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Dental Students' Attitudes and Perceptions towards ICT Resources and Skills

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Abstract

Information and communication technology (ICT) is an increasingly important tool in dental education and practice. This may benefit the students' personal and professional development. The aim of this study was to investigate the attitudes and perception towards ICT resources and skill among the clinical group of dental students of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. A self-administered questionnaire was developed and pretested. The reliability of questionnaire with Cronbach's coefficient alpha was 0.761. With responded rate of 96.1%, this study revealed that majority of the students reported positive attitudes towards ICT. They also perceived that they have some skills in utilizing the ICT in their study.

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Keywords: information and communication technology (ICT); dental students; attitudes; perceptions; skill;

1. Introduction

Information and communication technology (ICT) has become an integral part of daily lives of young generation. They are familiar and have no difficulty in the use of ICT. The worldwide web has pervasive in their everyday life and has important implications in their education. This rapid development in computer technology has changed the study environment and practice of deⁿtistry and other disciplines (Grigg and Stephens 1999; Nattestad 1999). This type of learning for dental students is more focused on communication, interactivity and displaying clinical images. As a result, many dental programmes worldwide have incorporated ICT as a part of learning method for the students. Therefore, it is important that the students who are going to be subjected to ICT-learning method to be competent to handle ICT resources. Even, individual characteristic such as IT proficiency are likely to have an influence on students perceptions of their learning experience (Jesse and O'Neill 2006).

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In the Faculty of Dentistry Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), the use of ICT as a tool to support dental teaching and learning was introduced few years ago, which were limited to seminar presentation, portfolio and clinical report submission. Upon enrolling into the dental programme of UKM the students may have variable level of competency in the use of ICT. Even, they are not provided with mandatory courses in basic ICT skills during their basic sciences and clinical year of study. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the attitudes and perception among the clinical group of dental students of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia towards ICT resources and skills in their education.

2. Methodology

A questionnaire with 16 items was designed with references to Rajab & Baqain (2005), Mosley (Nov 2000 to Jan 2001) and Grigg & Stephens (1999). The content validity was established by a group of dental academicians. The questionnaire contained questions concerning the students' attitudes and perception on motivation, facilities and current skill of ICT in terms of their study. The respond for each items was assessed using Likert Scale with 5-point scale ranging from 1=strongly disagreed to 5=strongly agreed.

The questionnaire was pre-tested among 33 clinical students (Year 3, Year 4 and Year 5). The internal consistency of the questionnaire was determined through Cronbach's alpha coefficient with the overall reliability of co-efficient of 0.761. This was considered good, as $\alpha > 0.60$. The questionnaires were then administered to all 181 clinical dental students in year 3, 4 and 5. Descriptive statistics were used to report frequencies and percentages of respondents on the items.

3. Results

The questionnaires were completed by 174 undergraduate dental students, including 50 of year 3, 68 of year 4 and 56 of year 5, with an overall response rate of 96.1%. Distributions of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic data

Year of study	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
3	41	9	50
4	52	16	68
5	45	11	56
Total	138	36	174

One hundred and seventy one (98.3%) of the respondents reported that they personally own a computer. However, the other three (1.7%) have an access to their family computer. One hundred and sixty seven (96%) of them claimed that they have an access to an internet with their computer. Table 2 shows the feedback of the students in relation to their attitudes and perceptions towards ICT resources and skill.

Table 2. Students' attitudes and perceptions towards ICT resources and skill

Items		Scale, n (%)				
		1	2	3	4	5
		Disagreed		Neutral	Agreed	
1.	I need to receive training in the use of computers and ICT resources	57(32.8)		79(45.4)	38(21.8)	
2.	I am able to complete my assignment on time if I have easy access to					
	a. Internet					
	b. Computer	-		9 (5.2)	165(94.8)	
	c. Printing facilities	-		9(5.2)	165(94.8)	
		1(0.6)		17(9.8)	156(89.6)	

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