

Computer Usage, Learning Interest, and Comfort Level of Business Students

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Change and technology are intertwined and both create challenges for our society. Since business students are the future workforce, their usage of computer technology and how they deal with change is vital. For this study, computer comfort was examined in the terms of a concept specific construct. The purpose of this study was to examine student's computer proficiency and the student's interest in learning more about using the computer technologies. Specifically, the study 1) described the students on selected demographics, 2) described the student's self-reported proficiency on selected computer applications and tasks, 3) described the students interest in learning selected computer applications and tasks, 4) described the students comfort level with technology, and 5) compared the proficiency and interest in learning computer technology of high and low computer comfort level students.

A purposeful sample of 218 students completed a survey questionnaire resulting in 214 usable instruments. The students were business majors from a mid-western university Carnegie Doctoral I institution. The instrument was constructed to collect demographic data, proficiency with computer technology, interest to learn computer technology, and comfort level with technology. The face validity of the instrument was insured by expert review. Cronbach's alpha will be used to determine the internal consistency, a conservative estimate of reliability, of the scaled items. The sample was split into high and low computer comfort level groups. Means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percents will be used to present descriptive data. Comparison of high and low level groups will be made with t-tests with the alpha set at .05.

Objective one describes the demographics of the participants on age, grade point average (GPA), gender, educational level, and ethnicity. The majority of the high comfort level students and low comfort level groups were male, junior, and caucasian. The students in the high comfort level were 21.4 (SD=4.38) years of age and had a GPA of 2.98 (SD=.52). The students in were 20.4 (SD=1.44) years of age and had a GPA of 3.00 (SD=.54). Objective two was to describe the student's proficiency on selected computer applications and tasks. Table 2 show that the students highest level of proficiency for high comfort level is e-mail with students, e-mail with professors world wide web, and word processors. Objective three was to describe the students' interest in learning selected computer applications and tasks. The students in the high comfort level had the highest level of interest developing web pages, presentation graphics, word processors, and world wide web. Objective four was to describe the student's comfort level with technology. The comfort level has a computer anxiety scale (Cronbach's alpha=.71) and an acceptance of technology scale (Cronbach's alpha=.84). The over computer comfort level ranged from 1.71 to 5.00 and the average was 4.02 (SD=.68). The group was divided at 4.02 and above being considered high comfort level (n=107) and below that would be low comfort level (n=107). Objective five was to compare the proficiency and interest in learning computer technology of high and low comfort level students. PC-based statistics, main frame computers, web for instructional support, and online web based testing proficiency were the only four areas that were not significantly different between high and low comfort level students. The students interest to learn distance learning, main frame computers, developing web pages, database management, and video presentation were significantly different between high and low comfort level students. All other interest areas were not significantly different.

The finding from this study provides some empirical evidence that high and low comfort level students do have different levels of proficiency in many areas. Even though students might not have a high comfort level with computers, this research supports that in majority of the applications and tasks both high and low comfort level students want to learn more about using computer technologies. These findings also support other research with college students stating the more computer experience and proficiency students have lower levels of computer anxiety.