IT UTILIZATION OPPORTUNITIES IN TRAINING RELIGIOUS FROM ISFAHAN UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS' PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The present study aims at identifying opportunities resulting from the application of information and communication technology in cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects of religious training from the perspective of Isfahan University's professors. The population was all faculty members of Isfahan University which are more than 454. In this study with the use of stratified sampling 80 individuals were selected. The methodology of the present study is descriptive – survey and to examine research questions a researcher made questionnaire was used; the content validity of which was confirmed by expert reviews and it reliability was calculated as 0.90 through Cronbach's alpha.

Results suggest that the application of information technology in cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects of religious training was above average and the level of "creating appropriate field for religious dialog" and "creating grounds to increase religious thinking" are considered as the most important opportunities created by information technology in religious training from the

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perspective of Isfahan University's professors. In addition, "to create exhilaration and make life meaningful" and "to become easier to have constant and regular relation with Scientific and research centers in the world to communicate latest achievements in religious training" and "to improve decision making based on religious criteria" as opportunities created in religious training are more important than other items.

Key words: information technology, religious training

Introduction

The present era is considered as a combination of communication and information. The age in which man has a greater need than ever, to have information and needs to establish communications to access to more information. Today by having access to several advanced information and communication technologies, the possibility of establishing communications and the rapid exchange of information is bigger than ever (Yousefi Saeeid Abadi and Rezaei Raad; 1389:147). The term information technology is used to describe those technologies that help us record, save, process, recover, transfer and receive data (Holms, Translation by Azarakhsh & Mehrdad, 1377:5). Perhaps what is even more important than the meaning of Information technology is the understanding and defining of the concept of Information technology. Because the concept of information technology will imply cultural, social and instructional components in addition to technical, technological aspects and areas of skill; and as a result human and society consideration will include cultural and instructional aspects in addition to technical and technological aspects. And when these components and functions enter the life of a phenomenon, it will have social, cultural, economical and even instructional effects and as a result this phenomenon would not only act as a hardware but as an influential software. The depth of its impact would be more when it enjoys recent means and concepts of communication and information and consequently it will form a civilization based on information (Ebadi, 1384:31). Brown, Norberg and Srygley (1972) name six benefits of using technology in education as follow:

1. Technology can increase productivity in education 2. Technology can result in individual learning. 3. Technology can result in learning based on scientific findings. 4. Technology can cause deep learning. 5. Technology can speed up the learning. 6. Technology can create equal opportunities for everybody to learn.

Since the majority of our nation is Muslim and the government is Islamic as well, one of the main duties of Education ministry is commitment to religious training of the new generation. Religious training is a set of intentional and purposeful actions in order to teach valid propositions of a religion, so that people feel commitment to observe and apply those instructions. According to this definition, teaching is not confined to mosques, churches or theological school but it is possible to make purposeful effort to teach and form religious teachings everywhere. Thus in

religious training an individual should be guided toward God so that he considers God as the origin and the extremity of the universe and accedes Him and not anybody else. In such a manner, education is a purposeful course which has its stages, methods and principles (Malekian, 1379: 39). Thus today's society needs civilians who can resolve problems with proper utilization of information and communication technologies and critical thinking and taking strategic approaches. Instructional technology makes the ground for this utilization, because through obtaining required information, knowledge and skills a successful life and methods of using information and communication resources would be possible. And one of the achievements of information and communication technology is evolution in education (Yousefi Saeeid Abadi and Rezaei Raad; 1389:148).

Since communication expands through the world and people from all over the world communicate with each other and people get to know each other communicate with other people of the world, International understandings becomes necessary and learning to leave with each other becomes an important goal of the education and also information technology in the field of religious training shows its uncertainty-making and fragile presence. As the dynamism of the training system is in releasing its principles, methods and functions from static mode and keep its needs live and fresh regarding environmental changes. If a training system, regardless of changes in environmental conditions, wants to constantly use fixed principles and approaches for all times and places, it is doomed to death. Our educational system, does have the Islamic property, whether specified or not; since the culture of our country is Islamic, our training, in one sense, would be religious (Bagheri, 1379).

In the present century, religious training has gained a massive importance along with the increasing development of science and technology; since with many potential users using and having access to these facilities, certain educations is made possible for students and researchers and these facilities have created an electronic environment for developing research, doing active discussions, exchanging new thought and ideas and communicating with others. Also, religious training in Iran is among issues that along with the increasing development of science and technology in the present century and with the victory of Islamic Revolution, has always gained the attention of educational authorities in our country. Despite several theoretical and field studies, the need for research in religious training still exists and seems essential, especially due to the fact that the conceptual explaining of this area and distinguishing it from Islamic training in its general sense, is not clear, and for some, especially Arab researchers it is accompanied by accepting some type of unwanted secularism and on the other hand despite all efforts and activities, no proper success of the training system could be witnessed. Especially that due to the place and the role of religion, the increasing thirst and need to proper religious training not only in our society but in most societies is clear (Ebadi, 1379). Also, significance of the study is due to the fact that it shows the current status of the application of information systems in religious training and as the first step could cause better use of computers and deployment of computer networks.

The following deals with researches that have been conducted in the application of technology in educating individuals: Bein and Wilheim, in a research on how academic people use the Internet suggest that: the internet is a common and ordinary approach in universities to do unknown things and this network has made it possible to have quick and easy access to information (Hayati & Sharifpour, 1382:3). Hiner (1992) found that networks are powerful means of having access to research resources including individuals, information, databases and softwares and specifically international cooperation and communication would be easier using these networks but meetings and personal visitations still seem to be essential. Other experimental researches have explained the positive effects of the internet on creativity and scientific productivity (Rezaeei, 1997). Also, Salajeghe (1377) in his research demonstrated that users use this network for different reasons such as familiarity with international system of information, doing specified researches, familiarity with electronic journals, finding out the results of scientific researches and other people's experiences. The study of Mohsen Eslami (1383) on the internet learning capabilities in information and communication, suggest that new technologies could take interesting programs that are based on present realities to the classroom and improve the learning by providing learning aids.

Dans (2010) in an article under the title of the effect of using information and communication technology on primary school students, claims that generally effective use of information and communication technology could be one the basic indicators of educational progress. For example in Macedonian education teachers are taught to use technology and IT based on interactive instruction and with the focus on creative learning, critical thinking, problem solving and creating motivation in educational process. Ghoculp (2010) with the goal of examining the effect of information technology with the use of questionnaires and analyzing the results with T-tests, one-way ANOVA and factor analysis on 395 students from four faculties of Educational Sciences, Agriculture, Math and Engineering, found that these students have positive and affirmative attitude toward the effect of information technology in education and also, students of different faculties had different views about that.

Dastan et al. (2010) in a practical study with 349 participants in Social Sciences Institute of Ataturk University found that using IT positively influences decision making and success in life and business. Kong (2008) in a review study on the development of IT in recent years in Hong Kong demonstrated that all honk kong's schools in response to this need of the society and also based on the framework of the situations, were encouraged to apply methods of using IT in training students.

According to what is presented, the problem still exists that how can we make use of information and communication technology in religious training of students. Thus in the present study with the goal of defining opportunities resulting from the application of information and communication technology in cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects of religious training, following the presentation and analysis of valuable comments of the professors, we decided to

answer the following questions: 1. What are opportunities resulting from the application of information and communication technology in cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects of religious training from the perspective of Isfahan University's professors? 2. What are opportunities resulting from the application of information and communication technology in cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects of religious training from the perspective of Isfahan University's professors according to demographic characteristics (gender, Academic rank, Service record and academic degree)?

Methodology

The methodology of the present study is applied as far as the objective is concerned and is descriptive – survey as far as data collection is concerned which deals with survey of Isfahan University's professors about opportunities of information technology in religious is training.

Population and Sampling method

The population of the research includes Isfahan University's professors which are more than 454 during academic year of 90-91. In this study with the use of stratified sampling 80 individuals were selected, relative to the number of professors of different faculties.

Instrument

In this study researcher made questionnaire was used. Regarding the nature of the topic and research method, a researcher made questionnaire was used including opportunities resulting from the application of information and communication technology in cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects. In order to measure the research's main components dues to the fact that each component includes a few items, Five-point Likert scale was used. In this scale some weighs are conventionally given to the answers. So that 1 indicates very little and 5 shows very much. After planning ad forming the questionnaire it seemed necessary to do a preliminary examination and pilot the questionnaire in order to eliminate possible problems. The preliminary examination should be conducted among the population of this study. To do so, the questionnaire was distributed among 30 samples of the population for a pilot test. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined which due to the high reliability of the questionnaire no need to adjustments was suggested by the supervisor and the advisor. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated as 0.90 through Cronbach's alpha.

Data analysis method

For the investigation and description of the data related to the general characteristics of responders, in descriptive statistics, parameters like frequency, percentage and mean were used. And to analyze and answer research questions, in referential statistics, univariate t-test, one way ANOVA, Hotelling T2 test, Paired t-test and Tukey test were used.

Results

1. Results about the first research question: opportunities resulting from the application of information and communication technology in cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects of religious training from the perspective of Isfahan University's professors

Table 1. The frequency and percentage of responses on opportunities of the application of Information Technology in cognitive aspect of religious training

Items	Very little	little	somehow	much	very much	Mean
Creating appropriate field for religious dialog		9 14/1	18 28/1	21 32/8	16 25/0	3/68
Creating appropriate ground to increase religious thinking	1 1/6	10 15/6	20 31/3	17 26/6	16 26/6	3/57
Nurturing pure rationality in different areas of beliefs and ethics	1 1/9	18 34/6	15 28/8	5 9/6	13 25/0	3/21

Results obtained from the table show that the highest mean score is 3.68 for the "Creating appropriate field for religious dialog", it is 3.57 for "Creating appropriate ground to increase religious thinking" and the lowest goes to "Nurturing pure rationality in different areas of beliefs and ethics" with 2.68.

Table 2. The frequency and percentage of responses on opportunities of the application of Information Technology in emotional aspect of religious training

Items	Very little	little	somehow	much	very much	Mean
To create exhilaration and make life meaningful		7 11/3	18 29/0	16 25/8	21 33/9	3/90
To create and increase the spirit of human development through developing the pleasure of getting close and having relations with God	2 3/5	6 10/5	22 38/6	18 31/6	9 15/8	3/36
To consider moral values as relative, individual and personal taste	9 30/0	1 3/3	11 36/7	5 16/7	4 13/3	2/80
To moderate emotional characteristics based on religious training	6 16/7	4 11/1	11 30/6	6 16/7	9 25/0	2/80

Results obtained from the table show that the highest mean score is 3.90 for the "To create exhilaration and make life meaningful"; it is 3.36 for "To create and increase the spirit of human development through developing the pleasure of getting close and having relations with God" and the lowest mean score goes to "To consider moral values as relative, individual and personal taste" with 2.80.

Table 3. The frequency and percentage of responses on opportunities of the application of Information Technology in behavioral aspect of religious training

Items	Very little	little	somehow	much	very much	Mean
To become easier to have constant and regular relation with Scientific and research centers in the world to communicate latest achievements in religious training	4 6/3	6 9/4	13 20./3	19 29/7	22 34/4	3/76
To improve decision making based on religious criteria	4 7/0	7 12/3	12 21/1	19 33/3	15 26/3	3/59
to desensitize individuals to religious teachings	3 7/9	17 44/7	14 36/8	3 7/9	1 2/6	2/52

Results obtained from table (3) show that the highest mean score is 3.76 for the "To become easier to have constant and regular relation with Scientific and research centers in the world to communicate latest achievements in religious training"; it is 3.59 for "To improve decision making based on religious criteria" and the lowest mean score goes to "to desensitize individuals to religious teachings".

Table 4: independent sample T-test for comparing Mean scores of opportunities of the application of Information Technology in religious training, in cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects with hypothetical mean of 3

Area	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard error	t
Cognitive aspect	3/38	/695	/084	4/53
Emotional aspect	3/54	/623	/077	6/93
Behavioral aspect	3/42	/838	/103	4/13

According to the results of the table, the observed t is bigger than critical value of the table at error level of 5%. Thus the application of Information Technology is effective more than average in cognitive, behavioral and emotional aspects in religious training.

Results about the second research question: opportunities resulting from the application of information and communication technology in cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects of religious training from the perspective of Isfahan University's professors according to demographic characteristics (gender, Academic rank, Service record and academic degree):

Table 5: independent sample T-test for comparing Mean scores of opportunities of the application of Information Technology in religious training from the perspective of male and female faculty members.

Areas	Male		Female		t	p
	$\overline{X}$	S	$\overline{X}$	S		
Cognitive	3/42	/652	3/32	/756	/568	/572
Emotional	3/47	/598	3/63	/657	1/05	/298
Behavioral	3/28	/880	3/64	/721	1/74	/086

According to the findings of the table, observed t was not significant at $p \leq /05$ level; therefore there is no difference between male and female faculty members.

Table 6: the comparison of the Mean scores of opportunities resulting from the application of Information and Communication Technology in religious training from the perspective faculty members in terms of academic degree

Areas	MA		Ph. D		t	p
	$\overline{X}$	S	$\overline{X}$	S		
Cognitive	3/53	/766	3/32	/661	1/15	/252
Emotional	3/69	/795	3/48	/547	1/22	/224
Behavioral	3/51	/978	3/39	/785	/523	/602

According to the findings of the table, observed t was not significant at $p \leq /05$ level; therefore there is no difference among opinions of faculty members in terms of academic degree.

Table 7: the comparison of the Mean scores of opportunities resulting from the application of Information and Communication Technology in religious training from the perspective faculty members in terms of academic rank

Areas	Instructor		Assistant Professor		Associate Professor		f	p
	$\overline{X}$	S	$\overline{X}$	S	$\overline{X}$	S		
Cognitive	3/43	/793	3/44	/728	3/17	/204	/590	/557

Emotional	3/65	/796	3/59	/536	3/16	/332	2/28	/110
Behavioral	3/34	1/02	3/64	/636	2/95	/803	3/03	/055

According to the findings of the table (7), the observed f was not significant at $p \leq /05$ level; therefore there is no difference among opinions of faculty members in terms of academic rank.

Table 8: the comparison of the Mean scores of opportunities resulting from the application of Information and Communication Technology in religious training from the perspective faculty members in terms of Service record

Areas	**Less than 5**		**6-10**		**11-15**		**Above 16**		**f**	**p**
	$\overline{X}$	**S**	$\overline{X}$	**S**	$\overline{X}$	**S**	$\overline{X}$	**S**		
Cognitive	3/16	/683	3/58	/690	3/28	/727	3/55	/644	1/37	/295
Emotional	3/50	/858	3/42	/669	3/56	/605	3/59	/489	/205	/893
Behavioral	3/01	/882	3/63	/667	3/28	/790	3/70	/864	2/18	/099

According to the findings of the table, the observed f was not significant at $p \leq /05$ level; therefore there is no difference among opinions of faculty members in terms of service record.

Discussion and Conclusion

According to the objectives of the research and questions that are proposed, data analysis for the first research question about opportunities resulting from the application of information and communication technology in religious training in cognitive aspect was 3.3 and standard deviation of 0.838. The mean score for answers with hypothetical mean of 3 indicated that the application of information and communication technology in cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects of religious training was higher than average. The highest mean score for "much" and "very much" in cognitive aspect goes to "Creating appropriate field for religious dialog" with 3.68 and "Creating appropriate ground to increase religious thinking" with 3.50. The lowest mean score is "2.68" which is for "Nurturing pure rationality in different areas of beliefs and ethics".
According to the findings, two items of creating appropriate field for religious dialog and creating appropriate ground to increase religious thinking are the most important opportunities created by the application of information and communication technology in religious training from the view point of faculty members. Although it is not directly mentioned in other researches but they have reached similar results that are in line with this option. The results of researches by Salajeghe (1377) confirms this fact that Internet users of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences use this network for different reasons such as familiarity with international system of information and finding out the results of scientific researches and other people's experiences. Okhovati (1375) in examining the status of using the Internet by faculty members of Iran University of Medical

Sciences and Shahid Beheshti University of Tehran indicated that users mostly use this network to do researches and to communicate with their colleagues abroad.

In relation to the application of information and communication technology in emotional aspect, the highest mean score for "much" and "very much" goes to "To create exhilaration and make life meaningful for students" with 3.90 and "To create and increase the spirit of human development of students through developing the pleasure of getting close and having relations with God" with 3.36. The lowest mean score is related to the item "decreasing the relation of religion with students' social life" with 2.62. Based on the findings, to create exhilaration and make life meaningful for students was the most important opportunity from the view point of faculty members of Isfahan University.

In relation to the application of information and communication technology in behavioral aspect, the highest mean score for "much" and "very much" goes to "To become easier to have constant and regular relation with Scientific and research centers in the world to communicate latest achievements in religious training" with 3.76 and "To improve decision making based on religious criteria" with 3.59 and the lowest mean score is related to the item "to desensitize students to religious teachings" with 2.52. Based on the findings, "to become easier to have constant and regular relation with Scientific and research centers in the world to communicate latest achievements in religious training" and "to improve decision making based on religious criteria" were more important than other items. This is while the item "to desensitize students to religious teachings" has been regarded less than other religious teachings. In other words this item was considered more as a threat. What is certain is that to improve decision making is among the most important factors in all fields whether managerial and non-managerial.

The second question was: what are opportunities resulting from the application of information and communication technology in cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects of religious training from the perspective of Isfahan University's professors according to demographic characteristics (gender, Academic rank, Service record and academic degree)? Data analysis in relation to this question show that there is no difference between opinions of male and female faculty members about opportunities resulting from the application of information and communication technology in cognitive ($p = 0.05720$), emotional ($p = 0.298$), and behavioral (0.086) aspects of religious training. These findings are inconsistent with those of Lebdicker (1997) who found that there is a meaningful relationship between the gender of faculty members and their attitudes toward using computer, but they are consistent with the findings of a research by Hosseini Shaoun (1386) who found that there is no significant relationship between gender and the degree of using information technology. This difference could be attributed to the cultural difference of male and female in Iran and the West.

In addition, there is no difference between opinions of faculty members in terms of academic rank in cognitive ($p = 0.557$), emotional ($p = 0.110$), and behavioral (0.055) aspects. These findings are in line with those of Hosseini Shaoun (1386) who found that there is no significant relationship

between academic rank and the degree of using information technology but are inconsistent with the results of a research by Hakimi (1375) who claims that there is a negative correlation between academic rank and the degree of using information technology.

There is no difference between opinions of faculty members in terms of service record in cognitive (p = 0.259), emotional (p = 0.893), and behavioral (0.99) aspects. These findings are inconsistent with those of Okhovati (1377) and Garcia et al. (2004) who claim that younger faculty members use the internet more and most Internet users have less than 5 years of work records. Also, Sharifi (1383) found that there is a meaningful relationship between personal and educational characteristics, teaching experience and the degree of using information technology which are inconsistent with the findings of this study.

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