
A STUDY OF GENERAL INTERNET USAGE PATTERN AMONG STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

With the increasing accessibility of internet, people have grown to be dependent on it in their daily life. People spend most of their waking hours staring at screens for various activities such as watching video clips online, playing games, instant messaging and social media. This study aims to explore the internet usage among students and analysis the effect of demographic factors, such as gender, language used at school, and preferred study habit, on the uses of internet among students. A simple questionnaire was use to gather data from 1088 students. The findings suggest that internet usage is influenced by gender. Male students spend most of their time online for entertainment whereas female for social purposes. Among the two gender, female uses the internet more for education purposes. Apart from gender, internet usage for education purposes is also affected by language used at school. Students who use English at school tend to use the internet more often for study purposes compared to students who use other languages. It was also noted that students who prefer to study independently uses the internet more for social purposes compared to other students.

Keywords: Internet usage, gender, language, learning preference

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Technology is continuously changing. The increasing accessibility of internet has become the conduit of information for millions of people, at home, at school, and at work and, step by step, people become dependent and integrate internet in their professional and personal life.

Having much social and economic impact on different aspects of our daily life, there are many important questions around what are the consequences of the diffusion and high use of the internet are for people's lives and this offers a huge potential study field from various perspectives: internet users' behavior and addiction, internet users' preferences, ethical and legal aspects etc. with the popularity of digital technology in education and with multiple opportunities to improve learning experiences and outcomes, many studies focus on students' population and aim at understanding the links between student learning with technology and internet.

The goal of this study is to identify the internet usage patterns of students and make some remarks about its applications for higher education and young generation.

2.0 TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION PROCESS

Technology has facilitated substantial changes in teaching and learning activities. With the exponential advancements of informatics technology, the digital revolution has profoundly entered in the education sector at all levels i.e. school level, college level and university level (Sharma, 2017).

Sui (2002) reviews the technology education history of Hong Kong since the 1930s and concludes that new technology has had impacts on not only instruction methods and curricula for technical/technology subjects, but also on the nature of the students studying them. Furthermore, recognizing lack of face-to-face interaction is the major difference between traditional and online learning environments, Bilgiç, Doğan & Seferoğlu (2016) believe technology and internet provide opportunities for better interaction between students-students and between students-instructor.

However, while effective use of technology can improve student learning and teaching, just having the technology available does not assure better outcomes. Teachers need to decide what, how, when, and where technology will be used, and if it will enhance or hinder student understandings (Raines & Clark, 2011).

As summarized by Raja & Nagasubramani(2018), the role of technology in the field of education is four-fold: as a part of the curriculum, as an instructional delivery system, as a means of aiding instructions and also as a tool to enhance the entire learning process.

3.0 INTERNET AND LEARNING

With the technology becoming an integral part of education and with the increasing accessibility of internet to improve the quality of education, there is a wider variety with increasing volume of studies on the patterns and implications of internet usage among learners.

The results of Hacıoğlu & Seda (2015) affirm that internet plays a key role in daily life of university students, but most of the students do not use internet for course related readings and research needs. Their results also show that the younger generation has accepted the internet as an easy way for accessing to the relevant information and one of the means for entertainment and research at the same time. Ramayah, Jantan & Bushra (2003) find messaging and browsing are the main usage activities of internet by students which can be attributed to the need to keep in touch with friends and families through messaging while browsing activity is normally carried out to look for materials for projects or assignments. Aiming at providing higher quality of education, Kılıç & Güzeller (2017) examine the demographic variables describing the purposes of internet usage of high school students and suggests talking to male students with examples of computers and games and topics concerning social media with female students. With confirmation of students' recognition and use of internet as source of information for learning purposes, Stanciu & Inca (2014) also highlight the risk to access incorrect or unreliable information and believe that training is needed to improve the students' knowledge on ethics, communication, security and privacy as well as information searching and retrieving skill on internet.

Several other studies have considered the relationship between the internet usage and academic performance of students. Shahibi & Rusli (2017) show that student interest in

university is the most effective factor while online media usage for education also helps students in improving their academic achievement. Likewise, findings of Emeka & Nyeche (2016) reveal that Internet is one of the beneficial tools that enhances the skill and capability of students which assist them in studies and professional life. However, in a study on internet usage and educational outcomes, Posso (2016) notices that using online social networks reduces academic achievement; conversely, playing online games increases scores as although both activities are associated with a high opportunity cost of study, video games potentially allow students to apply and sharpen skills learned. Similarly, Chen & Fu (2009) find that online searching for information helps boost exam scores, while using the internet for socializing and gaming, as well as going to Internet Cafés, contributes to poorer exam performance and observe male and female students differ not only in their patterns of internet use, but in how these patterns affect their academic performance.

Despite the fact that studies and evidence indicate some disagreement about how technology has changed education and the impact of internet has brought to student learning experiences and outcomes, this study is to identify the internet usage patterns of students as the basis for further enhancement of student learning experiences.

4.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

4.1 Instrument

This study aims to explore the internet usage patterns among students using simple questionnaire. The questionnaire used for this study is divided into 2 sections. Section A covers demographical information and Section B is on internet usage among students.

4.2 Population and Sample

A total of 1088 participants with age ranges from 11 to 40 years old participated in this study. 85.85% of them age between 17 to 23 and 62.88 % of them are university or college students. Among them, 44.49% (484) are male and 55.51% (604) are female. About 64.89% of them (706) use English as the main medium at school and 35.11% (382) use other languages. Most of the participants are Malaysians (67.00%), followed by Chinese (15.53%), and Indonesians (9.01%). This is illustrated in the following table.

Table 1 Profile of Participants

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	484	44.49
Female	604	55.51
Language at School		
English	706	64.89
Other Languages	382	35.11
Country of Origin		
Malaysia	729	67.00
China	169	15.53
Indonesia	98	9.01
Others	92	8.46

5.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The table below presents the mean and variance for different internet usage. The frequency of usage ranges from every day to less than once a month and are coded with number 1 to 5, the smaller the value, the higher the frequency of usage.

Table 2 Means and Variances of Different Internet Usage

	Mean	Variance
Entertainment	1.363	0.460
School, studying and doing homework	1.722	0.821
Keeping in touch with friends and family	1.451	0.638
News	2.010	1.313
Other purpose(s)	2.093	1.753

The following table presents the frequency of internet usage for different activities. It was found that students use internet more frequently for entertainment and keeping in touch with friends and family than for study purposes. This is consistent with the study by Hacıoğlu & Seda (2015) which stated that approximately 76% of the respondents use electronic resources for entertainment and social networking. Only 24% of the respondents use the internet for academic purposes.

Table 3 Frequency of Internet Usage by Activity

Types of Activities	Frequency of Use (% of respondent)				
	Everyday	More than once a week	Once a week	Once a month	Less than once a month
Entertainment	73.16	18.84	6.99	0.55	0.46
School, studying and doing homework	51.84	29.69	14.43	2.57	1.47
Keeping in touch with friends and family	70.22	17.46	10.39	0.83	1.10
News	44.21	26.10	19.49	4.87	5.33
Other purpose(s)	47.33	21.69	14.80	6.25	9.83

The data was further analysed by gender. Based on the results provided in the following figures, there are differences found in the patterns of internet usage by different gender. Male was found to use internet more frequently for entertainment, followed by keeping in touch with friends and family, and education purposes. Female uses the internet more frequently for

keeping in touch with friends and family, followed by entertainment and education purposes. It is also worth noting that female students uses the internet for education purposes more frequently than male students. This conform to the findings of Kılıç, A. & Güzeller, C. (2017) on Turkish high school students where female students were found spending more time using the internet for joining social sites whereas male students use it more often to play games. This shows that the internet usage pattern among different genders are consistent between high school and university or college students across different countries.

Figure 1 Frequency of Internet Usage for Entertainment by Gender

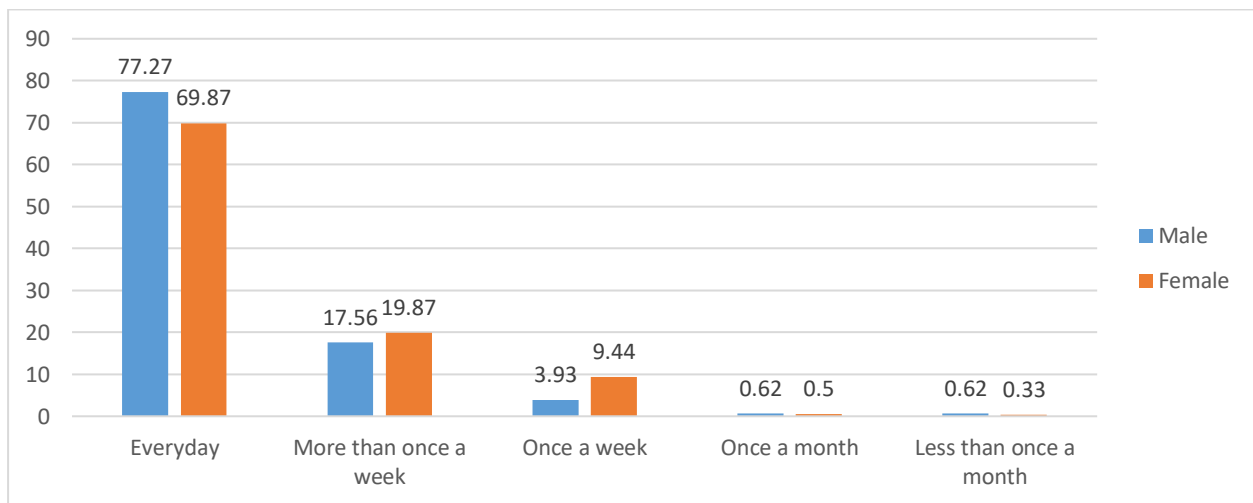


Figure 2 Frequency of Internet Usage for Social Purpose by Gender

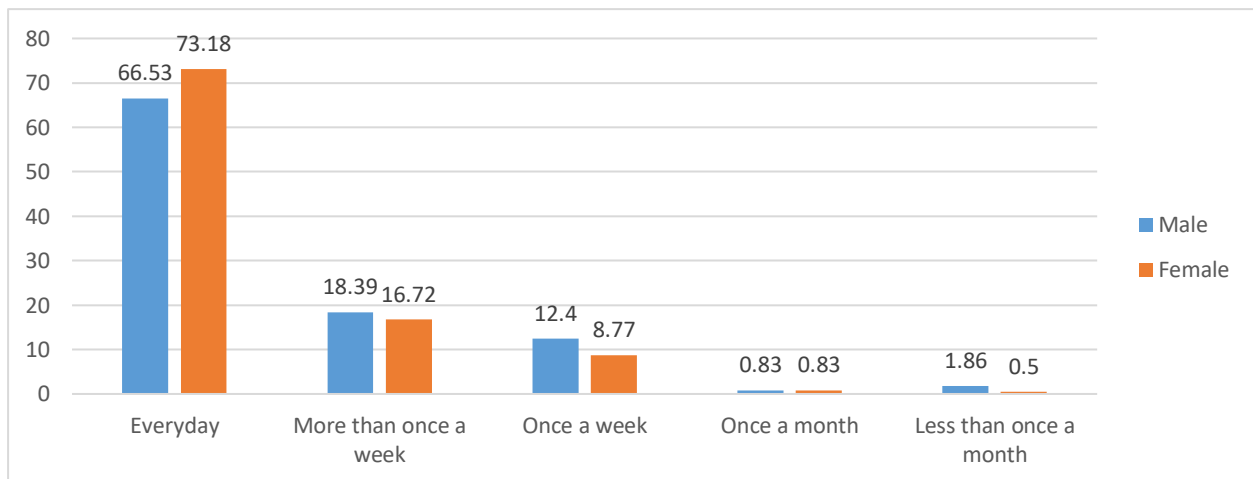
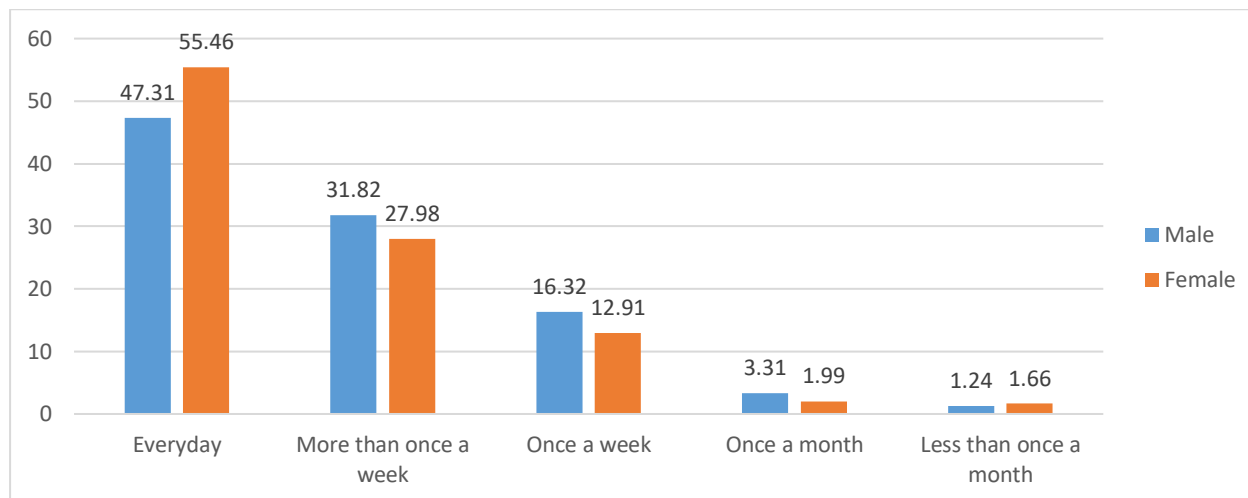


Figure 3 Frequency of Internet Usage for Education purposes by Gender



Based on the results provided in the following tables, language difference is seen as a factor affecting the internet usage for education purpose; however, language difference has non-significant impact on the usage pattern for entertainment purpose. According to Popova and Beavitt (2017), up to 96% of the world’s academic literature is published in English. The proportion of English language articles published in European countries as indexed by the Scopus abstracts database is many times higher than the proportion of publications in all other national languages combined. It could be due to this reason that students from a non-English study environment find it a challenge referring to the materials. More studies need to be carried out to validate this.

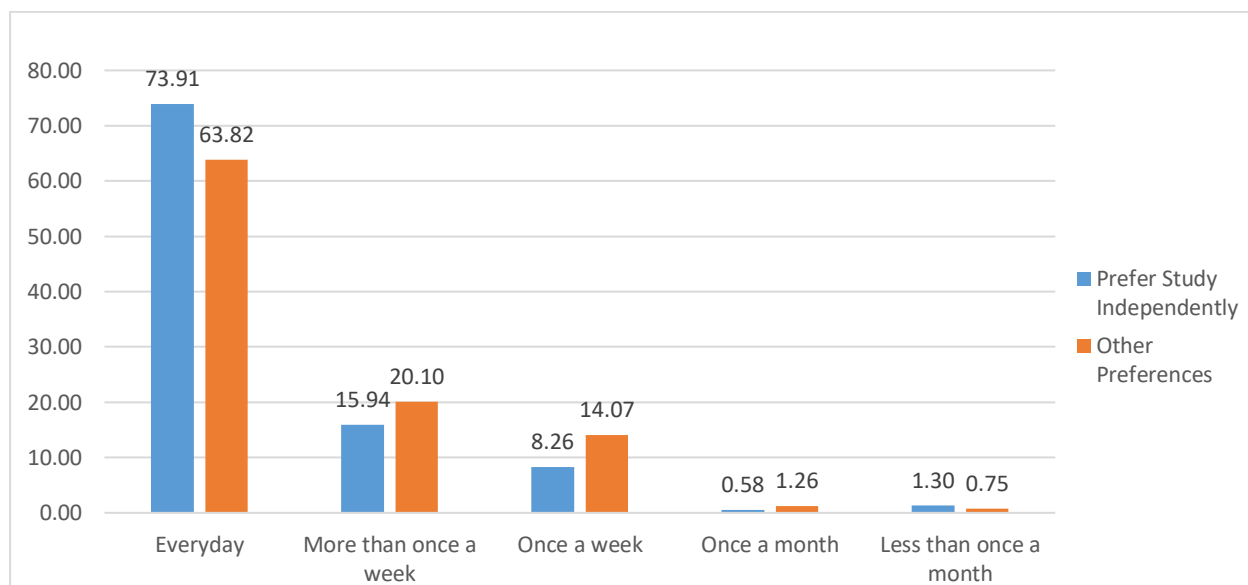
Table 4 Frequency of Internet Usage for Education and Entertainment by Language Used at School

Types of Activity	Frequency of Use (% of respondent)				
	Everyday	More than once a week	Once a week	Once a month	Less than once a month
Education					
English at School	56.80	28.19	12.18	1.70	1.13
Other Languages	42.67	32.46	18.59	4.19	2.09
Entertainment					
English at School	73.65	18.41	7.22	0.57	0.14
Other Languages	72.25	19.63	6.54	0.52	1.05

The graph below shows the relationship between study habit and the frequency of use of internet for keeping in touch with family and friends. The graph indicates that students who prefer to study independently tend to use internet more frequently for keeping in touch with friends and family compared to those with other study habit preferences. It is hypothesize that

due to the natural characteristics of independent learner being more socially reserved, they are more comfortable keeping in touch with friends and family using online means rather than face to face. However, this is a non-conclusive observation and more studies is required to support the hypothesis.

Figure 4 Frequency of Internet Usage for Keeping in Touch by Students with Different Study Habit



6.0 CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the internet usage among students. The data gathered indicates that there is a slight different in preference in terms of online activity among difference gender. Female is found to use the internet more frequently for education purposes compared to male. Language used at school also affects the frequency of internet usage for education purpose. It was also interesting to note that students’ preferred learning style may have a correlation with their preferred mode of socializing. With these observations in mind, it is important to note that while students are spending more and more time on the screen, majority of the time may not be for education purposes. More efforts are required to encourage learners to leverage on the internet as a resourceful learning tool.

6.1 Suggestion for Further Studies

Considering the increasing integration of technology in education, more studies on the habit of internet usage among students, especially those from different cultural background, different socio economic status, etc. should be carried out. This information is valuable to institutions of higher learning in understanding the needs of students from a diverse background and capitalize on this in designing their teaching and learning activities to improve student learning experience and outcome.

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ENGLISH AS A MEANS OF SCIENTIFIC
COMMUNICATION: LINGUISTIC IMPERIALISM
OR INTERLINGUA?

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