

**INFORMATIONAL POWER AND ITS EFFECTS ON A STUDENT'S PERSONALITY AND PERFORMANCE: ACQUIRED THROUGH AUTODIDACTISM AND TECHNOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS**Iftikhar Khan<sup>1</sup>, Rana Kashif Shakeel<sup>2</sup>, Turab Hussain<sup>3</sup>

Original Article

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**ABSTRACT**

*This paper investigates the acquiring of informational power through autodidacticism by using technological applications and their effects on students' personality and performance. Informational power denotes the amount of access an individual has to the resources, possession of information in the form of knowledge, and how information is communicated and expressed effectively to others. Autodidacticism is the process of self-education or self-learning that takes place without the supervision of mentors like professors and teachers or institutions like a school, college, and university. Personality is a set of traits and is studied by considering various aspects like emotions, behaviour, and genetics of a person. The bases of power model by French and Raven was used as a theoretical framework for the study. Using purposive sampling technique, data was collected from sixteen students of BS Computer Engineering, Software Engineering, Maths, and English from a public sector university constitute the population of the study. The data were collected through one-on-one interview from the respondents. The data was analyzed qualitatively which involved steps of coding, categorizing, and theme creating from the transcribed interviews. The findings of the study were divided into two parts: in the first part, access to the sources of informational power was discussed and in the second part effects of informational power on a student's personality and performance were discussed. The findings of the study reveal that students can acquire informational power through autodidacticism by using various technological applications which were divided into five main categories based on similarity in sub-categories. Moreover, it was also concluded that informational power acquired through autodidacticism by using technological applications affects a student's personality and performance both positively and negatively.*

**Keywords:** Informational Power, Autodidacticism, Personality, Technological Apps

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to theorists, power exists everywhere in the world in various forms. Different models were developed by various theorists in different periods. Niccolò Machiavelli contributed a lot in a different discourses of Western thoughts and his political theory made him distinguished from the others, though he had decentralized thinking about the power. According to him, power is a means not a resource and it can be used to seek strategic advantages (Benner 2009; Zuckert, 2018). Whereas, Hobbes discussed power as hegemony. In addition, he considered power as a centralized and focused element based on sovereignty (Baluch, 2018). Weber defines power as “the probability that an actor within a social relationship would be in a position to carry out his will despite resistance to it” (Flantz, 1997, p.35). Dahl wrote the book ‘Who Governs’ that encompasses two aspects of Weber’s approach: the definition of power and its attribution to the human factor (Dahl, 1961). Weber and Dahl discussed power by focusing on how it exists in society. Weber argued that power exists in the context of the organization and its structures, whereas Dahl found it within the boundaries of communities. Dahl developed his concept by understanding ruling elites that became prominent just after the Second World War (Mills, 1956; Hunter, 1953). As a response to Dahl, a model of two faces of power was developed by Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz. The model criticizes Dahl’s basic premises. Dahl took society as a pluralist society that holds the interest of all the individuals through open processes. Bachrach and Baratz also criticized the decision-making process whether it is democratic or not as assumed by Dahl (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962). They discussed the covert (the ability to stop the decision-making process) and overt face (how decisions are made) of power. Clegg claims that power conflict cannot rise above the values, beliefs, and rituals people have in their respective society in the form of public face and that society has vested

interest of one group relative to others (Clegg, 1989). The concept of power was extended from the field of sociology to all fields of social sciences and humanities (Foucault, 1979, 1980, 1996).

Autodidacticism is the process of self-education or self-learning that takes place without the supervision of mentors like professors and teachers or institutions like schools, colleges, and universities. The word “autodidactic” is derived from the Greek word that consists of prefix “autos” and the root “didaktikós” meaning “self” and “apt at teaching”, respectively (Word Reference online language dictionary, 2020). The notion of autodidacticism (autodidacticism) represents the degree of students’ independence at acquiring knowledge and skills in different fields of studies. In addition, the process of autodidacticism is not organized under the guidance of a teacher and it lacks the formally organized learning process (Bouchard, 1994). The learning through autodidacticism may or may not have formal education and the study represents complete or an alternative way to formal education (Azimov, 2009). Autodidacticism enhances one’s knowledge independently and makes a notable contribution to various fields of studies (Giniatullin, 1990; Tambovkina, 2014). In autodidacticism three steps involve learning, self-directed learning, and peer-teaching that makes the learning process effective and notable (Sergeeva & Guzeva, 2019).

Technology is used everywhere nowadays and life without it indispensable. It is a cornerstone of many new things and engenders integration of different things with technology for making them more effective in the world. The technological devices used now get smarter and proliferated and the process of information dissemination and acquiring become easier, as technology become more advanced (Khadage, Muller, & Flintoff, 2016). The integration of technology with Education makes the process of teaching and learning innovative and unconventional (Eppard, Nasser, & Reddy,

2016). The technology generates new learning models and provides access to teachers and students to use multiple informational sources. In addition, it has changed the way of teaching from conventional and teacher-centred to unconventional and students-centred and disseminates information at a quite faster rate (Hamm, Saltsman, Jones, Baldrige, & Perkins, 2013). The informational process can be enhanced by remote learning with the help of technological devices and collaborative learning and blending of two create effective learning experiences for the students (Peters, 2007). Teachers use technological applications in the classroom (mobile applications and classroom response) that allows students to reply to the questions devised by the teacher on course content. The use of technology shows that students can improve their perceptions of engagement, learning, information, and actual assessment (Denker, 2013; Jones, Crandall, Vogler, & Robinson, 2013).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

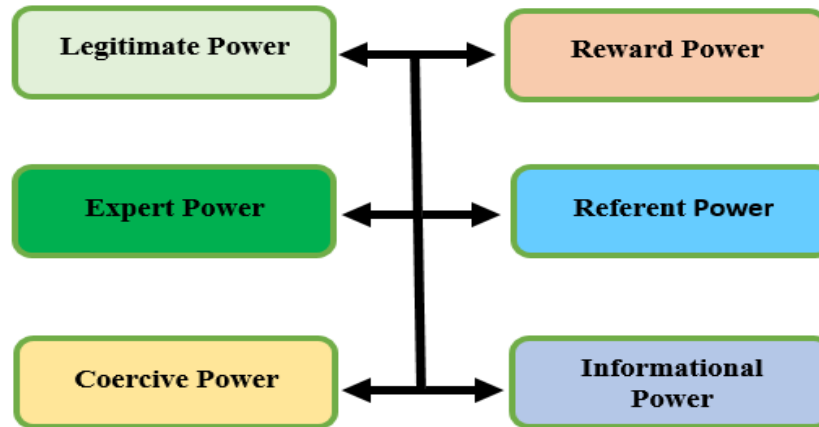
Power exists in the word and it is exercised in different forms such as coercive, reward, legitimate, referent, expert, and informational in a society (Raven, 1964; Forsyth, 2006; Forsyth, & Burnette, 2010). The types of power affect people in different ways and sometimes these forms manipulate and persuade the people of society (Nesler, Aguinis, Quigley, & Tedeschi, 1993). Forms of power are categorized based on knowledge people have and the level in hierarchy where they exist. Nowadays, technology is a great source of information that enhances informational power and provides access to people to various sources of information (Lohnes & Kinzer, 2007; Waycott, Bennett, Kennedy, Dalgarno & Gray, 2010). New applications of Web 2.0 technologies like YouTube, Flickr, blogs, Facebook, online discussion boards, My Space, and others enable users to collaborate and interact with one another in the social community (McCarthy, 2010). The enhancement of

informational power depends on personal interest and available technological resources. The current study investigated acquiring of informational power through autodidacticism by using technological applications and its effects on a student's personality and performance. The objectives of the study were to find out the various technological sources that enhance the informational power of the students.

The bases of power model were developed by French and Raven and were used as a theoretical framework for the study. Initially, they divided the power into five different forms and these included legitimate, reward, coercive, referent, and expert power (Raven, & French, 1959; French, Raven, & Cartwright, 1959). In 1965, Raven's subsequent work identified the sixth base of power called informational power which was added to the model. Finally, the model was composed of six bases of power (Raven, 2004). The model describes each power in detail and gives wielding of each power in society. The model describes legitimate power that it is the form of power that derives from status and a job. The second form is referent power and it expresses followers' identification and linking to their leader. The third form is expert power and it describes the competence of the leader from the viewpoint of his followers. The fourth form is reward power and it is the capacity of an individual to provide a reward to others in any form. The fifth form is coercive power and this denoted the capacity of an individual to punish others. The last form is informational power and this denoted the amount of access an individual has to the resources, the information in the form of knowledge, and how information is communicated and expressed effectively to the others (Raven, 2008). The model also describes forms of power by considering some other aspects. According to the other aspects of the model, reward and coercion powers are assigned personal and impersonal forms too. Negative and positive categories are assigned to the referent and expert power whereas

normative, reciprocity, equity, and responsibility are assigned to legitimate power. Moreover, direct and indirect categories are assigned to informational power (Ogunleye & Aluko, 2012).

Each form of power is distinctive from the other based on its usage and the way it is implemented.



**Figure 1.** Six Bases of Power by French and Raven

Personality is defined differently by different writers and psychologists and they take different features of personality in their writing like characteristics, qualities, emotions, and composition of the mind. Stangor and Walinga (2014) in their book 'Introduction to Psychology' define a personality that it is the result of two factors and these include hereditary and environmental factors that change over time. Generally, personality is defined as "individual differences in characteristic patterns of feeling, thinking and behaving." Robbins & Judge defines personality "The sum total of ways in which an individual reacts to and interacts with others" (2009, p.154). There are two ways to study personality and these are idiographic and nomothetic. Idiographic psychology discusses the unique aspects and characteristics of a particular individual whereas nomothetic psychology talks about general laws that can be applied to various people having different characteristics like the principle of self-actualization (Allport, 1937). There are many influential personality theories and these define personality as a set of traits (Goldberg, 1990;

McCrae & John, 1992). The theories describe that each individual has a profile of traits. The traits are sometimes described as a person's behaviour and they do not tell us what situation triggers that behaviour or what psychological factors cause a change in the behaviour (Mischel, 1990; Pervin 1994; Block, 1995). The theories formulated so far are based upon one or more factors of personality like behaviour, traits, biology, and emotion, etc. Traits theories of personality are rooted in the biology of a person and do not discuss the psychological aspects of personality (Eysenck, 1982; Loehlin 1992). Another important theory about personality is Psychoanalytic theory that discusses interaction among different constituents of personality (Kernberg & Caligor, 2005). Sigmund Freud was a prominent supporter of this school of thought (Kahn, 2002). Many other theories discuss personality differently and these include behaviourist theories, social cognitive theories, humanistic theories, biopsychological theories, and evolutionary theories, etc.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study investigates how can students enhance informational power through autodidacticism by using technological applications. A qualitative method was used for the investigation of the study. Qualitative research best suited to the study in which the researcher does not know about the variables of the research problem and want to explore it (Creswell, & Poth, 2016). The nature of the study is exploratory as it explores and examines students' views about using the technological application for enhancing their information (Wolcott, 1992). The current study has a great interest to investigate acquiring of informational power by integrating self-learning with technology and its effects on a student's personality and performance.

#### Data Collection

The students of BS Computer Engineering, Software Engineering, Maths, and English from a public sector university constitute the population of the study. Purposive sampling technique was used for the selection of the sample. The study sample size was sixteen students and these students were from different BS programs (Maths, Computer Engineering, Software Engineering and English). The ages of participants were between the age of 19-23 years. The study was interested to investigate the acquiring of informational power through autodidacticism by using technology and its effects on students' personality and performance. Data were collected through one-on-one interview via a Zoom application and the duration of each interview was forty minutes.

#### Data Analysis

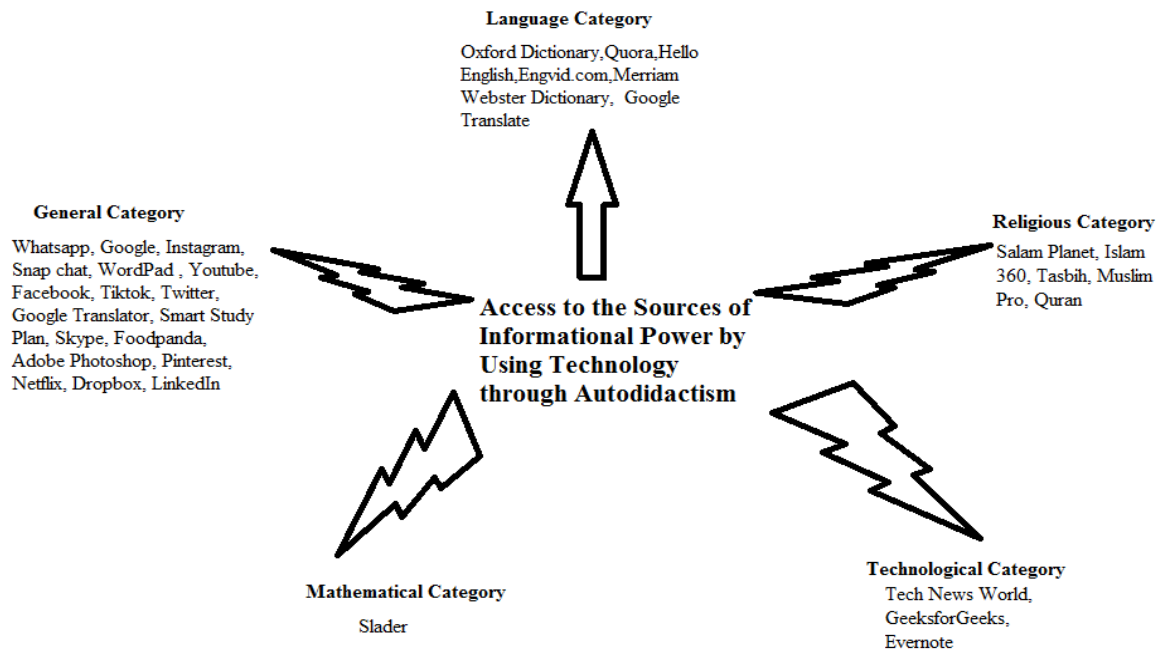
The data were analysed by applying constructivist grounded theory analysis that helped in developing themes from the transcribed data (Charmaz, 2014). The analysis of data was carried out into various steps. Firstly, the collected data were transcribed one by one. Transcribed interviews were divided into the small meaningful units and each unit was coded with two or more words subsequently. Thereupon, assigned coded words to each meaningful line were arranged into categories through the exploration of links. Finally, various themes were developed from various categories by linking similar categories and by taking guidance from theoretical framework and literature review.

### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings were divided into two parts: in the first part access to the sources of informational power was discussed, and in the second part effects of informational power on a student's personality and performance were discussed.

#### (a) Part One

Informational power is represented into two forms: one form is the possession of information and the second is access to the sources of information. Everybody has possessive informational power to a different extent and it depends upon the information one has. In this study, students' access to the sources was explored and was described. In data analysis, various sources were identified which students could access and divided them into five categories based on the acquired information.



**Figure 2.** Access to the Sources of Informational power

One participant of Mathematics described access to the technological sources of informational power through autodidacticism in the following words:

*“Generally, I used the following technological applications for enhancing my information like Slader, Quora, LinkedIn, Google Translate, Tech News World, Smart Study Plan, and Hello English.”*

One interviewee expressed access to the technological sources of informational power as:

*“I used Netflix for watching English movies, Youtube for many things like English language learning, religious lectures, cooking videos, national geographic video, and gardening video, etc. Instagram for learning English and Arabic language and Whatsapp really but for a chat.”*

### (b) Part Two

In the second part of the findings and discussion effects of informational power on a student's personality and performance were discussed. After analysis of data, the following

main themes were developed by linking various similar categories.

### Educational Effects on a Student's Personality and Performance

The acquired information affects a student's personality and performance both positively and negatively and it depends upon the source of information and how they use this information. The various technological sources were used by the students which help them to acquire knowledge of different educational subjects taught at the university like Maths, English Language, and Computer Science and in many other subjects through autodidacticism. The knowledge acquired in the form of informational power helps students to prepare themselves for future challenges. One participant expressed his view about personality as:

*“Its informational power in the form of education which develops the personality of a student and makes him a valuable person of society.”*

Informational power acquired in the form of advanced knowledge enables students to

improve their personality and performance positively. In contrast, sometimes acquired information from various technological sources are not authentic and caused embarrassment to the students.

### **Social Effects on a Student's Personality and Performance**

Many factors construct the personality of an individual and affect how a person adjust to the different environment by acquiring information (Snyder, & Ickes. 1985). Society is a combination of people with different cultures, sects, professions, and educational backgrounds. In other words, society is a combination of professional people who have different information in the form of different professions like engineers, doctors, social scientists, linguists, etc. Society does not reflect the image of its people but people reflect the image of its society through acquired informational power by playing different roles in hierarchical structures. A participant views about social effects:

*"Whatever you read, watch and comprehend from the technology influences your personality in ways one may not even anticipate. An informative, motivational article in the morning may push you to give better performance in whatever job you're doing."*

A student is one of the key elements of these hierarchical structures of society that develop and direct society towards the advancement and reshape it through the acquired information. Technological apps provide access to different kinds of information that enable them to know the rules and discipline of civilized society. Information acquired through the use of technology reshapes their personality to realize and to follow their roles and duties for building a civilized society. The students' roles and duties in society reflect their acquired informational power and its effects on their personality and performance.

### **Technological Effects on a Student's Personality and Performance**

To modify users' attitudes and behaviour, technological devices are designed intentionally. Moreover, these devices are used for acquiring information which persuades the individual in some direction Fogg, 1997). Today's world is a place where technology is an integral part of many things. Likewise, it is also a vital part of the educational system that enables students to enhance their possessive information and provides access to the various informational sources from where they can acquire new information as well. Therefore, it affects a student's personality and performance on a larger scale in every field of life. Enhancement of possessive information and access to the new sources of information through technology makes the students self-disciplined, confident, and skilled. In addition, the use of appropriate technological apps widens the informational power of the students in the form like listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills and provide them with more hands-on practice and experience. Besides these, they can search for relevant and authentic material in the form of information and can also contact different people for acquiring information by using technological apps. A participant expressed his view regarding the effects of technology:

*"Considering a person who uses technology every day to indulge in war games and action/abusive and crime movies, they will have an impact on his personality, his demeanor, his behaviour."*

In contrast, these technological apps negatively affect a student's personality and performance in form of wastage of precious time, internet addiction, mental disturbance and less involvement in physical activities.

### Religious Effects on a Student's Personality and Performance

The students acquire different information about their religion by using technological apps like Pro Muslim, Salam Planet, Islam 360, YouTube, Facebook, etc. Technological apps provide them with different views on information related to the religion that they cannot access easily in daily life. Such information enhance their knowledge and make them aware of the latest issues. In addition, information acquired through autodidacticism by using technological apps makes their personality stable, tolerant, and knowledgeable. Beside these, technological apps provide the opinion of different sects on a single platform, discuss various aspects of information and modify their thinking toward enlightenment. Furthermore, views of religious scholars from different sects educate them on the lesson of brotherhood, peace, and self-esteem. In contrast, some information disseminated through technological apps like YouTube and Facebook inculcate sectarianism in immature minds and hamper the performance of students by diverting their direction. The participants articulated religious effects as:

*“Acquired information enhances knowledge on multiple topics including religion, and affects student's performance and personality positively in society.”*

*“Students can get all types of online lectures (medicine, education, religion, languages, general knowledge), and they can also share their views and experiences with people worldwide openly.”*

### 5. CONCLUSION

Informational power is the possession of information by an individual, the access to the various technological sources by an individual, and how effectively information communicated by an individual. Technology is a big source of learning and it enhances information of the individual in different ways. Particularly, it helps individuals to acquire information efficiently and use them effectively in different settings (Gulati, 2008; Goodyear, & Retalis, 2010). The study concluded that students can access various technological apps for acquiring informational power. The sources enumerated by respondents were analyzed and finally found five categories of the sources according to the relevancy they have among one another. The categories of these sources include general category, language category, mathematical category, religious category, and technological category. The information acquired by using technological apps affects a student's personality and performance both positively and negatively. The effects of informational power were sorted out and developed four main themes from the transcribed data. The education affects students personality and performance positively and enhances their knowledge in the form of informational power which helps them in preparation for future challenges. Sometimes, information acquired through technological apps are not authentic and cause embarrassment to the students. Nowadays, technology is a great source of information that enhances informational power and provides access to people to various sources of information (Lohnes & Kinzer, 2007; Waycott, Bennett, Kennedy, Dalgarno & Gray, 2010). The study concluded the technological effects of informational power that it enhances possessive information and provides access to the new sources of information through technology which makes the students well aware of the use of technology for acquiring information. The social effects were concluded that acquired information reshape students' personality to realize and follow their roles and duties for building a civilized society.

Raven (2008) in his interview with a research scholar signifies the importance of religion in term of informational power. Religion has many positive contributions that can be traced to religion: it is a ray of hope in disparity, it is a source of encouragement for various work like artistic and literary work, it provides satisfactory answer regarding our origin, life, death and life after death and it provides social support to the people of the community (Raven, 2008). The religious effects make their personality stable, tolerant, and knowledgeable. In addition, different dimensions of information modify their thinking toward enlightenment. On the other side, some information disseminated through technological apps inculcate sectarianism in immature minds and hamper the performance of students by diverting their direction. The study was unique than the previous study that integrated informational power with technological apps through autodidacticism and discussed its effects on students' personality and performance.

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