

Gender Differences in Patterns of Internet Usage: A Study of College Students from Mumbai, India

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate gender differences in internet usage with 323 college students (145 male, 174 female) from Mumbai, India. A specially designed 26-item structured questionnaire was administered to determine gender differences in technology ownership, internet skills and experience, internet knowledge and access, time spent on the internet, purposes for using the internet, and barriers to using the internet. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to examine gender differences in internet usage. The results indicated that 98.6% of males and 92.5% of females were internet users. More females (55.7%) had attended a computer training course than males (46.8%). No gender differences were obtained in internet skills; however, males experienced significantly higher levels of internet experience than females ($p < .01$). Males and females first started using the internet at home, they accessed the internet daily, they obtained their internet knowledge from self-study, and used the internet most frequently at home. Both males and females used the internet most frequently to “chat with friends” and rarely used the internet for “electronic group discussions”. When asked to indicate purposes for internet usage, significant gender differences were obtained for five items: to obtain general information, to download music/games, for online banking, for social networking, and for chatting with friends. The biggest barriers to using the internet for both males and females were a lack of time and cost of using.

Keywords: Gender differences; internet usage; college students; India