
NEWSLETTER

Who Benefits More from Online Learning: An Empirical Study on Online Knowledge Sharing Behavior in Postgraduates

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IN the digital era, online knowledge sharing is a crucial link in individual development. Postgraduates are potentially core members of the future knowledge society. The research into the factors influencing online knowledge sharing behavior of postgraduates can provide implications for promoting equality in their utilization of digital dividends. Is there a “second-level digital divide” among postgraduates? If yes, which of them benefit more from it?

Despite the restriction of Covid-19 prevention and control, this study attempted to gather data via both online and offline channels. Researchers encouraged postgraduates to respond to a questionnaire that would take them 8-12 minutes to complete, both by posting it on campus forums in Chinese universities as well as on those popular virtual academic community platforms such as Zhihu and Economic Management and by distributing it offline in classrooms of general graduate courses and laboratories. Respondents were asked to complete the Information Literacy Scale, the Online Knowledge Sharing Behavior Scale, and the Background Information Sheet (items presented in random order). From April to June 2021, 642 responses were obtained, of which 501 were valid, constituting 78.04% of the total responses. The average age of the respondents was 25.56 years old, and the sample had balanced distribution in all categories and showed good representativeness.

Research conclusions include that: (i) the individual ability factor (information literacy) has a significant impact on the online knowledge sharing behavior of postgraduates, with a greater effect on the quantity of online knowledge sharing than on its quality; (ii) structural factors (gender, school type, urban or rural origin, paternal occupation, paternal education level) also have prominent effects on online knowledge sharing behavior of postgraduates, with a stronger impact on the quality of online knowledge sharing than on its quantity; (iii) structural factors influence various dimensions of information literacy of graduate students differently, with the greatest impact on their information discrimination competence; (iv) the effects of structural

factors on online knowledge sharing behavior of postgraduates are partially mediated by the individual ability factor, as individuals who are more advantaged in terms of structural factors show higher levels of information literacy and thus have more active and higher-quality online knowledge sharing behaviors.

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