

Internet Usage Proficiency of College Students

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Abstract

The major objective of this study was to examine the difference between the mean scores of proficiency in Internet usage of college students with respect to gender, locality, subject, parental monthly income, and internet usage time per day. Three hundred college students from various colleges of Kanyakumari district in India were selected by stratified random sampling method. The findings of the study revealed that male and female students did not differ significantly in their Internet usage proficiency. Rural and urban students, computer science and non-computer science students, three groups of students classified on the basis of parental monthly income, and four groups of students based on the time spent for Internet usage differed significantly in their Internet usage proficiency.

Keywords: internet usage, proficiency

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Introduction

Technology is just one of many disruptive influences in education today. The phenomenon of today's technology, especially Internet technology, has changed our daily life. These days, the Internet is used by more than half the world's population since the program was found in almost every area related to existence, whether it is knowledge, news, entertainment, education, communications, advertising, and so forth. The Internet swiftly entered the life of the humankind in the 20th century. It took us less than 10 years to face the fact of its spreading all over the world, including the developing countries. It has become not only the hugest information resource in the world, but what is even more important, the most rapid means of communication (Anu, 2008).

The Internet is the largest group of computer systems that use Internet Protocol. People from different countries have an opportunity to communicate with each other in quite a short time. Internet has indeed opened up the doors to knowledge at every other place, making itself crucial in the field of education. The Internet has allowed individuals around the world to become more interconnected. Internet is the user-friendly graphical system that offers a huge amount of information to the users. Internet is a medium that is essentially without national borders. It provides a number of learning experiences and educational resources to students, teachers, administrators, policy makers and all those who work for the cause of education (Venkataiah, 2004).

Significance of the Study

The modern technologies particularly the Internet made education no longer limited to the four walls of the class room. Internet is a global communication network that allows computers worldwide to connect and exchange information. The rate of Internet usage has been growing exponentially during the past few years. This is true not only in the United States, but

around the world a well. Internet is a medium that is essentially without national borders. Computer, Network and Technology have implications for the general proliferation of new technology tools in society. For that reason, computer, network and technology literacies can be discussed as tool literacies. Whereas educators may need special training to use new technologies, educators can effectively determine potential, weaknesses and strengths of the students by analyzing the Internet literacy of the students. The higher the levels of Internet literacy students had the more frequently they use the Internet in their studies (Hwond & Wei-Long, 2003).

There is so much that students can do with the Internet. Not only can they communicate with international students, they can gain from others' knowledge and experiences, participate in chat rooms, share ideas and solutions and learn about the diverse culture out there. While the Internet does a lot for students, there are also benefits for parents and teachers. The interactive learning that the Internet provides can help students and parents with little or no English skills to learn English. Parents can become more involved in their children's education by connecting the school with homes, libraries or other access ports. Teachers can adjust to the different learning styles in the classroom. They can also set their own pace of teaching. Individual teaching techniques can become more available, which has been proven to be a factor in student achievement. Teachers have the chance to be able to teach at more than one place simultaneously. They may be in a small town but through the Internet, they can be linked to students in more populated areas. Also, the Internet enables administrators and teachers to spend less time on administration and recordkeeping. This would also give them more time to spend with their students. Education these days has been the top priority for any family or individual person, and no doubt amongst the latest technologies to promote and maintain the education standards the Internet comes first (Varanasi, 2004).

Internet is not only an access to websites, these days there is knowledge and information on every aspect of the educational world over the Internet. The resources provided on various web pages are indeed very informative and useful for professionals and students related to every field of work. Internet use time irrespective of purposes is less likely to influence academic performance, while in-degree centrality and ego-network efficiency are more likely to exert positive influence on academic performance (Young, 2006). Hence in this study, the investigator studied the Internet usage proficiency of college students.

Objective

The objective of this study was to find out whether there was any significant difference in mean scores of Internet usage proficiency of college students with respect to the background variables gender, locality, subject, parental monthly income, and Internet usage time per day.

Hypothesis

We hypothesized that there existed significant difference in the mean scores of Internet usage proficiency of college students with respect to the background variables gender, locality, subject, parental monthly income, and Internet usage time per day.

Method

The investigator used survey method for the present study. The sample included 300 college students selected from various colleges of Kanyakumari district by stratified random sampling method. Internet usage proficiency scale was the tool developed by the investigator for the present investigation. The validity of the tool was established using the content validity technique. The investigator used odd-even method for establishing the reliability. The reliability was calculated as 0.993. This showed that the scale possessed a very high reliability. Personal Data Sheet was also used as a tool to collect the personal information about the sample.

The t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were the statistical techniques used in the present

investigation.

Results and Discussion

1. There existed significant difference in the mean scores of male and female college students in their Internet usage proficiency.

Table - 1

Groups compared	N	M	SD	t	Result
Female students	151	13.64	3.050	0.092	Not Significant
Male students	149	13.60	2.908		

It is inferred from the above table that there were no significant differences between male and female college students in their Internet usage proficiency ($t = 0.092$). This means that male and female college students were similar in their Internet usage proficiency.

2. There existed significant difference in the mean scores of rural and urban college students in their Internet usage proficiency.

Table – 2

Groups compared	N	M	SD	t	Result
Urban students	150	14.23	3.352	3.62	Significant at 0.01 level
Rural students	150	13.01	2.441		

It is inferred from the above table that there existed significant difference between rural and urban college students in their Internet usage proficiency ($t = 3.62$). The mean scores showed that urban college students possessed more Internet usage proficiency than rural college students. This may be due to the fact that urban college students get more exposure to Internet.

3. There existed significant difference in the mean scores of computer science and non-computer science college students in their Internet usage proficiency.

Table – 3

Groups compared	N	M	SD	t	Result
Computer science students	130	14.26	2.743	4.415	Significant at 0.01level
Non computer science students	170	12.98	2.993		

It is inferred from the above table that there existed significant difference between computer science and non-computer science college students in their Internet usage proficiency (t = 4.415). College students studying computer science as their subject have higher proficiency than the non-computer science students.

- There existed significant difference in the mean scores of college students in their Internet usage proficiency based on their parental monthly income.

Table - 4

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Result
Between group	82.512	2	41.256	4.779	Significant at 0.01 level
Within group	2564.168	297	8.634		

The above table showed that the three groups of students whose parental monthly income is below 5000, 5000-10,000 and above 10,000 Rupee differed significantly in their Internet usage proficiency. This may due to the fact that parents’ socio-economic status influences the students Internet access and usage.

- There existed significant difference in the mean scores of college students in their Internet usage proficiency based on their Internet usage time per day.

Table - 5

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Result
Between group	99.573	3	33.191	3.857	Significant at 0.05 level
Within group	2547.107	296	8.605		

The four groups of students (who used less than one hour, 2 – 4 hours, 4-6 hours and above 6 hours) differed significantly in their Internet usage proficiency. This may be due to the time spent in Internet and the purpose of the study in Internet.

Findings

The findings of the study revealed that male and female students do not differ significantly in their Internet usage proficiency. Rural and urban students, computer science and non-computer science students, three groups of college students based on their parental monthly income and the four groups of students classified on the basis of time spent for Internet usage differed significantly in their Internet usage proficiency.

Implication of the study

The importance of computers and ICT continue to increase in schools, colleges and throughout the society. The results of the present investigation imply that the present learning environment should be made more fruitful by the accessibility and use of Internet to the maximum extent possible. Online instruction helps students to learn and to develop computer and information and communication technology literacy. The teachers act as a guide to train students to work in pairs or small groups to achieve shared learning goals.

Conclusions

Computer and information technologies are getting more or less to be standard and integral part of our life. Rapid development of the Internet enables us to introduce learning in virtual distance forms. As it is everyone's responsibility for his or her own education, we can expect that the one who wants to learn something will be able to find someone who would provide the best instruction on the Internet. If it really happened, it would probably influence the higher forms of education. Students must be taught to browse efficiently in various media, but especially in text. The modern advances in information technology have revolutionized the content of knowledge and the process of educational transaction. A key to the twenty first century is that learning throughout life will be essential. Curriculum upgradation, productivity orientation, and value education should be implemented in education. Internet education thus also should be provided for all individuals to balance their time according to their own needs. This also allows the poor class of people to work and study at the same time through Internet education.

Appendix: Internet Usage Proficiency Scale
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Instructions:

Read each of the following statements carefully. Choose the answer from the following by putting a tick mark against it. Your answer will be kept confidential and will be used for my research purpose only.

1. Internet is used to ----- with other people.

a. Separate	b. Distinguish	c. Connect
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2. MS – Internet explorer is a -----

a. Website	b. Operating system	c. Browser
------------	---------------------	------------

3. Each web page has ----- address.

a. Unique	b. Double	c. Multi
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4. The term online commonly refers to as ----- to the w w w .

a. connected	b. disconnected	c. Exit
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5. Broad band is a ----- of internet.

a. Type	b. Section	c. part
---------	------------	---------

6. Internet protocol is a computer -----

a. Mail-id	b. program	c. browser
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7. The process of copying from a remote computer on the internet to your computer is called -----.

a. File updating	b. File down loading	c. File using
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8. Most common type of internet connection is -----

a. Dial - up	b. Direct	c. Drill
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9. **. in** indicates websites of -----

a. India	b. Australia	c. Indonesia
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10. **. COM** indicates ----- organization.

a. government	b. commercial	c. academic
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11. Page down button is used to see -----

a. Next page	b. Previous page	c. Current page
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12. Wikipedia is a ----- dictionary.
- | | | |
|--------|-----------|-------------|
| a. web | b. oxford | c. computer |
|--------|-----------|-------------|
13. Language management system (LMS) is a web based -----.
- | | | |
|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| a. evaluation | b. application | c. internet |
|---------------|----------------|-------------|
14. E-learning tools are ----- made to operate with in a selected course design.
- | | | |
|----------|---------|--------|
| a. worse | b. best | c. not |
|----------|---------|--------|
15. Favorites / Bookmarks utility is used to ----- a new page quickly in the place.
- | | | |
|---------|---------|----------|
| a. save | b. open | c. close |
|---------|---------|----------|
16. ----- is a search service used in internet.
- | | | |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| a. Internet | b. Google | c. Ms- Word |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|
17. Telnet is used for ----- application.
- | | | |
|---------------|----------------|-----------|
| a. commercial | b. educational | c. sports |
|---------------|----------------|-----------|
18. The expansion of SOAP is -----.
- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. School Object Assessment protocol | b. Simple Object Access protocol | c. Student Object Access Protocol |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
19. ----- is a fast way to communicate with other internet users around the world.
- | | | |
|---------|--------|-----------|
| a. Chat | b. Fax | c. E-mail |
|---------|--------|-----------|
20. Searching a topic in internet is done by -----.
- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| a. Search engines | b. Search tools | c. Search machines |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|

Answer Key

Sl. No.	Choice	Sl. No.	Choice
1	c	11	a
2	c	12	a
3	a	13	b
4	a	14	c
5	a	15	a
6	b	16	b
7	a	17	a

8	a	18	b
9	a	19	a
10	a	20	a

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