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AN EXAMINATION OF SEX DIFFERENCES IN  
COMPUTING BEHAVIOUR AND INTENTIONS TO ENROL  
IN A COMPUTER STUDIES COURSE USING THE  
FISHBEIN-AJZEN AND SELF-EFFICACY MODELS

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A B S T R A C T

This study aimed to investigate sex differences in secondary school students' intentions to enrol in a computer studies course, and in the relative contributions of the attitudinal and normative components of the Fishbein-Ajzen model and self-efficacy expectations, to explaining variance in these intentions. Sex differences in other dimensions of computing behaviour were also examined. The study also provided the opportunity to test both the Fishbein-Ajzen and Self-Efficacy models per se. Participants were 363 Form 5 students attending seven schools (two single-sex male, two single-sex female, three co-educational) in the lower half of the North Island. The high school students were administered two questionnaires during the two separate phases of the study, measuring Fishbein-Ajzen (1980) model constructs, self-efficacy expectations, past computing behaviour, demographic variables and an estimate of ability. Results unexpectedly revealed that girls' behavioural intentions to enrol in a computer studies course were not significantly lower. In fact, girls were slightly more likely than boys to express intentions to enrol in computer studies courses when assessed at Phase 2. No significant sex differences emerged in the relative contributions of the attitudinal and normative components of the Fishbein-Ajzen model and self-efficacy expectations to intentions. In contrast, strong sex differences in the expected direction were found in access to computers in general including access to home computers. Boys also used computers more frequently, had more past computing experience and higher levels of computing self-efficacy expectations. The results of the present study provided empirical support for both the Fishbein-Ajzen model as well as for self-efficacy theory. However the independent contributions of two variables external to the Fishbein-

Ajzen model to explaining the variance in behavioural intentions, were inconsistent with the Fishbein-Ajzen model. The failure to find predicted sex differences in behavioural intentions was discussed in light of a number of possible explanations. The importance of intervention efforts based on countering traditional views about women's occupational role was highlighted. Results were also discussed in terms of their relationship to previous studies and the adequacy of some of the measures used. Finally some suggestions for future research were offered.

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