# Temporal Experience as a Correlate of Problematic Internet Use

Nithyanandan D.V.[1]*, Prof. Dr. S. Subramanian[2]

## ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to study the hypothesis that whether temporal factors associated with the years of experience in internet use and years of experience in research make any differences in problematic internet use (PIU). Descriptive survey research design was followed in this study to examine the hypothesis. The sample of this study comprised of 673 research students pursuing Ph.D. degrees in technical institutions and arts and science universities in Tamilnadu. The Online Cognition Scale measuring problematic internet use and Personal Information Blank were administered on the sample. One-way ANOVA was applied to find out the significant personal as well as temporal variations in problematic internet use. The results suggested that temporal factors were found to make significant differences in the social comfort, lonely/depressed, impulsive and distraction dimensions of problematic internet use.

*Keywords:* Temporal Experience, Problematic Internet Use (PIU), Tamilnadu

**T**he inception of Internet applications in the day to day life helps the users in many ways ranging from getting general information about weather or going for online psychotherapy. Besides these and many other positive aspects, if abused or excessively used, various applications of internet make the individual abusers addicted towards it. Hence, researchers, especially psychological researchers, have started focusing on the negative impact of internet on individuals. Studies conducted on this area revealed that the individuals' age, sex, personality, attitude towards the internet, job/academic requirements that make the individuals to be online were all found to be the major psychosocial correlates of the internet use and the problematic internet use.

## Temporal Experience

According to Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2014) the term Temporal refers to 'of or relating to time as opposed to eternity'. There are some kinds of temporal experience, namely, (i) duration; (ii) non-simultaneity; (iii) order; (iv) past and present; (v) change, including the passage of time (Pöppel, 1978).In other many researches, time spent on per day alone was

[1] Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Periyar University, Salem, India
[2] Professor and Head, Department of Psychology, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, India
*Responding Author

considered temporal experience. But in this study temporal experience refers to the years spent for internet and research.

### *Multitude of Internet Behaviours*

A comprehensive review of related studies has revealed that the internet user engages in various behaviours and many a time it is multidimensional and dynamic as newer and newer applications and software are introduced time and again. They are grouped as *Social Behaviours* (Lu et al., 2009); *Deviant Behaviours* (Couch & Liamputtong, 2008); *Shopping Behaviours* (Hsiu & Feng, 2009); *Personal Identity Behaviours* (Zheng, 2009); *Personal (self) Improvement Behaviours* (Wangberg et al., 2008); *Professional Use of the Internet* (Hsu, Ju, Yen, & Chang, 2007).In the Indian context Nithyanandan and Subramanian (2013) have explored eight components from a wide variety of online behaviours among research students and they are, according to them, general internet search behaviours, downloading behaviours, shopping behaviours, doubt clearing behaviours, knowledge sharing behaviours, deviant behaviours, personal improvement behaviours and professional improvement behaviours.

### *Problematic Internet Use (PIU)*

The concept of PIU reveals the psychological impact of the internet on individual user. Studies on the ill effects of internet on the individual have been assessed in terms of Problematic Internet Use, Internet Abuse, Internet Addiction, Compulsive Internet Use and Pathological Internet Use. These have been proved to be reliable measures for assessing the extent of problems caused by the misuse of the Internet. These psychosocial issues are obsession, neglect, control disorder, absorption, negative consequences, disrupted sleep, and deception (Demetrovics, Szeredi, & Rózsa, 2008); depressive symptoms and obsessive-compulsive symptoms(Ha et al., 2007); spending significantly less time at paid work as well as on domestic work and on personal care activities such as sleep and relaxation (Veenhof, 2006); online deception (Caspi & Gorsky, 2006); lower levels of psychological well-being (Mannell, Zuzanek, & Aronson, 2005); attention deficit and hyper active symptoms (Yoo et al., 2004); emotional sensitivity and reactivity, low self-disclosure, and non-conformist characteristics (Young & Rodgers, 1998); and a series of mental health problems (Egger & Rauterberg, 1996).In addition to these, *Personality* (Ceyhan, 2011; Rotsztein, 2003); *Attitude (*Knowles & Kerkman, 2007); and *Loneliness* and *Depression* (Criddle, 2010) were also found to be the correlates of PIU. But the impact of internet does not limited to these and in order to explore the additional correlates the present study addresses the problematic internet use in relation to the temporal experiences comprising years of experience with internet applications and years spend on the research.

### *Objective*

- To explore the extent to which the research students significantly differ in their problematic internet use based on the temporal variables, viz., internet experience and research experience.

*Hypotheses*

**H. 1:** "Research students with varied years of internet experience significantly differ in their problematic internet use".

**H.2:** "Research students with varied level of research experience significantly differ in their problematic internet use".

# METHOD

## *The Research Design:*

Descriptive survey research design was followed in this study to examine the problematic internet use of research students. The data was collected through online questionnaires with the stratified random sampling. Separate web pages for this purpose were created and the selected participants were requested to participate in this study. Clear instructions were provided in the web pages and the doubts were cleared through emails, personal phone calls, chatting and through the messages boards in the social network sites like Facebook. All the respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality for their responses.

## *The Sample:*

The sample of this study comprised of 673 research students pursuing Ph.D. degrees in 17 premier technical institutions and 5 arts and science universities (totally 22 institutions) in Tamilnadu. There are 673 doctoral research students in this sample of whom majority are males (83.5%); aged between 22 and 27 years; having humanities/social science background (55.4%); having personal internet connection (59.9%); using mobile internet connection (50.2%); spending 6 hours a day with Internet (48.9%); having 8 years of experience with the internet (32.5%); and having 3 years of research experience (29.6%). Here, years of internet experience and years of research experience constitute their research experience.

## *Research Instrument and Statistical Analysis*

**Online Cognition Scale (OCS):** The 36-item Online Cognition Scale developed by Davis, Flett and Besser (2002) was used to measure the problematic internet usage. The Scale consisted of the following four dimensions.

**Social Comfort PIU; Lonely/Depressed PIU; Impulsive PIU; and Distraction PIU.**

One Way ANOVA was used to compare the differences among the sub groups of internet as well as research related temporal experience separately. Scheffe's Post Hoc Method, a multiple comparison test (the table format is reported as the text), was used to determine the significant differences between groups means taken in pairs, as the follow up of one way ANOVA.

# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Hypothesis 1:** *"Research students with varied years of internet experience significantly differ in their problematic internet use".*

*Table 1, ANOVA for Problematic Internet Use by Years of Internet Experience*

| PIU | Mean (SD) | | | | *F* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1(n=116)** | **4(n=189)** | **7(n=149)** | **8(n=219)** | |
| S-PIU | 27.52 (12.46) | 36.11 (12.83) | 45.16 (10.54) | 39.87 (13.32) | 46.83* |
| L-PIU | 19.78 (6.96) | 29.01 (10.82) | 29.13 (8.78) | 29.67 (8.91) | 34.66* |
| I-PIU | 14.05 (8.47) | 17.59 (4.64) | 21.28 (7.07) | 24.56 (5.67) | 83.46* |
| D-PIU | 20.06 (10.20) | 19.23 (7.86) | 24.04 (7.22) | 20.32 (7.61) | 10.88* |

\* p<0.05.

It has been revealed from the table 1 that there exist significant differences among research students with varied years of experience with internet in Social Comfort, Lonely/Depressed, Impulsive and Distraction problematic internet uses. In the Social Comfort PIU, the group with 7 years of experience with internet; in the Lonely/Depressed PIU and Impulsive PIU, the group with 8 years of experience with internet; and in the Distraction PIU, the group with 7 years of internet experience have the highest mean scores. In order to find out the highest significant mean difference the post hoc test was applied and the results suggested that the highest significant mean difference exists between students with 1 year of experience and 7 year experience in the Social Comfort PIU. In the Lonely/Depressed PIU the 8 year experienced group and 1 year experienced group have the significant mean difference. In the Impulsive PIU and in the Distraction PIU the significant mean differences exist between 1 year experienced group and 8 experienced group and between 4 year experienced group and 7 year experienced group respectively. Hence, the hypothesis H.1:*"Research students with varied years of internet experience significantly differ in their problematic internet use" is* partially accepted.

**Hypothesis 2:***"Research students with varied level of research experience significantly differ in their problematic internet use".*

*Table 2, ANOVA for Problematic Internet Use by Years of Research Experience*

| PIU | Mean(SD) | | | | | | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1(n=91)** | **2(n=186)** | **3(n=199)** | **4(n=75)** | **5(n=39)** | **6(n=83)** | |
| S-PIU | 39.23 (9.84) | 27.62 (9.50) | 40.30 (15.19) | 43.44 (5.78) | 28.13 (10.59) | 52.98 (4.95) | 76.61* |
| L-PIU | 29.87 (11.34) | 19.23 (4.58) | 33.23 (10.62) | 32.08 (2.63) | 21.21 (8.50) | 29.84 (2.83) | 74.62* |
| I-PIU | 24.65 (8.05) | 13.36 (7.41) | 21.01 (4.29) | 26.52 (4.38) | 19.69 (5.91) | 22.13 (2.12) | 81.67* |
| D-PIU | 27.55 (8.87) | 16.44 (5.53) | 21.77 (8.07) | 17.04 (3.32) | 14.15 (11.05) | 27.30 (3.18) | 59.21* |

\* p<0.05.

It is inferred from the table 2 that there exist significant differences among the six groups with different number of years of research experience in all of the PIU dimensions. In Social Comfort PIU, Lonely/Depressed PIU, Impulsive PIU and Distraction PIU the highest mean score is secured by research students with 6 years, 3 years, 4 years and 1 year of research experience respectively. When the Scheffe's Post Hoc Test was applied it was found that in the Social Comfort PIU students with 5 years and 6 years of research experience have the highest significant mean difference. While in the Lonely/Depressed students with 2 years and 3 years of research experience have the highest significant mean difference whereas in the Impulsive PIU students with 2 years and 4 years of research experience have the highest significant mean difference between them. Finally in the Distraction PIU the highest significant mean difference exist between students with 1 year and 5 years of research experience. Hence, the hypothesis H.2: *"Research students with varied level of research experience significantly differ in their problematic internet use"* is partially accepted.

## CONCLUSION

Problematic internet use is relatively a newer concept and studies on it convey that the concept is highly dynamic as it changes with the introduction of the newer and more upgraded advanced software in Internet. Because upgraded features sometimes make the user spend more time online, if attractive or lesser time online, if unattractive. The pattern of PIU, in the present study, varying with the temporal correlates also suggests the same by showing the significant variations in all the dimensions. Precautions should be taken regarding the temporal constructs also, as this study considers only two temporal variables where much more temporal variables also could have been included.

*Conflict of Interests*

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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