
Pre-University Web Usage Behavior among New Medical Entrants

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With the development and wide accessibility of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) students would be expected to move away from traditional sources of information, such as books, towards the internet. With the objective of studying information seeking behaviour and the use of internet prior to university entrance, a survey was carried out on first year MBBS undergraduates at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya in 2016. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire distributed at the orientation programme for students.

Of the 155 students that responded to the questionnaire, 65% were females and 52.9% were from the Western Province. The most frequent method of finding required information prior to entering the university, as noted by the responders, was searching the internet (98.7%). Referring library books (80.0%) and their own textbooks (61.9%) were the next most common methods. This is also reflected by 87.1% of the students stating that they accessed the internet at least several days per week. Finding information was mentioned by most (94.2%) as the reason for going online. But, a considerable number also used the internet for entertainment (85.8%) and accessing social media websites (78.1%). The main devices used when accessing the web were smart phones (87%) and personal desktops/laptops (79.4%). When it comes to frequency of internet usage, comparative analyses failed to show significant differences between the two genders ($\chi^2 = 2.242$, $p = 0.134$) or those residing in and outside the Western Province ($\chi^2 = 1.534$, $p = 0.215$).

Even with the inclination towards the internet as a major source of information, the reliance on text books (either their own or of colleagues or from the libraries) seem to have still maintained its relevance (with 94.2% as compared to the 98.7% that referred to the web). Wide availability of devices and methods of accessing the internet, along with the ever increasing influence of ICT in education as well as day-to-day life is reflected in these findings.

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