

Attitudes towards Information Communication Technology (ICT) among CAFF students in Fiji

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed at investigating the responses towards Information Communication Technology (ICT) usage among students of College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Fiji National University, Fiji. The research was conducted with two main purposes; Firstly to examine the gender and age differences in ICT use and its possible relationship between students' use of ICT and secondly, to investigate students' familiarity and attitude towards ICT. The results revealed that students have a positive attitude towards ICT and use them to facilitate learning, although female students are more inclined towards ICT usage and likely to find that ICT help them at their studies.

Keywords: Teaching, Learning, Information and communication technology

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology (ICT) has brought about a revolution in every walk of today's life. Particularly it has become an integral part of education and its impact on teaching and learning is widely accepted. ICT plays a key role in the development of any nation. ICT includes computers, the Internet, and electronic delivery systems such as radios, televisions, and projectors among others, and is widely used in today's education field. The impact of ICT on learning is currently in relation to use of digital media, primarily computers and internet to facilitate teaching and learning. ICT are the technologies used in conveying, manipulation and storage of data by electronic means, they provide an array of powerful tools that may help in transforming the present isolated teacher-centred and text-bound classrooms into rich, student-focused, interactive knowledge environments. To meet these challenges, learning institutions must embrace the new technologies and appropriate ICT tools for learning.

The direct link between ICT use and students' study habit and academic performance has been the focus of extensive literature during the last two decades. Some of them help students with their learning by improving the communication between them and the instructors (Valasidou and Bousiou, 2005). Leuven et al. (2004) stated that there is no evidence for a relationship between increased educational use of ICT and students' performance. In fact, they find a consistently negative and marginally significant relationship between ICT use and some student achievement measures. In support to these, some students may use ICT to increase their leisure time and have less time to study. Online gaming and increased communication channels do not necessarily mean increased achievement.

Staehr, Martin and Byrne (2001) surveyed the attitudes to computers, and the perceptions of a computing career, of students enrolled in an introductory computing course at La Trobe University, Australia. Previous programming experience had a positive effect on computer confidence, and ownership of a home computer had a positive effect on computer anxiety and computer confidence.

There was a gender difference in computer attitudes and perception of a computing career, with females scoring significantly lower than males on all measures.

On the other hand, Abdulla Y. Al-Hawaj, Wajeeh Elali, and E.H. Twizell (2008), state that ICT has the potential to transform the nature of education: Where and how learning takes place and the roles of students and teachers in the learning process. Karim and Hassan (2006) noted the exponential growth in digital information, which changes the way students perceive study and reading and in how printed materials are used to facilitate study. Uribe and Marino (2006) surveyed 162 students at the School of Dentistry, University of Valparaiso, Chile to describe their use of ICT. All participants had access to a computer, and 96.4% used the Internet. Most students had home Internet connections (73.4%). The most commonly used Internet sites on at least a weekly basis were: email (92.2%); and search engines (88.3%). However, a very few (21.1%) used the Internet to search for dental information for their studies.

Smith and Oosthuizen (2006) surveyed entry-level students' attitude towards computers at two South African universities. The results showed that there is a greater appreciation of the benefit of computers, less fear of computer power, a more realistic view of computers and also a lesser impression of computer power. The conclusion is reached that less time should be spent in the syllabi on convincing students as to the benefits of computing machinery, as well as allaying fears about computing power.

Gay et al. (2006) surveyed management students at the University of the West Indies, Barbados. The majority expressed favorable attitudes to the use of ICT within the academic environment. Particularly, students were more inclined to use computers for typing assignments (92%), part of their studies (95%), supplementing other teaching activities (72%), emailing questions to teachers (90%) and distance education from home (68%). No significant gender and age differences were found on most of the attitudinal ICT statements.

Inoue (2007) studied 174 male and female students of the School of Education at University of Guam. It was found that students' attitudes toward information technology were highly positive.

There were no differences in students' perceptions of computer technology experiences between females and males as well as among various academic status groups.

Based on the extended usage of ICTs in education the need appeared to unravel the myth that surrounds the use of information and communication technology (ICT) as an aid to teaching and learning, and the impact it has on students' study habits and academic performance. Therefore, the present paper aims to examine how familiar are the students of CAFF in the Fiji National University, Fiji with the ICT use.

2.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to achieve the objectives of this study we have used primary source of information. Primary data have been taken from the respondents through a prepared questionnaire with the close ended questions.

The sample size of the study was chosen from the undergraduate students in the College of Agriculture, fisheries and Forestry (CAFF) at the Fiji National University, Fiji. The sample size consisted of 150 students comprising of students of Agriculture, Animal Science, Forestry, Fisheries and Education disciplines. A questionnaire was provided to them in order to fill it in. The questionnaire was divided into two main areas. The first part of the questionnaire sought demographic characteristics of the respondents in the sample. The second part of the questionnaire focused on the students' knowledge and experience of using ICT. This part attempted to examine whether the respondents have computer and internet access, whether they use these for their academic purpose or other purposes like watching movies, social networking, listening to music or browsing only for entertainment.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of 150 students 58.1 per cent are male students while 41.9 per cent are female. Participants belong to the 34.2 per cent belongs to Agriculture, 20.5 per cent belongs to Animal Science, 17.1 per

cent belongs to Forestry ,11.6 per cent to Fisheries and 19.2 per cent to Education faculties respectively (Table1).

Table 1: Demographic information of student respondents

Demographic Information	Frequency (n=150)	Percent (%)
Age		
16-20	91	86.7
21-25	50	47.6
26-30	4	3.8
>30	5	4.8
Gender		
Male	61	58.1
Female	89	84.8
Disciplines		
Agriculture	1	50
Animal Health	2	30
Fisheries	3	25
Forestry	4	17
Education	5	28

3.1 Purpose of using computers in campus

The majority of students in survey used computers for doing research or downloading study materials, while very less used it for email and chat in the campus. Particularly students were more inclined to use computers for doing research or downloading study materials (77%) while 10 per cent used it to prepare for classroom presentations, 8 per cent used computers for searching job opportunities and 5 per cent used it for email and chat purpose.(Figure 1)

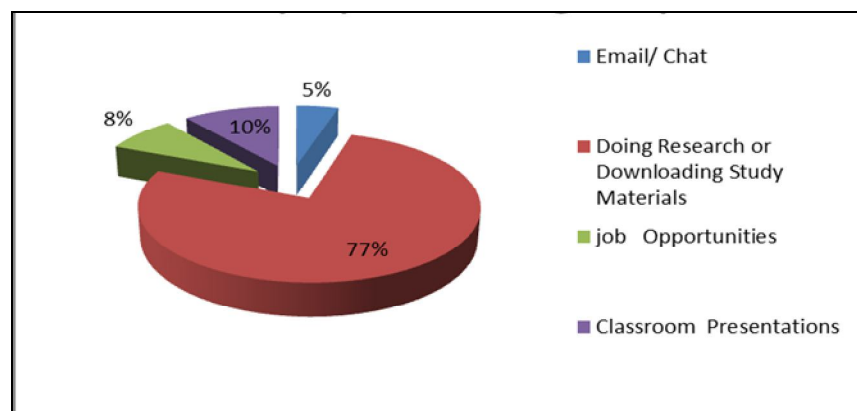


Figure 1. Purpose of using computers by students in Fiji

3.2 Students ICT usage in CAFF campus

The 51 per cent of students in survey used ICT once or twice a week, 40 per cent used it every day while 5 per cent used ICT once or twice a month, 1 per cent never used ICT and 3 per cent didn't answered the survey question.(Fig. 2).

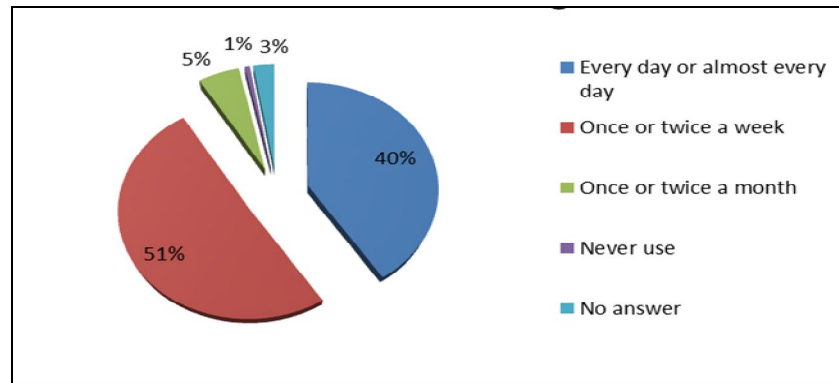


Figure 2 . Students ICT usage at CAFF, Fiji

About 74 per cent of the students of CAFF used desktop computer and 19.3 per cent used laptops for the above mentioned purposes. Only 1.3 per cent students had net books and 5.3 per cent performed these tasks by mobile device (Fig.3).

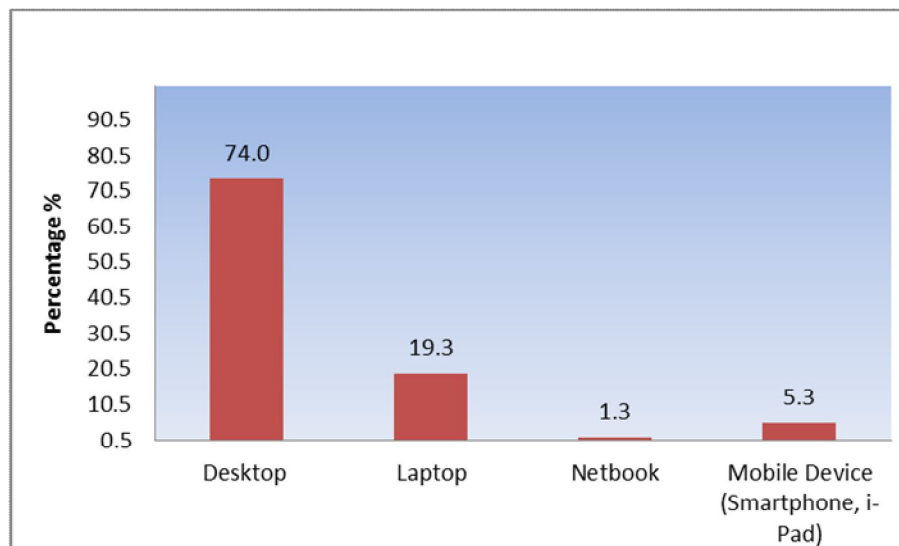


Figure 2 . Students access to ICT tools at CAFF, Fiji

Out of total student in survey 56.7 per cent were confident in using mouse and 72 per cent were confident to use key board for their academic work while 67.3 per cent were confident to use micro soft power point and 62.7 per cent in micro

4.0 CONCLUSION

It can be concluded by the study that female students use ICT more than the male students at CAFF, FNU. Most used ICT tools are desktop computers and laptops. These ICT tools are mostly used for the academic purpose i.e. doing research or to prepare class room presentations. Most of the students are confident in using Microsoft office including micro soft power point and micro soft excel in their research and presentations.

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