

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF GCASH AS MODE OF PAYMENT FOR ACCOUNT SETTLEMENTS: INSIGHTS FROM STUDENTS OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

Electronic payment systems, such as GCash, are transforming financial transactions in educational institutions. This study assessed the perceptions of Saint Mary's University (SMU) students toward GCash as an alternative mode of payment for account settlements, focusing on benefits, ease of use, security, trust and overall perception. Using a mixed-methods approach, quantitative data were collected via a survey questionnaire from 279 tertiary students at SMU, complemented by qualitative insights into the challenges faced by users. Descriptive and correlational analyses were employed to assess perceptions and identify relationships between key variables. Findings revealed that students generally perceive GCash positively, recognizing its convenience, efficiency, and modern features. All variables—benefits, ease of use, security, trust, and overall perception—were found to be significantly related. Despite some challenges like network connectivity, technical issues, system maintenance, user interface and operational issues, and security and trust issues, students expressed openness to adopting GCash for account settlements. The study recommends addressing identified concerns to enhance user satisfaction and ensure successful implementation.

Keywords: benefits, ease of use, electronic payment system, security, trust

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

In the dynamic landscape of the digital age, technology has catalyzed transformative shifts across various sectors, with education being no exception. The advent of electronic payment systems stands out as a remarkable innovation that has reshaped the operational landscape of educational institutions worldwide. These advanced campus payment solutions, as highlighted by Spacebasic (2023), offer a secure, streamlined, and user-friendly avenue for conducting financial transactions within educational settings. As noted by Team Technicali (2022), managing payments within the education sector presents a significant challenge, necessitating institutions to explore innovative solutions to meet the transactional needs of students, faculty, and administrators. Additionally, school systems, educational institutes, and higher institutions require highly proficient payment processors to streamline payment acceptance processes, ensuring operational effectiveness and enhancing the educational experience. According to Merchant Services (2024), an efficient collection management system is paramount for educational institutions, students, and parents alike, encompassing various aspects such as tuition fees, course materials, and extracurricular activities.

Demand for electronic payment systems has surged in recent years, fueled by ongoing technological progress and societal digitization. Khan and Abideen (2023) emphasized that the convenience, speed, and security offered by electronic payment systems have become indispensable across various sectors, facilitating seamless financial transactions for individuals, businesses, and the broader economy. Aryal (2021) adds that the increasing ubiquity of the internet has further propelled the adoption of electronic payments, addressing new financial requirements that traditional payment methods often struggle to meet. On the other hand, Spacebasic (2023) highlighted that traditional fee collection methods, characterized by

extensive queues, paperwork, and delays, have become outdated in the face of digital alternatives. Ahuren and Osei (2021) underscores the adverse impact of these archaic practices on academic activities and the registration process, highlighting the need for modernization. Hence, the adoption of electronic payment methods has emerged as a transformative solution, alleviating the challenges associated with traditional fee-collection processes. Spacebasic (2023) illustrates how parents and students can now conveniently pay tuition online through electronic payment networks, eliminating the need for physical currency handling. Furthermore, Ritthitraphop and Hamra (2019) noted that this transition has not only enhanced operational efficiency but also contributed to an overall improvement in the educational experience.

Wibowo and Dermawan (2023) shed light on the evolution of electronic payment instruments, with various forms now being integrated into digital wallet applications, commonly known as e-wallets. These digital wallets facilitate a wide array of payment transactions, including fund deposits and transfers, representing a significant advancement in financial technology within the current digital era. As Dayrit et al. (2023) observed, the popularity of e-wallets is particularly pronounced among young individuals, notably students, who demonstrate a high demand for this mode of payment.

According to the Statista Research Department and Rakuten Insight (2022), GCash has emerged as one of the leading digital wallet applications in the Philippines, gaining significant traction due to its convenience and versatility. Developed by Globe Telecom, GCash offers users a comprehensive platform for conducting various financial transactions, including money transfers, bill payments, and online purchases. GCash has experienced remarkable growth since its launch in 2017, becoming a prominent digital payment solution in the country.

Despite the proliferation of mobile payment platforms like GCash, there is limited research on their perception and adoption, especially within specific contexts like educational institutions. Understanding students' perceptions of GCash specifically in settling tuition, miscellaneous and other school fees can help bridge this gap and provide insights to promote its usage among this demographic. Focusing on student perceptions of GCash as a mode of payment for account settlements is warranted for several reasons. First, students constitute a major demographic within educational institutions, and their experiences with payment methods can greatly influence the success and adoption of such systems. Additionally, students are often early adopters of technology, making them a valuable source of insights regarding the usability, convenience, and acceptance of digital payment platforms like GCash. Furthermore, understanding student perceptions enables institutions to refine their financial services to better align with the preferences of their key stakeholders, thereby improving overall satisfaction and engagement.

Therefore, this study aims to assess the perceptions of students at Saint Mary's University regarding potential use of the GCash payment system as an alternative mode of payment for account settlements, with a particular focus on its benefits, ease of use, security, and trust. By assessing students' concerns, and preferences regarding the adoption of GCash, the study strives to offer recommendations grounded in its findings, aiming to provide valuable insights for enhancing the implementation and acceptance of GCash for account settlements within the student community.

This study aligns with two key United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). According to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2015), SDG 4 emphasizes ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities. By examining the adoption of GCash as a digital payment system for account settlements, the study contributes to enhancing the educational experience through more efficient and accessible financial processes. GCash simplifies payments, reduces administrative burdens, and promotes financial literacy among students, which supports the objectives of SDG 4 by making education more accessible and

aligned with technological advancements. Furthermore, SDG 9 focuses on building resilient infrastructure, promoting sustainable industrialization, and fostering innovation. The integration of GCash into school financial systems exemplifies the role of innovation in improving operational efficiency within educational institutions. GCash also supports inclusive financial infrastructure by providing access to digital payment services for both banked and unbanked populations. Thus, the study not only highlights how educational institutions benefit from innovative financial technology but also underscores the broader impact of digital infrastructure development, supporting both SDG 4 and SDG 9.

The findings of this study hold significant implications for both academia and industry. For Saint Mary's University, insights derived from student perceptions will inform strategic decisions regarding the integration of GCash into existing financial processes, potentially leading to improvements in efficiency, effectiveness, and user experience. Additionally, the study contributes to the broader discourse on electronic payment adoption within the educational sector, offering valuable insights for administrative officers, finance officers and other stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of electronic payment solutions. Overall, this research aims to pave the way for enhanced financial inclusivity and innovation within higher education institutions, ultimately benefiting students, faculty, and administrative staff alike.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to assess the perceptions of students at Saint Mary's University regarding the GCash payment system as a mode of payment for account settlements for the first semester of the academic year 2024- 2025.

Specifically, this study addresses the following questions:

1. What is the level of perception of the respondents on GCash payment system in terms of its:
 - 1.1 Benefits;
 - 1.2 Ease of Use;
 - 1.3 Security;
 - 1.4 Trust; and
 - 1.5 General Perceptions?
2. Is there a significant relationship among the five presented domains of the respondents' perceptions of the GCash payment system as a mode of payment for account settlements?
3. What challenges do the students encounter when using the GCash payment system as a mode of payment?
4. What recommendations can be crafted based on the findings of the study?

Statement of Null Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the five presented domains in terms of the respondents' perceptions of the GCash Payment System as a mode of payment for account settlements.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess students' perceptions of GCash as a payment system at Saint Mary's University. Using a descriptive correlational design, the quantitative aspect examined the

relationships between various factors-such as benefits, ease of use, security, trust, and students' general perception of GCash. A qualitative component was also included to gather insights into the specific challenges students encountered while using the platform. The study took place at Saint Mary's University, with respondents randomly selected from the university's four academic schools: the School of Accountancy and Business (SAB), the School of Health and Natural Sciences (SHANS), the School of Teacher Education and Humanities (STEH), and the School of Engineering, Architecture, and Information Technology (SEAIT). A total of 279 students participated, with data collected through face-to-face surveys and Google Forms. The researchers utilized a validated questionnaire, employing a 4-point Likert scale to measure student perceptions, alongside open-ended questions to identify challenges. Data analysis involved calculating means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlation for quantitative data, while thematic analysis was applied to qualitative responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Section 1. Level of Perception of the Respondents on GCash Payment System

Table 1

Level of Perception of the Respondents on GCash Payment System

Domains	Mean	Qualitative Description	Interpretation
1. Benefits	3.15	Agree	High
2. Ease of Use	3.29	Agree	High
3. Security	2.93	Agree	High
4. Trust	2.94	Agree	High
5. General Perceptions	3.00	Agree	High
Overall Mean Rating	3.06	Agree	High

Legend: Strongly Disagree: 1.00 – 1.49; Disagree: 1.50 – 2.49; Agree: 2.50 – 3.49; Strongly Agree: 3.50 – 4.00

As reflected on the data, the overall mean rating is 3.06, indicating that respondents generally agree with the statements across these domains. Specifically, ease of use received the highest mean of 3.29, suggesting that students find the system user-friendly and accessible. The benefits domain follows with a mean of 3.15, reflecting that users agree on the advantages of the system. Meanwhile, trust and security scored 2.94 and 2.93, respectively, both slightly lower but still within the "agree" range, highlighting potential areas for improvement. The mean score for overall student perceptions was 3.00, representing a balanced agreement with the system's attributes. The data implies that level of perception across the five domains is high.

Section 2. Significant Relationship Among Five Domains

Table 2

Significant Relationship Among the Five Domains

		Ease of Use	Security	Trust	General Perception
Benefits	Correlation Coefficient	.426**	.339**	.388**	.572**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	279	279	279	279
Ease of Use	Correlation Coefficient		.423**	.354**	.478**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N		279	279	279
Security	Correlation Coefficient			.635**	.466**

	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.000
	N			279	279
Trust	Correlation Coefficient				.515**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000
	N				279

Legend: Significant at <0.05.

The table indicates that there are significant relationships among the five domains: benefits, ease of use, security, trust and general perceptions of the GCash payment system. All factors are interrelated, showing that each domain plays significant role in shaping student's overall perception of GCash.

Section 3. Challenges Encountered by the Students in Using GCash Payment System as a Mode of Payment

Table 3

Challenges Encountered While Using GCash

Challenges	Sample Responses	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Technical Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One of the challenges that I've faced in using GCash is the transaction error that leads to a not very convenient use - Sometimes I encounter technical problems with the GCash app such as difficulties in logging in, loading the app, or processing transactions. - During my first time using the app there were steps before becoming a verified user, however the app had difficulty in recognizing every single one of my valid ID's which led to me not using the app for quite a while. 	72	25.80
Network Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I need a strong internet connection because without it I'm not able to open or use it. It's hassle for the people without internet since they can't transact or operate the application or system - Inaccessible to most rural areas with no signal - Accessing GCash requires a stable connection, sometimes I have an issue in making transactions as it declines my payment especially when I'm traveling in areas with no network or internet connection. 	64	22.94
System Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The sudden maintenance of the app produces challenges especially at times when GCash payments are immediately needed. - Down system of the app. - Maintenance schedule/sudden maintenance which causes problems to the users. 	39	13.98
User Interface and Operational Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For me, it requires a lot of time for processing and there's information/systems that I don't use/understand. - When paying it needs to have a charge which needs an extra amount of cash. - GCash has its limit. 	24	8.60

Security and Trust Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Security issues are one of my worst problems that I encountered while using GCash. The app is prone to fraud and identity theft - My mother has gcash and a lot of her money in her account had been stolen, so this kind of payment for me is so risky and so scary at the same time. - In the previous event, my account was hacked but technically it was recovered. 	11	3.94
	Total	210	75.26

This table presents the primary challenges faced by students when using GCash payment system. The most common challenge reported by 25.80% of respondents involves technical issues such as transaction errors, application crashes, and login difficulties. Network connectivity problems, affecting 22.94% of respondents, were also highlighted, particularly in rural areas where slow internet or lack of signal disrupted transactions. System maintenance issues, including unexpected downtimes, account for 13.98% of the feedback. Additionally, 8.60% of respondents expressed frustration with the user interface and operational aspects, citing complex navigation and additional fees. Lastly, concerns about security and trust, including fraud and account hacking, were raised by 3.94% of respondents.

Section 4. Recommendations Based on the Findings of the Study

Table 4

Recommendations Based on the Findings of the Study

Recommendations	Suggested	Persons Involved
Collaboration of Telecom Companies and GCash	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stakeholder meetings to align goals between telecom companies and GCash. 2. Formal agreements are signed to ensure commitment from both parties. 3. Improvement of network coverage to reduce connectivity issues that affect GCash transactions. 4. Explore offline transaction capabilities, allowing GCash users to make payments when internet access is unreliable. 	Telecom Providers and GCash Development Team
Technical Infrastructure Enhancement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Address app crashes and technical issues by focusing on system performance improvements. 2. Conduct system updates regularly to prevent crashes and improve functionality. 3. Commit to continuous system improvements to ensure the app remains stable and user-friendly. 	GCash development Team and IT Department
Real-time Updates on Maintenance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meeting with GCash Management and IT staff to coordinate maintenance schedules. 2. Scheduling system maintenance during off-peak hours to minimize inconvenience. 3. Offering real-time notifications to users about ongoing or upcoming maintenance, ensuring they are informed in advance. 	GCash Development team and Communication Department
Usability Improvements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meetings with the GCash development and IT teams to discuss necessary improvements. 2. Simplifying the interface and navigation to make GCash more user-friendly for students. 3. Integrating direct payment options for school fees allows students to pay their tuition and fees more easily. 	GCash Development Team and School Admin

Security Enhancement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meetings with the GCash Security Team and management to discuss strategies. 2. Implementing double multi-factor authentication and enhanced encryption to secure transactions. 3. Expanding ID verification options to include more types of identification for account verification. 4. Conducting student workshops to teach secure usage of the app, helping users avoid scams and fraud. 	Gcash Security Team, Cybersecurity Department, and School Admin
Collaboration of GCash and SMU Admin	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A formal partnership between GCash and SMU to enable the use of GCash for tuition and other fee payments. 2. Launch joint communication efforts to inform and guide students on how to use GCash to pay school-related fees. 	GCash Management Team, SMU Admin, and SMU Accounting Office

The table presents a comprehensive strategy for improving the GCash payment system. It highlights a set of strategic activities designed to improve GCash's usability, security, and technical infrastructure, addressing the challenges identified by the respondents. To enhance usability, GCash should simplify its app interface and integrate direct payment options for school fees through partnerships with educational institutions. Security measures should be strengthened by implementing multi-factor authentication, encryption broadening ID verification options, and conducting student workshops on secure app usage. Technical infrastructure improvements should focus on reducing app crashes and enhancing network connectivity through collaborations with telecom providers. Additionally, scheduling system maintenance during off-peak hours and providing real-time updates will help minimize disruptions for users. By addressing the identified challenges through these strategic activities, GCash can improve user satisfaction, build a stronger, more trusted platform thereby enhancing its adoption among students.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

1. The students generally perceived the GCash payment system positively in terms of benefits, ease of use, security, trust, and overall perceptions, with ease of use receiving the highest rating.
2. There is a significant relationship among all five domains- benefits, ease of use, security, trust, and student perceptions- indicating that each domain influences the others in shaping students' overall perception and willingness to adopt the GCash payment system.
3. The challenges encountered by students include technical issues, network connectivity, system maintenance, user interface and operational issues, and concerns related to security and trust, all of which affect their overall experience with the GCash payment system.
4. It is recommended that improvements be made in system reliability, user interface design, security measures, and network stability to address the identified challenges, as well as to enhance user education, fostering greater trust and encouraging wider adoption of GCash as a payment method.

Recommendations

For GCash providers. The researchers recommend that GCash partner with telecom companies to ensure better network capacity for their apps, especially in areas where many users are active. Additionally, the researchers suggest that offering offline transaction options, like SMS-based payments, would be helpful in places with weak internet connections. Aside from network connectivity, the researchers recommend that GCash should focus on resolving

technical issues by enhancing the app's stability and performance. This can be achieved through regular updates and thorough testing to reduce app crashes, slow processing times, and other technical difficulties. Ensuring a smooth user experience is crucial for maintaining customer satisfaction and trust in the system.

For SMU Administration and SMU Accounting Office. The researchers recommend using GCash as an efficient and effective payment method for financial transactions to save time for both accounting staff and students, especially during peak payment seasons. The researchers also suggest organizing workshops or information sessions to educate students and staff on the use of GCash, helping to familiarize them with the platform and encouraging the adoption of cashless transactions on campus. Additionally, exploring partnerships with GCash to reduce service charges for students and installing cash-in machines on campus would enhance accessibility, allowing students to add funds to their GCash accounts easily. These efforts would not only streamline financial transactions but also promote financial literacy and highlight the benefits of cashless payments within the campus environment.

For Future Researchers. This study is limited to SMU college students. The researchers recommend expanding future studies to explore the perceptions of parents in the college, junior high school, and elementary levels of SMU, as well as considering other schools beyond SMU. Another limitation of this study was the use of a 5% response distribution, which may not fully capture the diversity of opinions within the student population. Future researchers are encouraged to consider increasing the response distribution by at least 30 to 50% to obtain a more representative sample, thereby enhancing the reliability and generalizability of the results. This provides a broader understanding of students' perceptions and improves the overall validity of the study. Additionally, future researchers may study the potential adoption of GCash as a payment method at SMU, focusing on its capability to streamline financial transactions. A separate study could investigate the level of readiness of the accounting office for adopting GCash as a payment method. These studies would provide valuable insights into how GCash can be effectively integrated into the school's operations and identify the necessary steps for a successful implementation.

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