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Usage of ResearchGate by the Research Scholars: A Study of the University of Calcutta

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Abstract

Academic social network sites (ASNS) have emerge as an opportunity to facilitate outreach of research work, share research data, ideas, collaboration, and knowledge. The present study is an attempt to report the use of ResearchGate, one of the academic social networking sites by the Research Scholars of the University of Calcutta. The study has used the two most common methods of survey, namely the descriptive survey method and the questionnaire tool. A sample of 140 researchers from Calcutta University was invited to participate in the survey. An online questionnaire was prepared over Google forms platform and spread. It was found that the majority of them were from the pure and applied sciences. This article focuses on one of the social networking services for researchers, namely ResearchGate (RG), to assess the research visibility and impact on research of universities in University of Calcutta, India. This study indicated male researchers are more motivated for use of RG than the women researchers of the University of Calcutta. It found that the enhancement of researchers' ability to stay alongside of new developments in my field of research is most beneficial to the University of Calcutta researchers by using RG. The study is an original research work mainly dealing with data collected through survey the research scholars of the University Calcutta, Kolkata, West Bengal, India and collected data has been evaluated. Results are highlighting for the major findings, suggestions and conclusion.

Keywords: ResearchGate, Academic Social Network, Use of ResearchGate, Development of Research, Research Scholars, University of Calcutta

Introduction

The internet has revolutionized our entire lines. Creating and sharing information is now easier than ever. The research and scientific community are no exception. Academic Social Networking

Services/sites, or ASNS is a term used to refer to an online service or tool, or platform that can help research communicate with other research and facilitate their various activities when conducting research. Some well known examples of ASNSs include ResearchGate (RG), Academia.edu, Mendely and Zotero. Academic Social Networking Sites provide a platform that allows users to create profiles with academic properties, upload their publications and create online groups. Dickersin *et al.*(1994)¹ states that it is almost impossible to achieve complete literature. Often, with the information explosion and the lack of accessibility, scholars use various methods in order to identify and acquire relevant research. Traditionally, Librarian has made all effort to provide access to all the literature through institutional subscription and library consortia. However, these scholarly subscriptions may not satisfy all the literature required to complete the research. Besides all the effort, a scholar may not provide all the relevant literature needed for the research, hence, the researcher may decide to exclude papers for which it is difficult to obtain full-text copies of similar article that are readily available. As a result of which, social media network and academic social networking sites such as Mendeley, Research Gate, and Academia.edu have been popular among scholars to share and access scholarly articles. These sites have included communication and dissemination by integrating a repository for scholastic publications within a social network site for researchers to use. With the growing popularity of the internet and social academic sites more and more people are joining such websites. Social networks help in maintaining records of current research trends and more importantly build up the relationship with other professionals. Sharing of popular papers and research documents amongst peers are helped in increasing their popularity. ASNSs have gained prominence among researchers who regard social media as an avenue for not only strengthening their own networks, but also sharing their research. Ovadia (2014)² described detailed ASNSs namely RG and Academia.edu. Researchers use ASNS mainly for consumption of information, very scantily for interaction with others and very less for sharing of information and researchers visit ASNS for self-promotion, ego-bolstering, acquisition of professional knowledge, belonging to a peer community, and interaction with peers as found by Pieterse (2016)³. In comparison to these advantages, there are almost no significant disadvantages to ASNSs. So, the scholars are using these networks more and more.

This study concentrates on use of ResearchGate⁴ to inspect the level of consequence on social media among the research scholars of the University of Calcutta, reason for inspiration in joining Research Gate and what are the different activities performed by the research scholars of the University of Calcutta through Research Gate. It will also investigate the varying benefits research scholars have accumulated by using Research Gate.

Literature review

Amees and Singson(2016)⁵ conducted usage of ResearchGate account among Pondicherry University science faculty and found that there was a correlation between, total publications,

reads, downloads and citations. Elsayed(2015)⁶ revealed that $\frac{3}{4}$ th of the respondents use ASNs to share publications, and most researchers subscribed to more than one ASNs, however ResearchGate was the most frequently used one. The findings of the study showed that pure and applied sciences academic discipline appears to play a role in defining Arab researchers within ResearchGate. Thelwall and Kousha (2015)⁷ studied whether ResearchGate usage and publication data broadly reflect existing academic hierarchies and whether individual countries are set to benefit or lose out from using RG and found that the popularity of ResearchGate among users from Brazil, India and Iran and like developed countries such as France, Spain, the Netherlands, and Sweden have relatively high RG scores. It further showed that rankings based on RG statistics correlate well with other rankings of academic institutions and commented that academics from many countries like Brazil, India, and Iran disproportionately were taking advantage of RG and academics in China, South Korea and Russia were missing opportunities to use ResearchGate to maximize the academic impact of their publications. Thelwall and Kousha (2017)⁸ found that ResearchGate is dominated by recent articles and recent articles attracted a three times more than the older articles. They have justified that the articles uploaded to the site give new audience. Thelwall and Kousha (2017)⁸ have also studied whether citations found for recent articles in ResearchGate are comparable to other citation indexes (Google scholar, Scopus and Web of Science) and found ResearchGate has more citations than both Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus, but less citations than Google Scholar. Onyancha (2015)¹⁰ focused on ASNSs for researchers, namely RG to assess the research visibility and impact in South African universities and revealed that researchers in the top-ranking South African universities have moved to utilize ASNSs and there is a high correlation between RG and WoS in terms of their coverage of papers produced by South African universities as well as in terms of impact and ranking of universities in RG, WoS and the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities. Jordon (2015)¹¹ confirmed the importance of the Journal Impact Factor (JIF) in determining ResearchGate score and found there is a relationship between JIF and RG score.

Chakraborty (2012)¹² studied the popularity of ResearchGate and Facebook among research scholars in North Eastern Hill University and found that scholars from social science discipline use RG or facebook for education and research point of view, however scholars from pure science discipline think ASNs have no use on research and education. Asnafi (2017)¹³ revealed that the LIS Department of Kharazmi University, Islamic Azad University, Iran Medical Sciences University, Islamic World Science Citation Center and Tehran University were top Iranian active LIS departments on ResearchGate. Asnafi and Rahmani (2017)¹⁴ studied among Faculty Members of University of Tehran's Engineering College on the role of Researchgate in the development of scientific scholarly activities. Borrego (2017)¹⁵ compared the scholarly output available in the institutional repositories and in RG of 13 top Spanish universities and found that 54.8% of the articles were available in full text on RG and only 11% articles were available in their institutional repository from the articles published in 2014 by researchers at these universities in the first quarter of 2016. Jeng et al.(2017)¹⁶ found that scholars seek

information and discussion equally for all disciplines and frame their questions with external resources with the same regularity.

Lee (2019)¹⁷ showed that motivations for self-archiving research items on ASNSs are based on 18 factors drawn from personal, social, professional, and external contexts, including enjoyment, personal/professional gain, reputation, learning, self-efficacy, altruism, reciprocity, trust, community interest, social engagement, publicity, accessibility, self-archiving culture, influence of external actors, credibility, system stability, copyright concerns, additional time, and effort and developed a model. Míguez-González *et al.* (2017)¹⁸ showed that RG is higher success in becoming the repository of publications, with a higher average of uploaded documents than Academia.edu and they furthered showed that presence of women in ASNSs is higher than men however women uploaded fewer than men do so their visibility is lower than men.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- Inspect the level of consequence on social media among the research scholars of the University of Calcutta
- Determine the identify inspiration of research scholars of the University in joining Research Gate.
- Determine the different activities intention performed by the research scholars of the University of Calcutta through Research Gate.
- Investigate the varying benefits research scholars have accumulated by using Research Gate.

Methodology:

The survey (questionnaire) method is used to study the usage of Research Gate. The simple random sample was used to select 140 users having accounts in Research Gate for the present study. Questions in the table were related to the users' inspiration for joining in Research Gate account as well as the latest structured questionnaire was designed to collect data from research scholars of the University of Calcutta, keeping in mind the basic objectives of the study. An organized online questionnaire was prepared over Google forms platform and spread. The sample size comprises 140 persons and a questionnaire was sent by e-mail to the respondent. Out of 140 questionnaires 128 questionnaire received, however 122 questionnaires were selected for the data analysis. So 122 questionnaires selected for the study and the response rate was 87.14%. The data collection was done during the month of July 5th to August 30th, 2019.

Data Analysis

Table 1 Distribution of Questionnaires to respondents

Total distributed Questionnaires	Questionnaires received from respondents	Incomplete Questionnaires	Questionnaires selected for the study	Percentage
140	128	06	122	87.14

Table 1 shows out of 140 questionnaires, 128 questionnaires received from respondents but 06 questionnaires are incomplete. So 122 questionnaires are analysed for this study.

Table 2 School wise respondents

Department	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Social Science	44	36.06
Science	78	63.93
Total	122	100

Table 2 indicates discipline wise distribution of the respondents. It shows majority 63.93% are from the science discipline followed by social science with just 36.06%. It indicates that research scholars of science disciplines are more relied on RG for promotions of their work as well as other works than the social science streams of research scholars in the University of Calcutta.

Table 3 total no of respondents for each subjects

Subject wise respondents	No of Respondents	Percentage
Mathematics	3	2.45
Physics	11	9.01
Chemistry	12	9.84
Biology	10	8.19
Zoology	9	7.37
Biotechnology	9	7.37
Microbiology	8	6.56
Statistics	1	0.82
Environment Science	7	5.74
Computer Science	8	6.56
Commerce	6	4.92
Management	4	3.27
Economics	4	3.27
Library and Information Science	12	9.84
Mass Communication	4	3.27
Law	6	4.92

Geography	8	6.56
Total	122	100

Table 3 shows the representation of respondents across the different departments. From the total number of 122 respondents participating in the survey, the highest number of respondents were from chemistry and library and information science with 12 respondents each, followed by physics with 11 respondents, biology with 10 respondents, zoology and biotechnology with 9 respondents each, microbiology, computer science and geography with 8 respondents each, environment science with 7 respondents, commerce and law with 6 respondents each, management, mass communication and economic with 4 respondents each, mathematics with 3 respondents, and statistics with 1 respondents.

Table 4 Gender wise respondents who uses

Gender	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	77	63.11
Female	45	36.88
Total	122	100

Table 4 is gender wise distribution of the users who have responded from the research scholars that use RG of the University of Calcutta. This shows majority 77(63.11%) respondents are male and 45(36.88%) respondents are female. It is found that male researchers are more active in RG then the female researchers.

Table 5 Frequency of Use of Research Gate account

Frequency of Use	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Daily	28	22.95
Alternate days	26	21.31
Weekly	54	44.26
Fortnightly	11	9.01
Monthly	3	2.45
Total	122	100

Here research scholars were asked about how frequency they use RG. Table 5 pointed out that majority of the 54(44.26%) respondents are visiting their RG accounts on a weekly basis, while 26 (21.31%) respondents visited their account on an alternate day, 28 (22.95%) respondents visited their account daily basis and 11 respondents visited their accounts fortnightly and only 3 respondents use their RG accounts once in a monthly. So almost all the scholars use RG either weekly, daily or alternate day. In other words, 88.52% students use RG at least once a week.

Table 6 Status Membership of the Research Scholar in using ResearchGate

Membership status	No of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 6 Month	19	15.57
6-12 Months	24	19.67
13-36 Months	33	27.04
3 Year and above	46	37.71
Total	122	100

Table 6 shows status of membership of the research scholar in using research gate accounts. Out of the 122 respondents, majority 46(37.71%) respondents' shows that they have been using research gate for more than 3 years and above, whereas 33 (27.04%) respondents using research gate account between 13-36 months and 24(19.67%) respondents using their accounts for 6-12 months. 19 (15.57%) respondents are using RG for less than 6 months. It indicates that 64.75% researchers are using RG for more than a year.

Table 7 Awareness of full text sharing of research article via ResearchGate platform

Aware of mutual sharing full text research	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	118	96.72
No	4	3.27
Total	122	100

Here we found awareness about sharing of full text articles via RG platform. Table 7 shows that 96.72% of respondents are aware of full text sharing of research article, whereas only 3.27% of respondents are unaware of this service. So most of the users who use RG are known to them that that RG platform is used for sharing of research article among RG users around the world.

Table 8 Satisfaction level of research scholar in using ResearchGate account

Satisfaction level	No of Respondents	Percentage
Very dissatisfied	0	0
Dissatisfied	2	1.63
Neutral	7	5.73
Satisfied	97	79.51
Very satisfied	16	13.11
Total	122	100

This table is to found satisfaction level of the researchers of RG users of University of Calcutta. Table 8 shows that majority 97 (79.51%) respondents are satisfied in using researchgate account, whereas 16 (13.11%) respondents are very satisfied and 2 respondents are dissatisfied in using research gate account. So 92.62% users are at least satisfied by using RG and sharing their research works as well as using other works which shared in RG.

Table 9 Status of posting question in Research Gate account

Status of posting question in Research Gate	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	76	62.29
No	46	37.71
Total	122	100

We found here whether researchers of RG users are posted any question in RG account. Table 9 shows that majority of the respondents 76(62.29%) users posted the question on research gate, whereas 46(31.71%) users did not post any question of research gate for clarification.

Table 10 Status of answered to their queries in Research Gate account (on the basis of 76 posted questions)

Status of answered to their queries	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	72	94.74% (59%)
No	4	3.28

Table 10 shows status of answered to their queries in Research Gate account. From the 76 who posted questions, 72 (94.74%) respondents stated that they were received responded to the questions they have posted, so received answers, whereas only 4 respondents stated that they did not receive any answer to their question.

Table 11 Rating of posting answer posted in Research Gate (On the basis of 72 respondents)

Status of rating	No of Respondents	Percentage
Extremely dissatisfied	--	--
Very dissatisfied	--	--
Satisfied	63	51.63
Very satisfied	7	5.74
Extremely satisfied	2	1.64

Table 11 shows Rating of posting answer posted in Research Gate. From 72 respondents who stated that they posted a question, 63 respondents stated that they were satisfied, 7 respondents were very satisfied and 2 respondents are extremely satisfied. As there is no respondent dissatisfied, 100% are satisfied on receiving the answers to their questions posted and received the answers.

Table 12 Different reasons for Research Scholar inspiration

Inspiration	SA	A	I	D	SD
To go on with activities of fellow researcher	34	75	13	--	--

Research linked questions answered	27	71	23	1	--
Individual topics that group is paying attention to	17	68	32	5	--
Attach with people who have related interests	44	69	9	--	--
Enlarge current social network	24	43	43	12	--
To make contract with researchers from different field of research	16	57	35	11	3
Cooperate with researcher I already known	24	59	31	7	1
Obtain professional visibility with discipline	36	64	16	6	--
Because colleagues initiate	12	34	48	23	5

SA= Strongly Agree, A=Agree, I = Impartial, D=Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree

Note: Total sample exceeds the required size since questions are multiple choices

Strongly Agree: finding of the study show that maximum respondents (44) in favors of the main reason for Research Scholar inspiration was to attach with people who have related interests, followed by (36) respondents with the reason obtain professional visibility with discipline, (34) respondents with the reason to go on with activities of fellow researcher.

Agree: out of the total respondents it was found that (75) respondents agree in favour of the main reason for researcher joining in research gate was to go on with activities of fellow researcher, whereas (71) respondents agree with the reason Research linked questions answered, (69) respondents agree with the reason attach with people who have related interests.

Impartial: 48 respondents neither agree nor disagree with because colleagues initiate, followed by 43 respondents neither agree nor disagree with enlarge current social network, 35 respondents neither agree nor disagree with to make contract with researchers from different field of research.

Disagree: Disagree response received from 23 respondents against the reasons for joining in research gate was to because colleagues initiate, followed by 12 respondents disagree for enlarge current social network.

Strongly Disagree: 5 respondents strongly disagree with because colleagues initiate, followed by 3 respondents with to make contract with researchers from different field of research.

Table 13 Interest of researcher in Research Gate

Inspiration	SA	A	I	D	SD
Frequently interface with researchers around the world	14	45	43	16	4
Frequently stay with upgrade my	10	44	33	31	4

profile information					
Posting my research article papers display	21	70	15	10	6
Observation and evaluate on my research publication	27	63	21	8	3
Learn articles and evaluating paper posted by others	32	76	7	6	1
Regularly reply questions posted in my area of interest	11	37	49	23	2
Convey my papers to fellow research gate users on request	21	63	28	9	1
Invite article not convenient to me in my university	31	68	11	11	1
Explore for job opportunity	4	15	47	34	20

SA= Strongly Agree, A=Agree, I = Impartial, D=Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree
Note: Total sample exceeds the required size since questions are multiple choices

Strongly Agree: strongly agree received from 32 respondents for interest of researcher in Research Gate with learn articles and evaluating paper posted by others, followed by 31 respondents with invite article not convenient to me in my university, 27 respondents with observation and evaluate on my research publication.

Agree: out of the total respondents it was found that (76) respondents agree in favour of the interest of researcher in Research Gate was to learn articles and evaluating paper posted by others, followed by 70 respondents agree with Posting my research article papers display, 68 respondents agree with invite article not convenient to me in my university, 63 respondents agree with convey my papers to fellow research gate users on request and observation and evaluate on my research publication.

Impartial: 49 respondents neither agree nor disagree with regularly reply questions posted in my area of interest, followed by 47 respondents neither agree nor disagree with Explore for job opportunity, 45 respondents neither agree nor disagree with frequently interface with researchers around the world.

Disagree: Disagree response received from 34 respondents against the Interest of researcher in Research Gate was to explore for job opportunity, followed by 31 respondents disagree with frequently stay with upgrade my profile information, 23 respondents disagree with Regularly reply questions posted in my area of interest.

Strongly Disagree: 20 respondents strongly disagree with explore for job opportunity, followed by 6 respondents with posting my research article papers display and 4 respondents with frequently interface with researchers around the world.

Table 14 Research Scholar gets benefits in using Research Gate accounts

Inspiration	SA	A	I	D	SD
It has increase potential to contact colleagues from my home institution	30	73/103	12	6	1
It has increased my ability to associate with colleagues	16	75/91	27	4	--
It has increased the erudite of my scholarly work	23	71/94	26	2	--
It has enhanced my ability to stay alongside of new developments in my field of research	29	81/110	12	--	--
It has enhanced my research achievement	6	20	59	33	4
It has accredit me to share my research article utilize this platform	27	70/97	20	5	--
It has increased my admiration among my peers	14	73	27	8	--
It has enhanced my citation counts	19	69	22	12	--

SA= Strongly Agree, A=Agree, I = Impartial, D=Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree

Note: Total sample exceeds the required size since questions are multiple choices

Strongly Agree: Out of the total respondents it was found that (30) respondents strongly agree in favour of the Research Scholar gets benefits in using Research Gate accounts with it has increase potential to contact colleagues from my home institution, followed by 29 respondents strongly agree with it has enhanced my ability to stay alongside of new developments in my field of research, 27 respondents strongly agree with it has accredit me to share my research article utilize this platform, 23 respondents strongly agree it has increased the erudite of my scholarly work.

Agree: Out of the total respondents it was found that (81) respondents agree in favors of the Research Scholar gets benefits in using Research Gate accounts with it has enhanced my ability to stay alongside of new developments in my field of research, followed by (75) respondents agree with it has increased my ability to associate with colleagues, (73) respondents agree with it has increase potential to contact colleagues from my home institution.

Impartial: 59 respondents neither agree nor disagree with it has enhanced my research achievement, followed by 27 respondents neither agree nor disagree with it has increasly my admiration among my peers and it has increased my ability to associate with colleagues, 26 respondents neither agree nor disagree with it has increased the erudite of my scholarly work.

Disagree: Disagree response received from 33 respondents against the Research Scholar gets benefits in using Research Gate accounts with it has enhanced my research achievement,

followed by 12 respondents disagree with It has enhanced my citation counts, 8 respondents disagree with it has increased my admiration among my peers.

Strongly Disagree: 4 respondents strongly disagree with It has enhanced my research achievement and 1 respondent strongly disagree with it has increase potential to contact colleagues from my home institution.

Conclusion:

The present study examines the factors that motivate research scholars to join online resources community the ResearchGate which provide academic and social networking service. ResearchGate has become very useful for researchers particularly among science disciplines. The motivation for research gate has not been observed for social science and humanities scholars. This study also indicated male researchers are more motivated for use of RG than the women researchers of the University of Calcutta. Overall research scholars join Research Gate to connect with fellow researchers, uploading articles, comment, review and read as well as for follow the activities of fellow researchers around world, and professional visibility or outreach. However main reasons to join RG are found from this study were to attach with people who have related interests, to follow the activities of fellow researchers around world and for visibility with within discipline or outreach. It is also found from this study that most interests for using RG are to know articles and evaluate papers posted by others, to get articles which are not available with their home institutions, to post their research article papers for display and outreach, and observed and evaluate their research publications. They are also interested RG for frequently interface with researchers around the world, frequently stay with upgrade their profile, regularly reply questions posted against their area of interest, and to provide their papers to fellow research gate users on request.

We also came to know the benefits are achieved by the research scholars of the University of Calcutta by ResearchGate accounts. The most important benefits they achieved are enhanced their ability to stay with new developments in their field of research and accredited them to share their research article with global. The other benefits they achieved are increased contact with colleagues from their home institution, increased their ability to associate with colleagues, increased the erudite of their scholarly work, enhanced their research achievement, increased their admiration among their peers and enhanced their citation counts. They also come across articles not available in their registered institutions. This study found that the enhancement of researchers' ability to stay alongside of new developments in my field of research is most beneficial to the University of Calcutta researchers by using RG.

It was found most of the researchers of It has enhanced my ability to stay alongside of new developments in my field of research

In spite of restrictions and embargoes by publishers, ResearchGate has become quite useful for scholars for sharing intrinsic to scholarship and a core activity. Technology and social media has made sharing much easier now. Therefore, if publishers do not publish articles of research scholars, soon they will lose regular customer ship.

ResearchGate metric provides foundation for further research for research scholars by collaborative endeavor. However, it has yet established its credibility evaluation metric for scholars to gain momentum as a social impact measurement. In India, large scale relationship study between ResearchGate metrics, establish metrics and institutional metrics have not been undertaken. Therefore credibility of research gate for scientific community is immense.

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