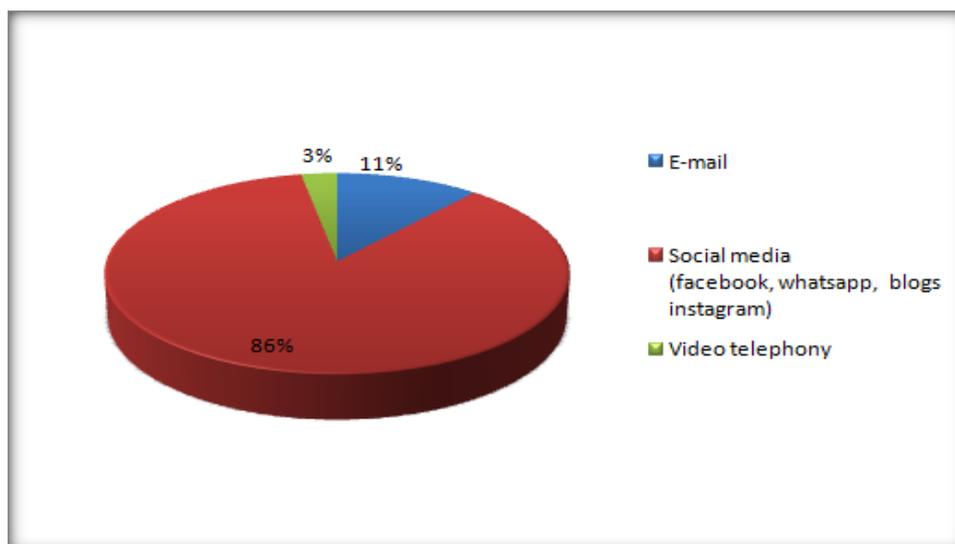


Fig.6.5: Use of Different platforms of ICT to disseminate their knowledge.

Table 6.5 shows the response rate on different platforms of ICT to disseminate their knowledge. Among these platforms social media (86%) is the most used platform followed by E-mail (11%) and Video telephony (3%).The fig 6.5 shows graphical presentation in percentage.

6.6. Effectiveness of each of the following knowledge sharing methods

Table 6.6: Level of effectiveness of different methods to share knowledge

Sl No.	Methods	Not effective (%)	Somewhat ineffective (%)	Neutral / don't know (%)	Somewhat effective (%)	Very effective (%)
I	Academic journals and articles	13.46	9.76	8.64	10.67	5.59
II	Workshops, Conferences	9.62	21.95	5.56	9.33	9.31
III	Newsletter	9.62	12.20	12.35	7.33	7.45
IV	Intellectual talks with elders and community leader	3.85	4.88	4.94	12	11.18
V	Community meetings	21.15	9.76	8.64	9	4.35

VI	Casual meeting	15.38	12.20	14.81	8	2.48
VII	Success story telling	3.85	9.76	12.35	8.67	8.07
VIII	Radio	13.46	7.32	14.20	7.67	5.59
IX	Photos, posters, visuals sharing online	1.92	4.88	8.02	10.33	11.80
X	Video sharing on YouTube	3.85	2.44	6.17	8.67	15.53
XI	Online media, blogs, websites	3.85	4.88	4.32	8.33	18.63

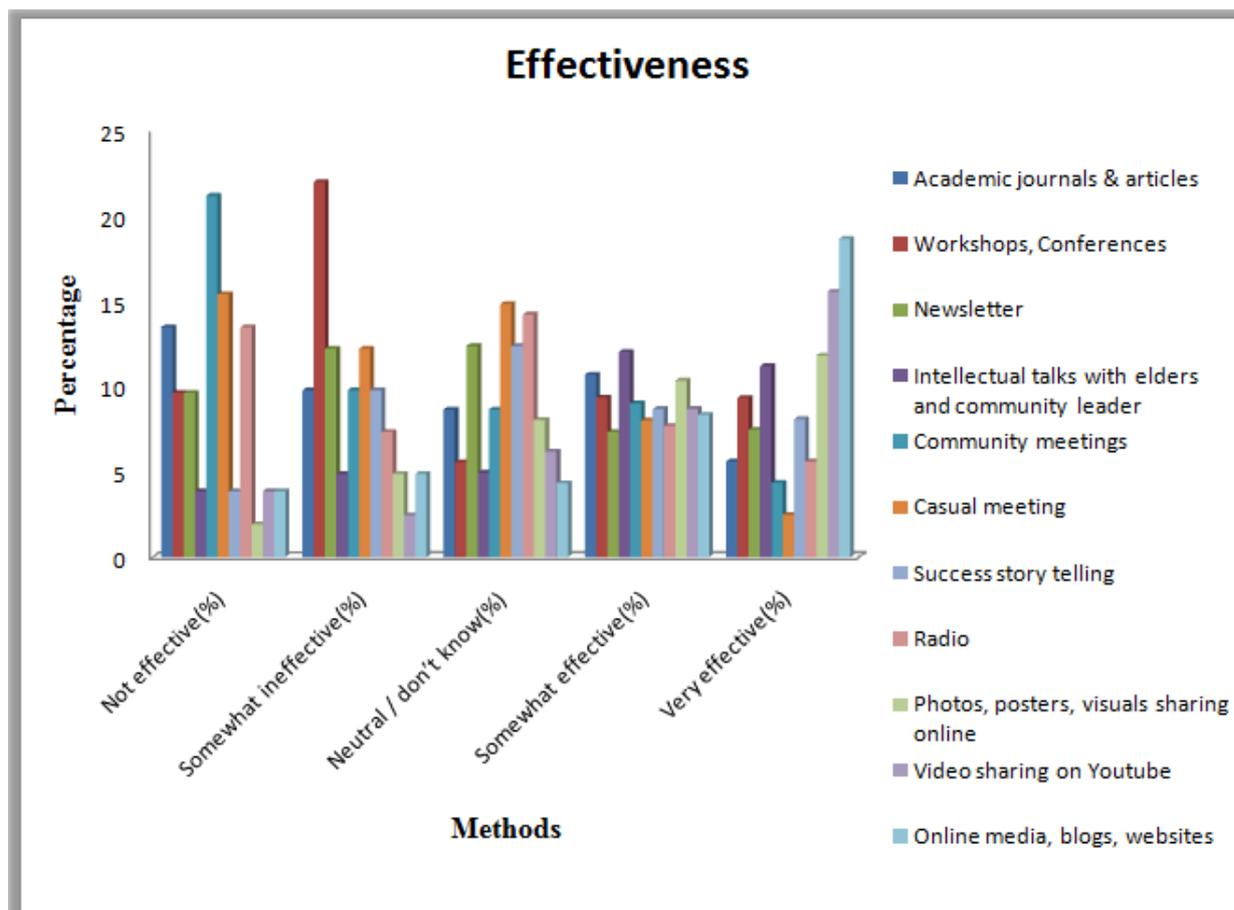


Fig.6. 6: Showing response against level of effectiveness of different methods

Table 6.6 and Fig.6.6 presents level of effectiveness of different knowledge sharing practices. The table shows online media, blogs, websites (18.63%) are very effective in sharing knowledge compared to the other methods whereas academic journals and workshops, conferences (13.46%) are not effective.

6.7. The information uploaded in the departmental Facebook page important for the improvement of your Interactive Knowledge.

Table 6.7: Different activities of departmental Facebook page

Sl. No	Choices	Choices of respondents	Percentage (%)
I	Information about departmental activities	34	48.57
II	Make an awareness	16	22.85
III	Helps in publicity	19	27.14
IV	Provides new services	1	1.42
Total		70	100

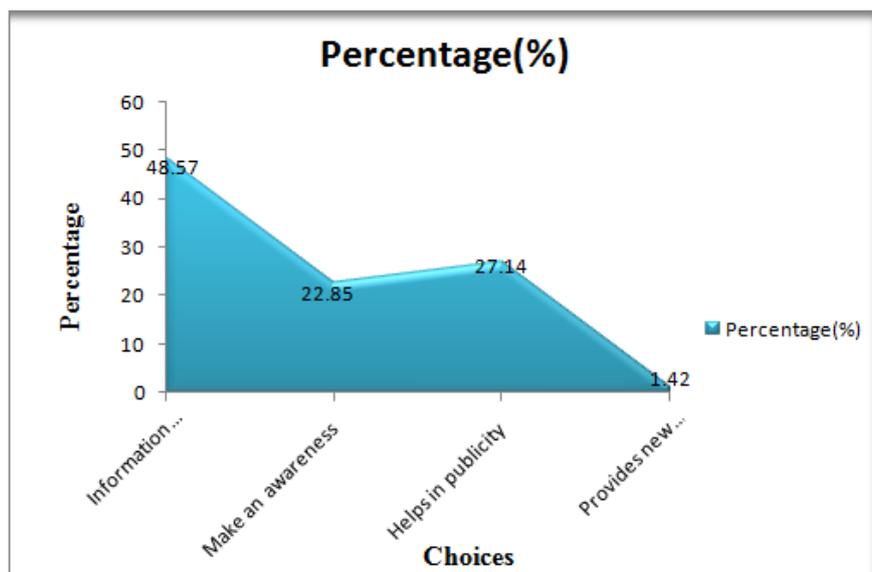


Fig 6.7: Showing different importance of departmental Facebook page

Table 6.7 represents importance of departmental websites to facilitate different activities through the website. The highest response is received on providing information about departmental activities (48.57%) followed by publicity purpose (27.14%) and making awareness (22.85%). The least response is received on providing new services (1.42%) which are graphically presented in the fig.6.7.

6.8. Technologies implemented in your institution

Table 6.8: The technologies implemented in the institution

Sl. No	Technologies	No of choices	Percentage (%)
I	Intranet	24	18.18
II	Internet(departmental website, Facebook group)	51	36.63
III	Mobile apps (WhatsApp Group, Library app, etc.)	36	27.27
IV	Knowledge Management Software(OpenVMS)	13	9.84
V	Data warehouse	6	4.54
VI	E-commerce	2	1.51
Total		132	100

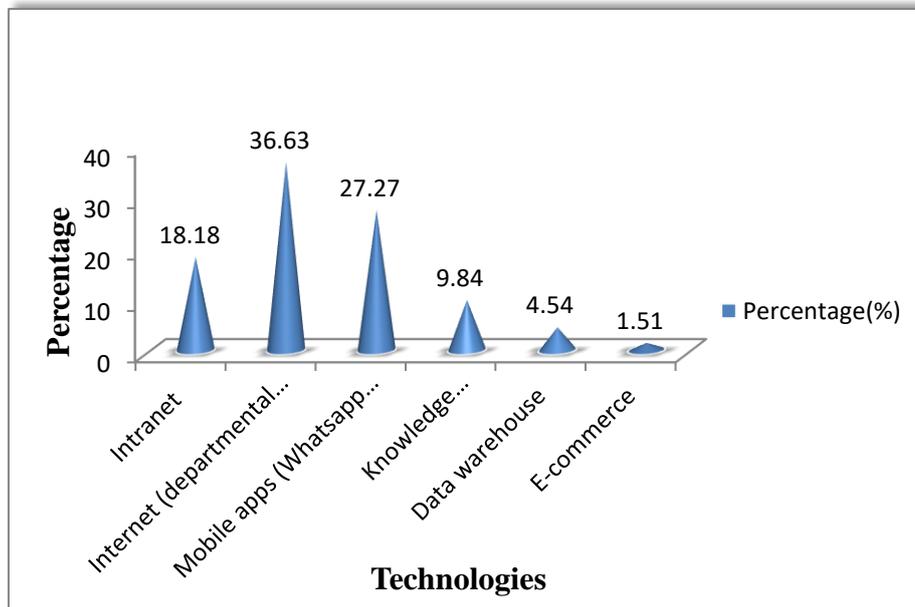


Fig 6.8: Response against different technology implemented in the institute

Table 6.8 shows different technology that implemented in the university where internet by using social media has received highest response with 36.63% followed by mobile apps (27.27%), intranet (18.18%), knowledge management software (9.84%), data warehouse (4.54%) and least response against E-commerce (1.51%). Fig 6.8 shows its graphical presentation in percentage.

6.9. The problems faced while using the various tools of Information Technology in Sharing Knowledge within the University campus

Table 6.9: Response against problems while using various ICT tools

SI No	Problems	No of choices	Percentage (%)
I	Lack of communication	23	11.61
II	Lack of training	17	8.58
III	Complicated system	19	9.59
IV	Lack of proper identification of IT tools	13	6.56
V	Lack of time to learn	21	10.6
VI	Due to technical problems	22	11.11
VII	Network problem	48	24.24
VIII	Fluctuations on internet connectivity	35	17.67
Total		198	100

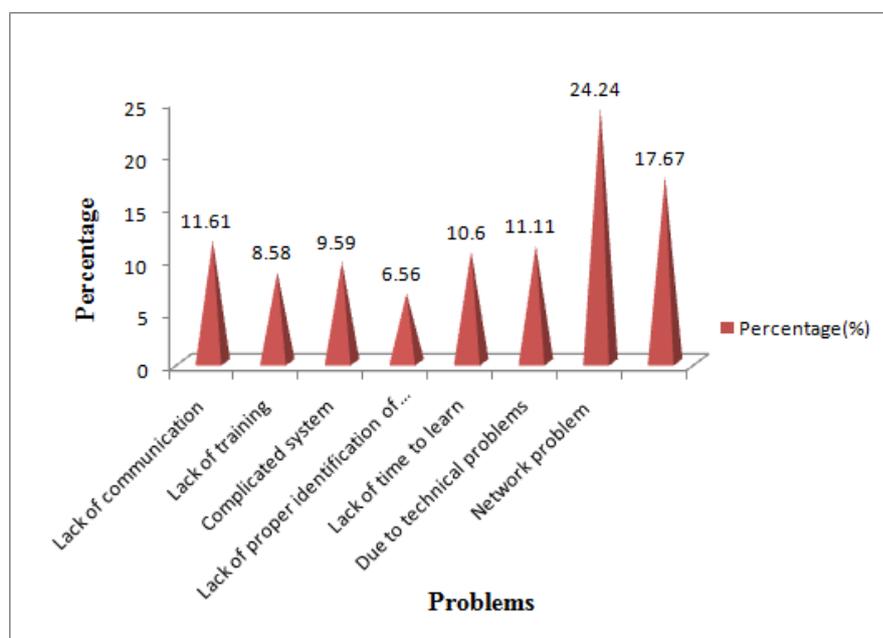


Fig 6.9: Response against problems while using various ICT tools

Table 6.9 shows response against problems faced while using different ICT tools to share knowledge among them. The most common problem faced by the respondents is network problem(24.24%) followed by fluctuations on network connectivity(17.67%), communication gap (11.61%), technical problems(11.11%), lack of time to learn(10.6%), complicated system (9.59%), lack of training(8.58%) and lack of proper identification of IT tools (6.56%) which are graphically presented in fig 6.9.

6.10. Effectiveness of Collaborative Knowledge Sharing through various tools like blogs, apps in your organization.

Table 6.10: Effectiveness of Collaborative Knowledge Sharing through various tools like blogs, apps in institution

Sl no	Choices	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
I	Very effective	8	12.12
II	Effective	36	54.54
III	Somehow effective	16	24.24
IV	Less effective	6	9.09
V	Not at all effective	0	0
Total		66	100

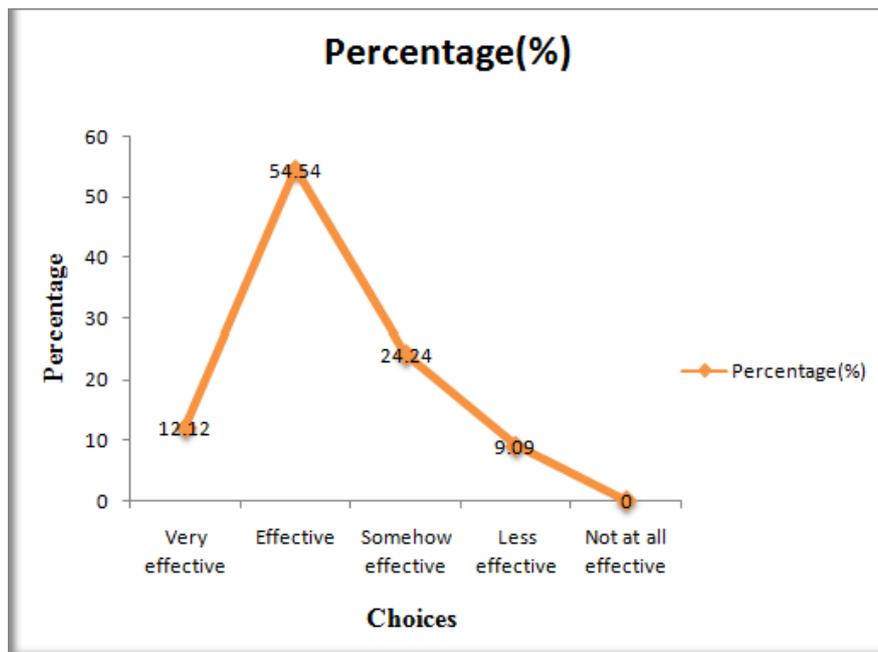


Fig 6.10: Showing effectiveness of various tools in collaborative knowledge sharing

Table 6.10 and Fig 6.10 shows level of effectiveness of Collaborative Knowledge Sharing through various tools like blogs, apps in institution. The result shows highest response on effective (54.54%) and least response on less effective (9.09%).

7. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The present study “*Strategies of Knowledge Sharing among the Post Graduate Students of University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya: A Study*” is carried out to find different tools and techniques used in sharing knowledge, to find out the problems faced by the students while sharing knowledge, to find out the effectiveness of different aspects of Information Technology etc. After carried out the data analyses following findings are highlighted.

I. Discussion is the most used methods of gathering and sharing knowledge among themselves.

Most used method is discussion (59.34) followed by seminar and talks (23.07), telephone (13.18) and E-mail (4.39). The fig.6 graphically shows the rate of respondents on different methods.

II. Among different platforms of ICT social media is the most used platform by the respondents.

Respondents use different platforms of ICT to disseminate their knowledge. Among these platforms social media (86%) is the most used platform followed by E-mail (11%) and Video telephony (3%).

III. The respondents prefer online media, blogs, and websites to share knowledge among them.

Online media, blogs, websites (18.63%) are very effective in sharing knowledge compared to the other methods whereas academic journals and workshops, conferences (13.46%) are not effective.

IV. Providing information about departmental activities is the major activity of departmental face book page in improvement of interactive knowledge.

The highest response is received on providing information about departmental activities (48.57%) followed by publicity purpose (27.14%) and making awareness (22.85%). The least response is received on providing new services (1.42%).

V. With the technological advancement, use of internet by using social media is the highest implemented technology in the institution.

Different technologies that implemented in the university where internet by using social media has received highest response with 36.63% followed by mobile apps (27.27%), intranet (18.18%), knowledge management software (9.84%), data warehouse(4.54%) and least response against E-commerce (1.51%).

VI. In this present technology environment, network problem is main problem while using the various tools of Information Technology.

The most common problem faced by the respondents is network problem (24.24%) followed by fluctuations on network connectivity (17.67%), communication gap (11.61%), technical problems (11.11%), and lack of time to learn (10.6%), complicated system (9.59%), lack of training (8.58%) and lack of proper identification of IT tools (6.56%).

VII. From the study it has revealed that group discussion is the common choice of mode of interaction among the students in their institute.

The most used mode is group discussion (29.67%) which is followed by social media (20.87%), workshop and training(19.78%), experts talks and seminar (18.68%) and least used is institutional websites (10.98%).

VIII. The result shows use of Information Technology in supporting a good communication is effective.

The effectiveness of Information Technology in supporting a good communication among the faculty members and the students in our organization where according to 41(62.12%) respondents it is effective and least response is received against less effective (1.51%).

IX. Use of online discussion forum as a knowledge sharing platform is highly useful.

Maximum response has received against rank 8th (30.30%) which means knowledge sharing though online discussion forum is useful.

8. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the responses and views of the respondents received against different IT tools and techniques, their effectiveness, different problems related to the tools following suggestions can be made. Therefore the major suggestions are:

- I. For an effective communication students can prefer communication through web.
- II. The result shows students are less aware of academic journals and article, to gather knowledge form the scholarly activities must have awareness on access of scholarly articles as well as to encourage them to write or present their knowledge through scholarly writes up.
- III. Students are also less aware of workshops and conferences which are one of the practical aspects to gather knowledge.

- IV. Students should be motivated to create Face book groups for academic activities as well as use of blogs to share individuals` knowledge.
- V. The institute should provide different platforms to promote individuals creativity so that it can share with others.
- VI. One important factor to facilitate or share knowledge among others is “appreciation” so that students are motivated to share knowledge.

9. CONCLUSION

After the observation of all findings and suggestions it can be concluded as respondents use different tools and techniques as well as adopt practices to share and gather knowledge among them. With the advent of technological tools ICT tools are most preferable knowledge sharing tools in the student community. There is also need of awareness regarding use of effective ICT tools.

The study also highlights the less preferred activities in regards to sharing knowledge. After the analysis it has come on focus that students are less aware of scholarly works such as journals, articles, workshops and conferences in gather knowledge. Therefore it can be recommended that there is a need of awareness on scholarly works and students should be motivated to present their knowledge through scholarly writes up.

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