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Analysing the Impact of Gender on the International Students on the Access and Use of ICT on the Social Integration: A Case of Two French-speaking Universities in Higher Education in Canada

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In the 21st century, the number of international students is increasing everywhere and many students are interested in studying at overseas universities since it enhances their academic career. The aim of this study is to design a structural equation model on the impact of gender for the international students to the access and use of ICT into the social integration. The population of this study was international students from two universities in Canada and the questionnaires were distributed via web link to international students. The data was analysed using the WarpPLS (5.0) software. The results of this study revealed that ICT access and use do not have an impact on the integration with peers (social integration) but does have significant impact on the social integration, particularly integration with faculty and faculty support. However, the results further revealed that gender has an impact on the access and use of ICT for the international students in their social integration.

Keywords: *International students, social integration, structural equation model, university*

Introduction

In recent years, the access and use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the education sector has been accepted globally. ICT is used in every higher education for the teaching, learning, and research purposes. In higher education, the social integration is described to the social involvement to meet with students, to have friends for the extra-curricular activities and on-campus attend the social and cultural events. However, students who are not associated with the behaviors is lead to the social integration, which is less likely to have persistence and more likely to have withdrawn (Tinto, 1987).

According to Tinto (1993) stated that the social integration students personal communication with their peers and with their academics, while in the higher education, students are motivated or being enjoyed. Social integration is beneficial for the working-class students. In the first step, the working-class students are less likely to have the social supports for their higher education studies because of the support they receive from their family and hometown friends (Elkins, Braxton, & James, 2000). However, on the other hand, Malecki and Demaray (2006) indicated that these students are likely getting more benefits than middle-class students that is offered by their peers and their institution. In the second step, the working-class students received less information support from their parents because of their parents are usually do not have much experience about the higher education system (Bryan & Simmons, 2009; Lehmann, 2009). In the third step, the working-class students get less opportunity to access higher education systems and role models within their family (Oliver, Rodriguez, & Mickelson, 1985). However, having a role model within the family can enhance working-class students' academic motivation and to set an instance in the family how to succeed (Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002).Miller (2012) stated that

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"student characteristics or goals are "modified and reformulated on a continuing basis through a longitudinal series of interactions between the individual and the structures and the members of the academic and social systems of the institutions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005)". Therefore, students begin college with a set of expectations that are constantly recalculated based on their campus experience. However, the social integration is an integral part of the student experience because it is seemingly based on a congruent system of values and attitudes from the student to the institution and from the institution to the student (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005)". According to Rienties, Grohnert, Kommers, Niemantsverdriet, and Nijhuis (2011) stated that a large number of students are studying overseas to get international experience since international experience always attracts multinational companies. In the past years in Canada, the number of international students has increased in higher education and however, these students contribute a lot to the national economy (Kunin, 2009) as well as their host country's economy (Kunin, 2009). In the case of Quebec province, every year many of the international students arrives to pursue their higher educations and (Affaris, 2011) reported in the Quebec province in 2004, a total number of international students registered 25,472 and in 2010, it went up to 32,225. In addition, the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in higher education allows international students to interact socially with other students and it plays a crucial role in the social integration (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

Hirt and Gatz (2000) indicated based on the study conducted at a higher institution for the betterment of replacement of the traditional behaviors where college students are engaged to have social integration. Their results revealed that during the students' participation in the social integration, the bulk of the email was not related to either form of integration. Ashmore (2000) found from the studies conducted on the 800 students in West Tennessee and the result revealed that ICT usages are significant for some of the variables, namely, the career development, communication, maths/science/technology, but on the other hand ICT usages did not have an effect on the social integration.Ruud (2013) stated that in higher education, researchers and practitioners have struggled to understand how this ICT affects international students in terms of learning, interacting, and growing. According to Nuñez (2004), it is not surprising to the international students because they detached from feelings and their own culture which is popularly known as the leading courses of the international student's dropping out of higher institutions.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to analyse the gender of the international students using a model on the access and use of ICT on the social integration. This aim is achieved based on the following sub-objectives:

- To examine the impact of ICT on the international students on the access and use of ICT on the social integration in particular integration with peers;
- To examine the impact of ICT on the international students on the access and use of ICT on the social integration in particular integration with faculty;
- To examine the impact of ICT on the international students on the access and use of ICT on the social integration in particular faculty support;
- To examine the impact of gender on the impact of ICT by the international students on the access and use of ICT on the social integration in particular integration with peers;
- To examine the impact of gender on the impact of ICT on the international students on the access and use of ICT on the social integration in particular integration with faculty;
- To examine the impact of gender on the impact of ICT on the international students on the access and use of ICT on the social integration in particular faculty support; and

- To design a model of the impact of gender on the international students on the access and use of ICT on the social integration.

Research Questions

- To what extent do international students have a significant impact on the access and use of ICT in the social integration in particular integration with peers?
- To what extent do international students have a significant impact on the access and use of ICT in the social integration in particular integration with faculty?
- To what extent international students have a significant impact on the access and use of ICT in the social integration in particular with faculty support?
- To what extent international students have a significant impact of gender on the access and use of ICT in the social integration in particular integration with peers?
- To what extent international students have a significant impact of gender on the access and use of ICT in the social integration in particular integration with faculty support? and
- To what extent international students have a significant impact of gender on the access and use of ICT in the social integration in particular faculty support?

Research Hypothesis

- There is no significant impact on the international students on the access and use of ICT in the social integration in particular integration with peers *(H_1)*;
- There is no significant impact on the international students on the access and use of ICT in the social integration in particular integration with faculty *(H_2)*;
- There is no significant impact on the international students on the access and use of ICT in the social integration in particular with faculty support *(H_3)*;
- There is no significant impact of the gender of the international students on the access and use of ICT in the social integration in particular with faculty support *(H_4)*;
- There is no significant impact of the gender of the international students on the access and use of ICT in the social integration in particular integration with faculty *(H_5)*; and
- There is no significant impact of the gender of the international students on the access and use of ICT in the social integration in particular with faculty support *(H_6)*.

Literature Review

According to Elkins, Braxton, and James (1998), the social integration "positively influences subsequent institutional commitment, which, in turn, positively affects the likelihood of student persistence in college" (p. 18). Furthermore, Peters (1992) indicated that university "should not simply be a bureaucratic apparatus…from which the student regularly receives written assignments, but should be a living institution of which he himself is a part" (p. 264).Wortman and Napoli (1996) conducted a study and stated that the social integration is linked to two factors, namely, term-to-term persistence and year-to-year persistence. The term-to-term persistence is observed significantly and persistently, but on the other hand, it is less related to the year-to-year persistence. Their results further indicated that both the factors are important for international students in order remaining or withdraw at a higher institution. A study was conducted by Myers (2001) on the influence for the persistence of the community college student technical degree seekers and the results revealed that age, social interaction, and in the career development had a positive influence on the technical degree seekers by international students. However, it provides the social integration opportunities for the community college students.

A study was conducted by Kuh (1991) indicated that the social integration consists students' social and psychological comfort with the institutions students' surroundings, associations with the common group

of students, and the sense of belonging to the institution. However, their study further indicated that these factors help student in order to bond with their colleagues for the achievement of their goals till the graduation. A report by Burrus et al. (2013) (p.26) stated that "Social integration is considered a function of the nature and quality of interactions with peers and faculty, as well as a student's social involvement in a college environment (Tinto, 1993). In their extensive review, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) concluded that studies have consistently supported peer influence as a positive force on persistence. For instance, Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994) found that through peer interactions, students were able to establish a social support network helping them cope with stresses associated with adjusting to the college environment. Similarly, Pistole and Kalsner (2003) found that perceptions of insufficient social support have been linked with student departure (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Peer relations can be particularly important in large institutions where students are prone to feelings of isolation and anonymity and may have greater adjustment issues (Chickering & Reisser, 1993)".

In Australia, a study was conducted by Russell, Rosenthal, and Thomson (2010) on approximately 900 international students and their research results revealed that 41% of the students are faced stress, which resulted into homesick, cultural shock for the students. On the other hand, as compared to domestic students for the international students need to pay more attention to the social integration as their friends and family members are far away and it is not easy to reach them(Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008).Rayle, Kurpius, and Arredondo (2006) conducted a study on the 527 female university students and the research results revealed that social integration is the strongest variable namely, self-esteem and the university comfort. A study was conducted by Thomas (2001) as Cited in Ruud (2013)on 322 university students and indicated that a larger number of friendships for the international students have an impact on the social integration.

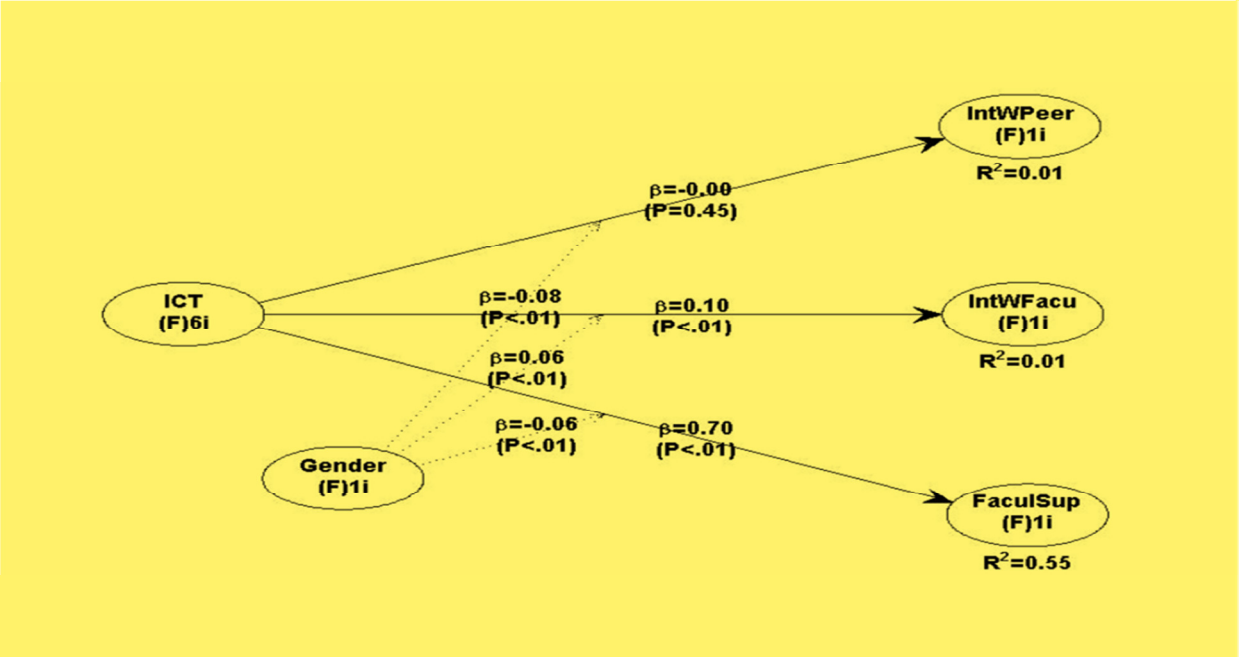
Methodology

This study was conducted in Canada at the two public universities, namely, university of Quebec at Montreal and University of Montreal. The questionnaire was designed from the existing literature and it was validated by a theoretical framework. An ethical clearance was sought from the ethics committee of the University of Quebec at Montreal. Only international students were participating in this study from the two universities and students participated voluntarily. A web link was sent to all the international students to fill-up the questionnaires. Collected data were analysed using the WarpPLS (5.0) software. The partial least squares (PLS) are the technique which is used to design a structural equation modelling as well as for a measurement model because it can have the following measurement scales, sample sizes, residual distributions (Chin, 1998). However, the questionnaire of this study divided into three sections, namely, demographics (the number of sessions at university, the number of hours of the work per week, sex, age, living area (urban/rural/semi-rural), ethnic cultural group, mother tongue, level of education of parents, and local students), social integration (integration with peers, integration with faculty, and faculty support), and ICT access and use (the number of ICT is used in Quebec, the number of access to the Internet in Quebec, the number of Internet users in Quebec, perception of the ICT skills, and the Internet experience).

Results

Figure-1

Proposed Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) on the Impact of Gender on the International Students on the Access and Use of ICT on the Social Integration



Access and Use of ICT on the Social Integration

Figure 1 shown that ICT has the highest impact on the faculty support with a value of $\beta = 0.70$ and $p =< .01$, but on the other hand, ICT have the least impact on the integration with peers with a value of $\beta = 0.10$ and $p =< .01$. However, ICT access and use do not have an impact on the integration with peers because of values are $\beta = -0.00$ and $p = 0.45$.

Impact of Gender by International Students on the Access and use of ICT on the social Integration

Figure 1 shown that the gender has an impact on the access and use of ICT by the international students in the social integration in particular integration with peers, integration with faculty and faculty support followed by with the values of $\beta = -0.08$ and $p =< .01$; $\beta = 0.06$ and $p =< .01$; $\beta = 0.10$ and $p =< .01$. However, the gender has the highest impact on the integration with faculty, but on the other hand, gender has the lowest impact on the faculty support.

Table-1

Model Fit and Quality Indices

Fit index	Model	Recommendation
Average path coefficient (APC)	0.167	P<0.001
Average R-squared (ARS)	0.187	P<0.001
Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)	0.186	P<0.001

Average block VIF (AVIF)	1.718	acceptable if <=5, ideally <=3.3
Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	8.749	acceptable if <=5, ideally <=3.3
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	0.426	small>=0.1, medium>=0.25, large>=0.36
Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)	0.667	acceptable if >=0.7, ideally = 1
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	0.990	Acceptable if >=0.9, ideally =1
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	1.000	Acceptable if>=0.7
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	0.667	Acceptable if >=0.7

The strength of the measurement model is measured on the basis of the convergent validity and discriminant validity (Hair, 2010). However, the convergent validity has three sections such as reliability of questions, constructs of the composite reliability, and variance extracted by constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The model can be measured based on the ten items which have shown inTable 1 and ten items are as follows: APC, ARS, AARS, AVIF, AFVIF, GoF, SPR, RSCR, SSR, and NLBCDR. From Table 1 it clearly states that the model fit is between the data and model(Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1991).

Correlation among the Latent Variables with Square Roots of AVEs

Table 2 represents the measurement items for the impact of gender on the access and use of ICT on the social integration for the international students. However, inTable 2 the square roots of the average variances extracted represent with the diagonal.

Table-2

Correlation among the Latent Variables with Square Roots of AVEs

	ICT	Integration with Peers	Integration with Faculty	Faculty Support	Gender
ICT	0.969	0.055	0.118	0.716	-0.045
Integration with Peers	0.055	1.000	0.007	0.068	0.047
Integration with Faculty	0.118	0.007	1.000	0.166	-0.004
Faculty Support	0.716	0.068	0.166	1.000	-0.030
Gender	-0.045	0.047	-0.004	-0.030	1.000

Analysis of the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients, Composite Reliability Coefficients

Cronbach (1951) stated that Cronbach's alpha is used to check for the consistency of measurement items. When the range of the reliability is 0.70 or bigger than it is considerable to accept. However, the Table 3 represents the Cronbach's alpha for the all the latent variables have ranged from the 0.987 to 1.000,

hence it can be concluded that the recommended value of 0.70 has exceeded. Furthermore, for the composite reliability has also exceeded the recommended value of 0.70 (Hair, 2010) because all the valued are between the 0.989 and 1.000. Finally, from the Table 3, we can conclude that all the measurement items of the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are appropriate for each of the latent variables and reliable.

Table-3

Results of the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability Coefficients

	ICT	Integration with peers	Integration with faculty	Faculty support	Gender
Cronbach's Alpha	0.987	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Composite reliability coefficients	0.989	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

P Values Correlation

Table 4 indicated that the correlations subscales such as ICT, integration with peers, integration with faculty, faculty support and the gender.

Table-4

P Values Correlation

	ICT	Integration with Peers	Integration with Faculty	Faculty Support	Gender
ICT	1.000	0.030	<0.001	<0.001	0.074
Integration with Peers	0.030	1.000	0.786	0.007	0.065
Integration with Faculty	<0.001	0.786	1.000	<0.001	0.884
Faculty Support	<0.001	0.007	<0.001	1.000	0.234
Gender	0.074	0.065	0.884	0.234	1.000

Normalized Combined Loadings and Cross-loadings

WarpPLS (2.0) user manual guide indicated that the loading is a combination of structure matrix (unrotated) and cross-loading matrix (rotated). Table 5 shown that all the items are loaded distinctly on the specified each of the variables. However, according to Hair et al. (2010), the latent variable value must exceed 0.50. The Table 5 shown that all the latent variables have passed therecommended value of 0.50. Hence it could be concluded that all the ten items have displayed the satisfactory level for each of the individual item reliability.

Table-5

Normalized Combined Loading and Cross-Loading

Items	ICT	Integration with Peers	Integration with Faculty	Faculty Support	Gender
Item1	0.713	0.001	0.001	-0.047	0.096
Item2	0.712	0.000	0.000	-0.041	0.096
Item3	0.712	-0.008	0.003	-0.013	-0.052
Item4	0.714	-0.000	0.000	-0.025	-0.110
Item5	0.702	0.002	-0.003	0.075	-0.043
Item6	0.702	0.005	-0.003	0.072	-0.033
Item7	0.000	1.000	0.000	-0.000	0.000
Item8	0.000	-0.000	1.000	-0.000	0.000
Item9	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.000	0.000
Item10	0.000	-0.000	-0.000	0.000	1.000

Graphs Showing the Effect of Variables

Fig. 2 shows that the relationship between ICT access and use for the international students' integration with peers is nonlinear and it has begun approximately 0.78 and it is not positively supported because of the beta value is negative. In spite of the Figure 3, the unstandardized scale indicated that the nonlinear relationship begun to increase when the mean of the respondents is 2.47 and the standard deviation is 3.51. In this relation, it can be concluded that ICT access and use by the international students are not significant on the social integration in particular integration with peers.

Figure-2

ICT Access and Use by the International Students in the Social Integration in Particular Integration with Peers

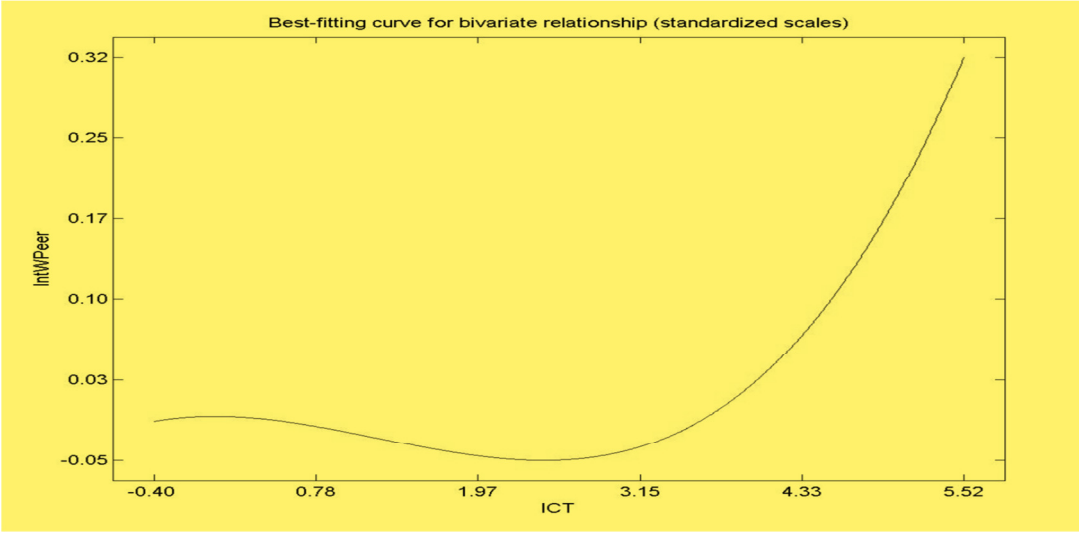


Figure-3

ICT Access and Use (with Mean and Standard Deviation) by the International Students in the Social Integration in Particular Integration with Peers

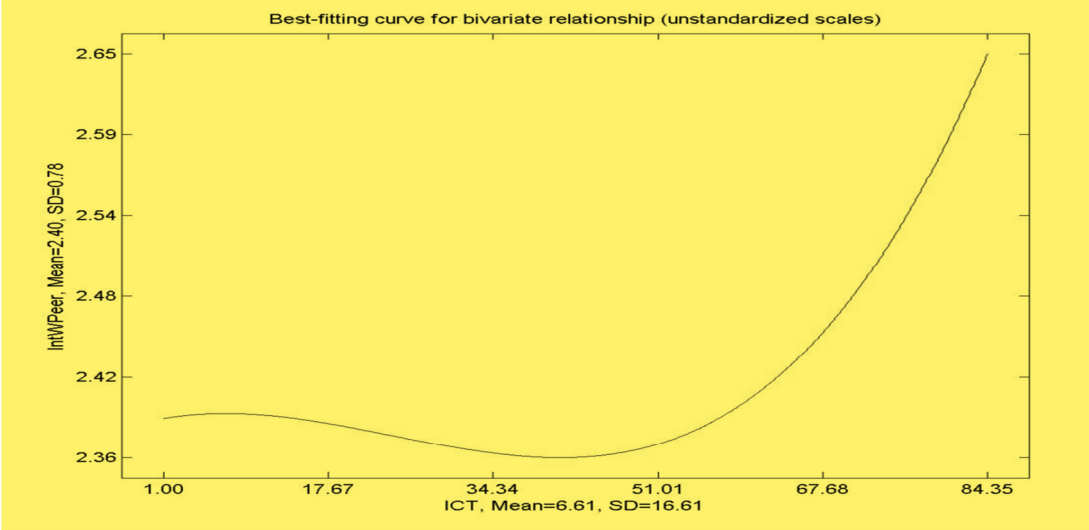


Figure-4

ICT Access and Use by the International Students in the Social Integration in Particular Integration with Faculty

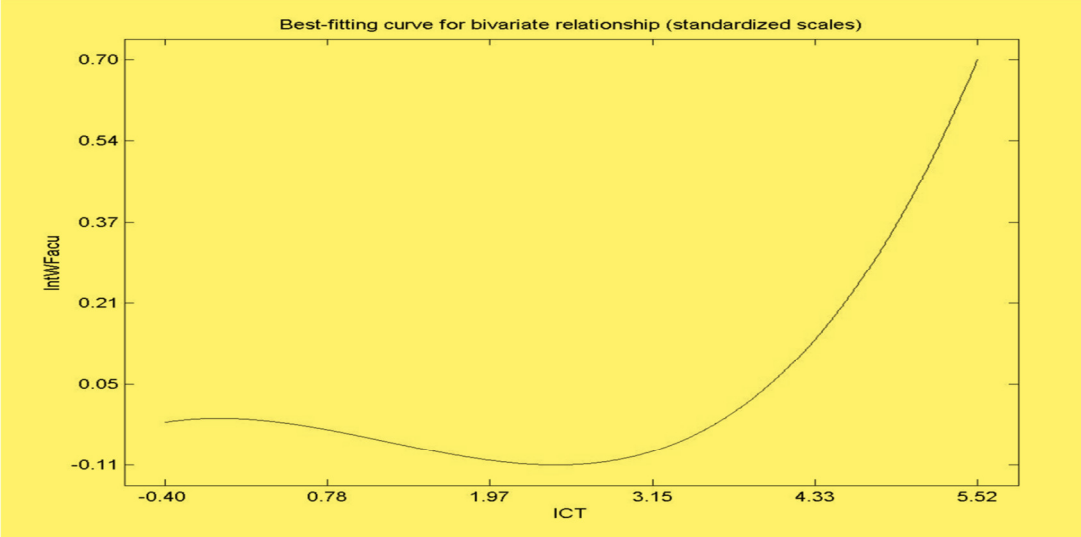


Fig. 4 shows that the relationship between ICT access and use by the international students' integration with faculty is nonlinear and it has begun approximately 0.78 and it is positively supported because of the beta value is positive. In spite of the Figure 5 the unstandardized scale indicated that the nonlinear relationship begun to increase when the mean of the respondents is 2.47 and the standard deviation is 3.51. In this relation, it can be concluded that ICT access and use by the international students are significant on the social integration in particular integration with faculty.

Figure-5

ICT Access and Use (with Mean and Standard Deviation) by the International Students in the Social Integration in Particular Integration with Faculty

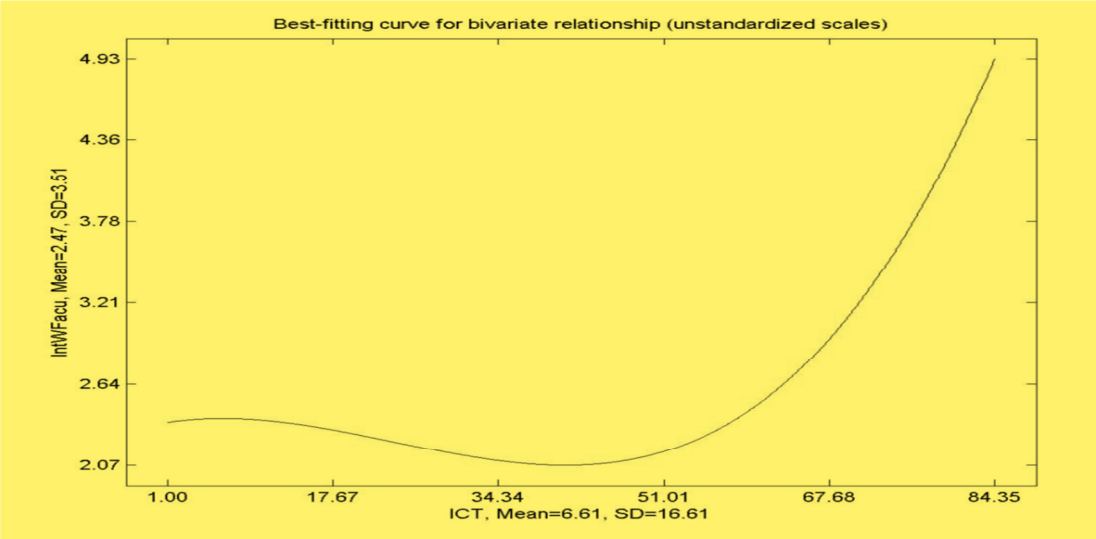


Figure-6

ICT Access and Use by the International Students in the Social Integration In Particular Integration with Faculty Support

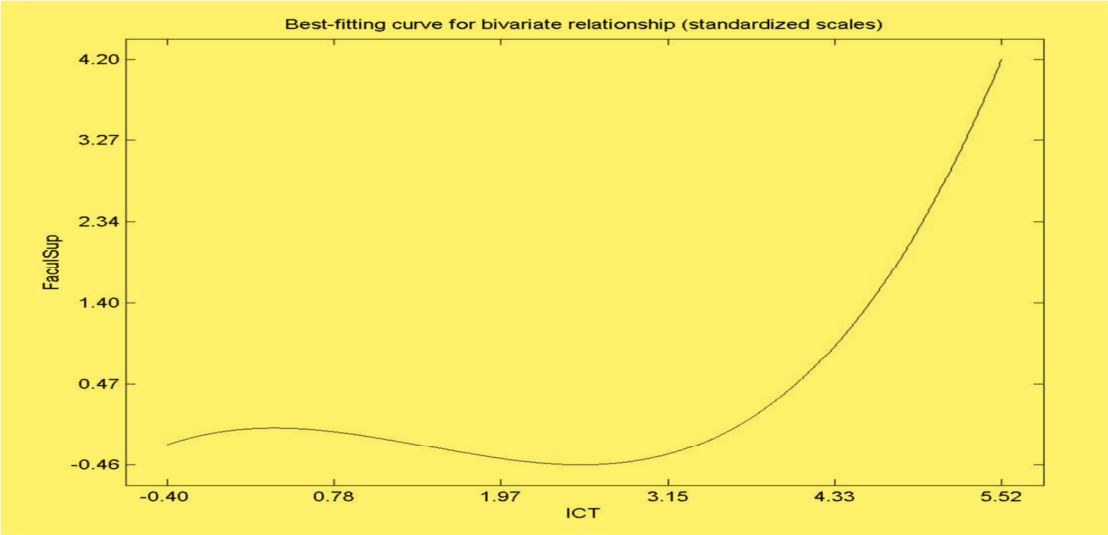
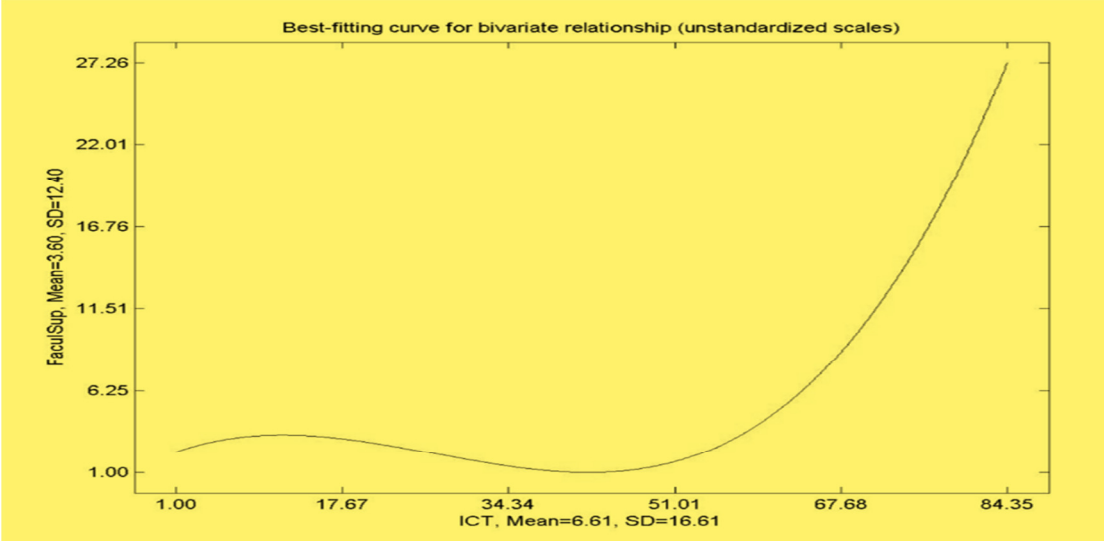


Fig. 6 shows that the relationship between ICT access and use by the international students' integration with faculty support is nonlinear and it has begun approximately 0.78 and it is positively supported because of the beta value is positive. In spite of the Figure 7 the unstandardized scale indicated that the nonlinear relationship begun to increase when the mean of the respondents is 3.60 and the standard deviation is 12.40. In this relation, it can be concluded that ICT access and use by the international students are significant on the social integration in particular integration with faculty support.

Figure-7

Ict Access and Use (with Mean and Standard Deviation) by the International Students in the Social Integration Particular Integration with Faculty Support



Conclusions and Discussions

This study was conducted at two public universities in Canada. The first hypothesis *(H_1)* was accepted since there was no impact on the access and use of ICT on the social integration.The second hypothesis *(H_2)* was rejected because the Figure 1 shown that there is a strong significant on the access and use of ICT on the social integration in particular integration with faculty. The third hypothesis *(H_3)* was also rejected since the strong significant have found by the structural equation model on the access and use of ICT in the social integration in particular with faculty support.The fourth hypothesis *(H_4)* was also rejected due to impact by the ICT in the social integration by the international students. Similarly, the fifth hypothesis *(H_5)* and the sixth hypothesis *(H_6)* was also rejected because the structural equation model showed the impact of gender on the access and use of ICT on the social integration by the international students. However, the combined loading and the cross-loading indicated that all the items have passed the reliability range. On the other hand, the Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability also shown that the minimum range has passed.

The novelty of this paper was to analyse the impact of gender on the access and use of ICT on the social integration such as integration with peers, integration with faculty and faculty support for the international students. The prime results of the study revealed that ICT access and use have an impact on the integration with faculty and faculty support, but ICT do not have an impact on the integration with peers. However, secondly, the results also revealed that the gender has significant on the social integration. The limitation of this study was that this study conducted within the French-speaking universities. However, a larger number of universities and including English-speaking universities could provide more details of the statistical analysis. Nevertheless, it is not clear why ICT access and use for the international students do not have an impact on the social integration in particular integration with peers. In spite of ICT access and use by international students have impact on the social integration in particular integration with faculty and faculty support. The findings of this research shown that it is very interesting and in line with the cross-cultural research (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). Finally, this study will help for the international students as well as who are interested to help international students with regard to the impact of gender on access and use of ICT on the social integration.

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