

RUNNING HEAD: Internet Use

This is the title of your project. Name it whatever way you want.

[Group Name]

[Group Members Full Names]

Communication Studies Department

The University of Kansas

Research Paper submitted as partial fulfillment of requirements for

COMS 356: Introduction to Behavioral Research Methods

[Date]

Introduction

As the Internet continues to grow rapidly as an important source of information and communication for students, its use for different purposes and by users of different skill levels has increased. Internet self-efficacy is the “belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute courses of Internet actions required to produce given attainments” and is important in “closing the digital divide that separates experienced Internet users from novices” (Eastin & LaRose, 2000, p.1).

Literature Review

According to Eastin and LaRose (2000), Internet self-efficacy was positively correlated to Internet usage, prior Internet experience and negatively correlated with factors like Internet stress. Researchers who are more interested in whether gender affects Internet self-efficacy levels often chose to survey college students and evaluate their time spent on the Internet and comfort with Internet functions based on their gender. According to Joiner, Gavin, & Durdell (2005), males were more likely to have to higher Internet use and low Internet anxiety. The researchers used the same method of surveys to determine the amount of time each gender spends on average on the Internet.

Hypotheses/Research Question

Hypothesis 1 was formulated based on the procedures and findings of Eastin and LaRose (2000) in their study on Internet self-efficacy, which concluded that males had higher self-efficacy and confidence in using the Internet. Hypothesis 2 was based on the procedures and findings of Joiner et al. (2005) in their study on gender and Internet anxiety which found that males spend more total time on the Internet and experience less Internet anxiety (Joiner et al., 2005).

H1: Men will spend more total hours per week using the Internet for all activities than women.

H2: Men will have a higher level of Internet self-efficacy than women.

Methods

Participants Demographic

Students in COMS 356 were required to participate in their classmates' studies to fulfill a course requirement. The total number of students present to take part in our study was 63 (17 male, 46 female). Participants were 21.4 years old on average ($SD = .67$, range 18-25).

Procedures

This study was conducted at the University of Kansas under the supervision and guidance of Professor [name] and Teaching Assistant [name]. This study is part of an assignment which serves to fulfill a requirement for completion of Communication Studies 356. The assignment instructed students to select a research topic and design relevant studies. Due to limited accessibility to potential subjects and the requirement to participate in other students' studies, all participants in this study were classmates.

The survey was distributed to participants on [date]. Participants were allotted [XX] minutes to complete the survey. After this time, the surveys were recollected. Participants were informed that the information they provided would be kept confidential and used for research purposes only.

The survey consisted of 3 sections. The first section asked participants to provide their demographic information such as gender and age. The second section asked participants to provide information about how they use the Internet and how often. The last section asked participants to report their self-efficacy.

Measurements

Frequency of the Internet use. Three items were used to assess the frequency of the Internet use ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 4.10$, $\alpha = .72$). Participants were asked how many hours per day, as well as how many hours per week, they use the Internet. Additionally, participants were asked how many hours per day and week were spent using the following: email, chatting/instant messaging services, social networking sites (like Facebook and Myspace), research, games, news services, and music downloads. Items were developed by the researchers for this study.

Self-efficacy. Five items were used to assess self-efficacy ($M = 6.11$, $SD = 2.65$, $\alpha = .92$). Participants were asked to evaluate each statement evaluating their Internet self-efficacy on a 7-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree and 7= Strongly Agree). Statements addressed participants' Internet hardware and software abilities, as well as confidence troubleshooting and explaining Internet concepts. Items were adapted from Eastin and LaRose (2000).

Results

Survey results showed that there was no significant difference between males and females in the average number of hours per week spent on downloading media, email, chatting, social networking, research, and other activities. However, there was a significant difference in the amount of time spent on gaming by males ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 5.74$) and females ($M = .92$, $SD = 3.77$). Also, researchers found males ($M = 5.94$, $SD = 5.01$) spend more time on the Internet looking at news and current events than females ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 3.54$).

Hypothesis 1. Analysis revealed that there was not a significant relationship between gender and the total hours of Internet use per week. Females and males spend almost the same number of hours on the Internet on average per week, $t(61) = .38$, $p = .35$. The mean number of hours per week that female participants indicated they used on the Internet was 21.95 (SD

=11.67). The mean number of hours per week that male participants indicated they used the Internet was 20.73 ($SD = 9.64$).

Hypothesis 2. Analysis revealed that there are significant sex differences. Females had higher self-efficacy levels than males when using Internet functions, $t(60) = 4.41, p < .001$. Females had a mean Internet self-efficacy level of 6.69 ($SD = 1.18$), while males had a mean Internet self-efficacy level of 5.25 ($SD = .92$).

Discussion

The data did not confirm either Hypothesis 1 or Hypothesis 2. It was found that there was a no difference in total hours per week spent on the Internet by males and females. Therefore, the data suggests that gender does not have an effect on the total hours per week spent using the Internet. But, males spent significantly more hours on the Internet gaming and looking at news. A possible reason for the difference in outcome from the literature the research reviewed may be due to the fact that the study by Joiner et al. was published in 2005 with the study having possibly taken place years prior to publishing. The status of the Internet was not as prominent as it is today in 2008, and the reported figures would have greatly varied from those of today. While the computer and the Internet is a large and important part of everyday life for male and female students today, five years ago the Internet and computers would have been readily accessible to only a small population (most likely males) who was very familiar with the technology.

Additionally, the researchers were surprised to find that the results for Hypothesis 2 went a different direction from what they initially expected. It was found that females have a significantly higher level of Internet self-efficacy than males, which was the opposite of what they had hypothesized. Thus, the data suggests that gender does have an effect on levels of Internet self-efficacy and confidence with Internet functions. This may be due to importance of

using the Internet for Communication majors. Communication majors are taught to be efficient in using the several functions of the Internet and technology. Perhaps both male and female Communication majors are good at using the Internet as a consequence.

Because the participants were all college students from a single class, the ability to make generalizations of this study to another population is limited. If there were more participants, and more participants who were not Communication majors, the findings could have been significant and agreed with our hypotheses. For the future study, the researchers recommend giving the survey to a larger population with a more balanced ratio of females and males and ask the participants to fill out a survey similar to the one used in this study. However, this new survey should include questions about the things learned in the participants' majors.

References

- Eastin, M. S., & LaRose, R. (2000). Internet self-efficacy and the psychology of the digital divide. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 6, 35-48.
- Joiner, R., Gavin, J., & Durdell, A. (2005). Gender, internet identification, and internet anxiety: Correlates of internet use. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 8, 371-378.