UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS' TECHNOLOGY APPROPRIATION AND LEARNING PERCEPTIONS IN ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Distance education has the unique characteristic of using technologies as the primary means of delivery of instruction and interaction. The present study contributes to research dedicated to explaining phenomena related to distance education, and has four objectives: (1) to identify specific social and technological factors affecting online students' behavior of using technology, (2) to conceptualize a theoretical model to better represent the relationships among the salient factors, (3) to examine how the elements in the theoretical model influence students' learning perceptions and satisfaction in the distance education program, and (4) to compare the proposed model with prior work to model and explain online behavior and satisfaction.

For the purpose of advancing understanding of the roles of social and technological factors in a distance learning environment, this study proposed a Unified Model for Technology appropriation (UMTA) based upon four attitude-behavior models, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and the decomposed TPB. Data were collected via a set of self-report questionnaires and computer-recorded system usage.

Among the statistically significant paths found in UMTA, subjective norm (instructor/mentor/peer influence) had the strongest relationship to students' technology appropriation behavior, while perceived behavioral control (self-efficacy and

technology/resource facilitating conditions) had the strongest impact on students' satisfaction. Results of the present study should help to better manage online courses by focusing attention on social influences and control factors in a distance education program.