

The Concept of Digital Addiction on Muslim Community in Malaysia

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Abstract

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines digital addiction as a mental illness that causes a pattern of repetitive and persistent attitudes provides an extensive priority over other interests and their life impact. Excessiveness in the digital world affects disruption on real social life to the point of immorality (pornography) which has increased the rate of illegitimate child and sexual transmitted diseases. This article, then discusses the concept of digital addiction and its effects on the users, further describes the symptoms of digital addiction on the Muslim community in Malaysia, and highlights the conceptual framework as a proposal from early stage to the national level. The results are based on empirical observations discover that; (i) The digital addiction of the Muslim community in Malaysia is influenced by physiological, psychological and social network factors, (ii) The digital addiction of the Muslim community in Malaysia is moderate and controlled, and (iii) Worshipping and obedience to God's law reduce the risk of digital addiction on Muslim society. Therefore, Islamic organizations, multimedia and health stakeholders in Malaysia, such as the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) and the Ministry of Health of Malaysia (MOH) need to be proactive to overcome these symptoms by formulating effective intervention plans for the health and well-being of the Muslim community in line with the *maqasid syariah*.

Keywords: Conceptual, Digital Addiction, Muslim Community, Malaysia

Introduction

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) defines addiction as a treatable chronic disease involving complex interactions between brain circuits, genetics, environment and individual life experiences, while the American Psychiatric Association (APA) defines addiction as a complex condition of brain disease with the use of compulsive substances despite of it adverse effects (American Psychiatric Association, 2017). Individuals who are

addict to use tools or behave compulsive even continuously will cause harm (American Society of Addiction Medicine, 2019). The World Wide Web was introduced in 1990 has increased the use of the internet and digital technology around the world. Nowadays, digital media has become a part of our daily life where humans spend their time for various purposes including social networking and gaming. Due to rapid development of technology, digital addiction has become the main focus of research from various fields such as software development (Alrobai, 2018). The study of digital addiction covers various terms which include excessive use of digital tools that adversely affect the social and professional lives of individuals. The exposure to digital tools is unavoidable, though mandatory in certain situations such as the use of computers by the school children and access to digital media by the employee past of their working hours (Christakis, 2019). The sophistication of digital technology has improved our social lives, however to the detriment of the entire society in turn affecting to unstable emotions. Indeed, digital addicts frail to resist the temptation of the addictive tools, also persists low motivation to alter such destructive behaviours (Alrobai, 2018).

The Muslim community is one of the fastest growing religious groups with the 2nd largest population by 2050 compared to other religions in the world (Pew Research Center, 2015). Technology as a source of information facilitates expanding Islamic teaching and becomes a platform to unite Muslim community around the world. Malaysia is a multi-racial country where Islam is embraced by the majority of its population with a percentage of 61.3% compared to other religions in 2010, according to the statistics collected from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM). The number of internet users in Malaysia during May 2020 is estimated at 26.35 million people or 81.4% of the total population, and it accounts for 1.1% of internet users across Asia (Internet World Stats, 2020). The statistics released by DOSM show that an increase of more than 1% of internet users each year and 90% of households surf internet in Malaysia. The data is quite perturbing because active internet users of social networks are the highest percentage which is 97.1% in 2019 with an increase of 0.6% compared to 96.5% in the previous year (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) submitted data on the percentage of internet usage which increased from 76.9% in 2016 to 87.4% in 2018, followed by the majority of internet users spending internet more than 7 hours per day, especially users aged between 20 to 30 years (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2018). In this new era, the internet has created a unique and challenges life, especially for the Muslim community in Malaysia. The use of the internet is advantages especially in the areas of learning, banking, entertainment and others, via the use of gadgets such as smartphones, tablets and so on. Nonetheless, the internet also participate damages to the Muslim community particularly teenagers who are patently influenced by extreme used and also exposed to negativity such as fraud, impersonation and cyber bullying which direct them into digital addiction.

In Malaysia, internet addiction was recorded at 98.2% (Haque et al., 2019) focusing on Muslim students who addicted to Facebook apps and estimated at 49.0% compared to the believer of other religions (Jaafarkarimi et al., 2016). Unlimited internet access opened up for unconstructiveness such as watching movies and dramas to the point of abandoning prayers and being lulled by the songs which affect the quality of devotion in prayers and so on. That kind of recklessness shall invite the wrath from Allah SWT. This is in line with a study by Sharaf

et al (2012) who encounter that social networking affect their worship which arise from an infirm faith.

Thus, this article discusses the concept of digital addiction and its effects on the users, then describes the symptoms of digital addiction on the Muslim community in Malaysia and highlights the conceptual framework as a proposal from early stage to the national level.

Literature Reviews

Addiction is basically classified thru chemical and behavioral addiction (Kesici & Tunç, 2018). Pathological gambling is a recent solitary behavioral addiction was recognized for diagnosis in the DSM-IV and ICD-10 (Grant et al., 2010). Behavioral addiction urges by a strong desire, tendency to repeat in activities (non -substance use) and inability to reduce the behavior (loss of control) resulting in serious harmful impacts to physical, mental, social and financial. It is also associated with the practice of gambling, pornography, video gaming, and excessive spend on social media, smartphone applications and similar electronic devices (World Health Organization, 2015). Digital addiction yet is defined distinct from one another by Western scholars. Accordingly, addiction is a persistent state involving a constant relationship between humans and objects experienced by individuals preferences that cause stress over time, while other defines digital addiction as a threat to real life through disruption of one's soul/mind, emotions, identity and personality (Dilci, 2019). Alrobai et al (2014) believe that digital addiction is the excessive practice of software to achieve certain needs. The term digital addiction is a warning sign to express over-exposure to technology by the use of digital gadgets which increasing daily (Hamilton-Ekeke & Rugai, 2016). The study also stated that digital addiction is a behavior-oriented addiction that leads to physical and mental dependence on the use of digital tools. Digital addiction is also a term associates to digital media mistreat which related to detrimental effects such as loss of focus, lack of sleep and social skills. To Bağcı (2019), digital addiction is where human loses control over any object, individual, tool or device, indeed his life cannot endure with; followed by the definition by Muslim scholars who define internet addiction as excessive, unreasonable and a harmful practice (Sharifi, 2019). Studies have found that majority of students who are abused by their parents or close relatives during childhood tend to isolate themselves and cause symptoms of internet addiction especially those aged between 25 to 30 years (Pourakbar et al., 2016).

The digital addiction is rooted via internet addiction then leads to craze for gadgets, social networks and so on. There are several factors contribute to addiction such as psychological, physiological, cultural, and environmental. According to Noer (2016), daily routine fatigue is lessened thru the entertainment accessed by digital devices producing endorphin hormones (hormones of satisfaction and pleasure) in turn drives the individual needs and desire to be virtually connected. Peer influence is one of the corresponding factors contributing to the addiction. Students also common use gadgets after lecture series and they regularly feel isolated, lonely, depressed and worried (Peper & Harvey, 2018). Digital addiction produces negativity on tolerance and addiction effects (Ali, 2018; Johnson & Keane, 2017) especially to young people who are excessive in using digital media (Griffiths & Kuss, 2017). This addiction inhibits the life habits of teenagers by spending their time surfing digital media. For adults, these symptoms activate impaired physical health (Verma & Kumari, 2016) followed by increased risk of headaches, abdominal pain, vision problems, overweight gaining and aging in children (Smahel et al., 2015) due to social and economy outcomes (Ali, Jiang,

Phalp, Muir & McAlaney, 2015). It is in line with the study by Al-Mazmi et al. (2013) who summarized some of negative effects on digital addiction are; (i) Deprives development and outdoor activities that stimulate obesity and various other health problems, (ii) Waste of time, (iii) Triggers sleep disturbances and insufficient sleep problems, (iv) Promotes addictive self-satisfaction, (v) Affects nutritional deficiencies, (vi) Creates poor language proficiency and lack of social skills including inability to understand body language and (vii) Causes violent behavior, stress, depression and confusion.

Methodology

The qualitative study is design to focus on this case study. Data collection were obtained from secondary sources or literature studies using keyword searches such as the concept of digital addiction, digital addiction factors and Muslim digital addiction, then analyzed the collected data benefitting content analysis methods.

Results and Discussions

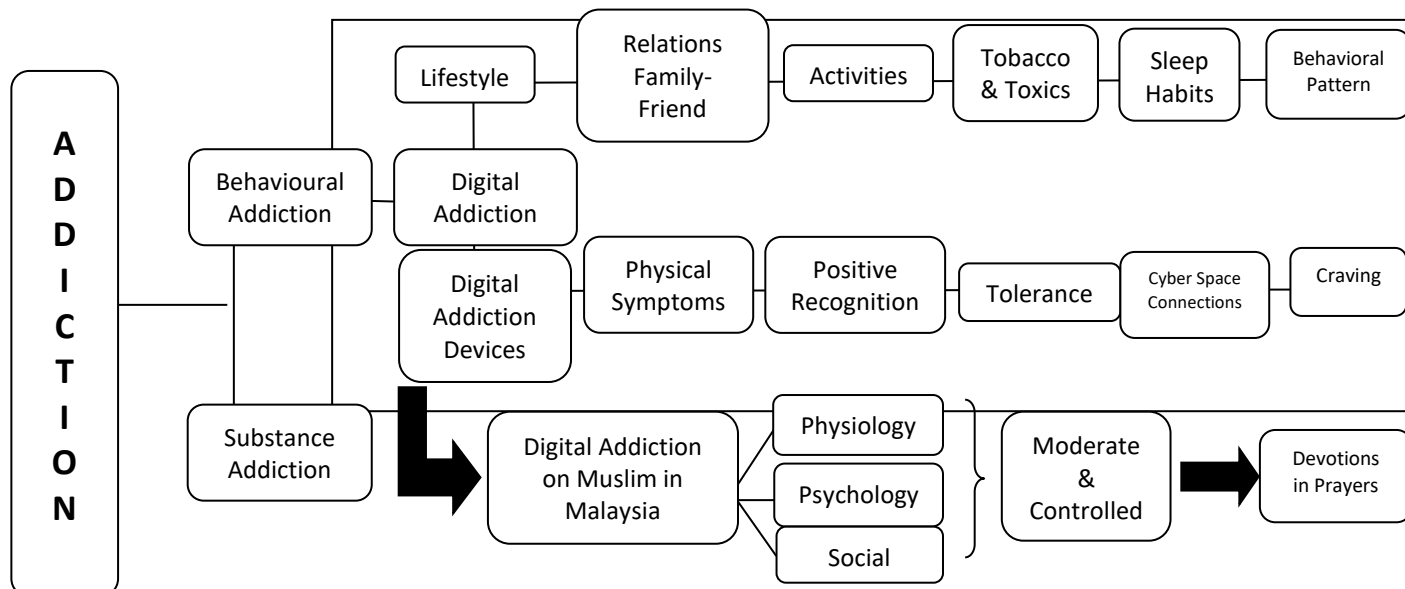


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Muslim Digital Addiction in Malaysia

Symptoms of Digital Addiction on the Muslim Community in Malaysia

Technology has created room for the Muslim community in Malaysia to form an online community where 26.3 million (90%) Malaysians are subscribing the internet (Internet World Stats, 2020). Adolescents around the age of 20 are the most at high risk of digital addiction especially adolescents under the age of 20 (Jafarkarimi et al., 2016; Haque et al., 2019). Digital addiction to social site originates from easy internet access, affordable price of smartphones and constant employing time surfing the internet (Fizal, 2016). This act indirectly strains family relationships and also develops lack of self -confidence (Iskender, 2018). In addition, these symptoms are also influenced by peers and environment that assembles their happiness (body produces endorphin hormones) to be online most of the time (Idris, 2017), followed by the capacity of high-speed internet access (Al Qadasi et al., 2018). A family with a stable economy background being able to hand a laptop and provide an internet line at home which also factors further to digital addiction. Also, Wireless internet services make it easy for users to access the internet without limits. Online gaming addiction is a condition of

a person bound by a strong habit and regularly attached to play digital games, even bad affects their focus on their surroundings, carelessness and neglect their responsibilities as a Muslim (Ayumi et al., 2019). If it is in a proper conduct, users can benefit for free educational access, easy information sharing and run a profitable online business (Shuriye & Ajala, 2014).

The situation in Malaysia shows that physiological factors are the main risk factors that cause generation Y to be addicted to mobile phones, followed by psychological factors and social networks (Hassan et al., 2017) cause poor psychological health (Hadi et al., 2019) which in turn affects health, depression, sleep disturbances, dizziness and loneliness (Hassan et al., 2017). Islam allows the use of beneficial technology as a field of seeking knowledge, as long as it does not against Islamic laws. However, it has adverse effects if used in extreme way as well as poses a threat to health. Digital addiction especially gaming is frequently an issue in society. World Health Organization (WHO) health experts' state gaming disorder is a term given to those addicted to video games who neglects his life, oneself, education, job, family and so on for 12 consecutive months. It harms themselves in fact others around them too. Digital addiction is a serious mental health that we should be alert following the increase in death cases associated to prolonged non-stop playing online games. Internet addiction is widely studied in Malaysia, especially in Terengganu. Although Universiti Malaysia Terengganu students have a high level of internet addiction, it does not affect their academic achievement (Tom & Tohalib, 2018). Meanwhile, students' of Polytechnic Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin (PSMZA) is moderately affected by the excessive use of Whatsapp (Ariffin & Idris, 2018). Similarly, the study of internet addiction among students of Kuala Terengganu Community College (KKKT) is manageable (Mohamad, 2013). A study conducted by Hassan & Rashid (2012) showed that the level of internet use among 16-year-old adolescents is monitored and moderate. Although the level of internet addiction among the International Islamic University students is at a moderate level, the majority of them agree that the internet facilitates and enhances excavating Islamic knowledge even though the internet has a negative effect if it used excessively (Latta et al., 2015).

From a neuroscience standpoint, neuro imaging research has found that behavioral addiction activates areas of the brain just as much as drug addiction. This suggests that behavioral addiction shares similar characteristics to drug addiction. Research using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is useful for identifying neuronal responses among addicted devices based on the stimulation of specific brain areas and helping researchers to diagnose potential addicted individuals (Kassim, 2016). Studies show digital addiction is closely related to the part of the orb frontal cortex (OFC) that serves as impulse control and reward process (Peper & Harvey, 2018). A study by Nasser et al (2019a; 2019b) presents that smartphone addiction with social networking applications affected attention-related brain areas and correlated to addiction questionnaire scores. Digital addiction which includes internet addiction and so on has shown an increase of accidents and violence cases in Malaysia (Sinar Harian, 2019). Thus, digital addiction is considered as a threat to young people or the population of the country in general, driving to social problems. The way to overcome the digital addiction problems is indeed challenging. Thus, preventions are the most effective measures. Various treatments are used to reduce the effects of digital addiction such as group therapy, family therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and pharmacotherapy (Alrobai, 2018; Bozoglan, 2019; Smyth et al., 2019) provided in hospitals or health centers. Irman et al (2019) suggest that *zikr* (remembrance of God) as a treatment should perform by Muslims who are addicted to the

internet is effective in reducing student anxiety. Constance worship and continuous performing goods creates spiritual health with wisdom, justice, dignity and sincerity in action, in fact it is a factor of human protection from physical, mental and social diseases (Asadzandi, 2018).

Contribution of Study

In general, this study discusses the digital addiction scenario that occurs in the world and Malaysia, followed by the conceptual framework of digital addiction of Muslim community in Malaysia. The framework will be executed as the basis for the development of profile, model, and module to solve the problems mentioned earlier. Hence, it is mean to further a society that is physically and emotionally stable, healthful, and secure in line with the goal of Shared Prosperity Vision (SPV) 2030.

Conclusion

Digital addiction has a detrimental effect on the user specific to the Muslim community in Malaysia as there are no absolute controlled. Therefore, Islamic organizations, multimedia and health stakeholders in Malaysia such as the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (JAKIM), Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) and the Ministry of Health (MOH) appropriately need to be proactive to overcome these symptoms by formulating effective intervention plans for the health and safety of the Muslim community in line with the *maqasid syariah*.

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