

Measuring Internet Addiction among Multiracial Youths in Malaysia

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Abstract

Internet addiction among youths is a serious issue in Malaysia. Hence, this study aims to examine the level of internet addiction among multiracial youths in Malaysia. A total of 400 respondents was collected from the four main zones in Malaysia. The study concluded that several concerns have surfaced due to the impact from internet addiction, these multiracial youths perceived the internet to be an important part of their life, they felt left out without it, and they assumed that life is boring without the internet. Several recommendations are highlighted in light that it can be a basis for future planning in reducing internet addiction among future generations in Malaysia.

Keyword: Internet Addiction, Youth, Youth Development.

Introduction

The use of internet in Malaysia has been growing rapidly. A survey on broadband subscription in Malaysia has demonstrated a penetration rate of 103.6% (per inhabitant) and 81.8% (per household). Despite the positive impacts resulting from the use of internet, its excessive usage may also result in negative influences such as internet usage addiction. Internet addiction refers to the excessive and outrageous use of the internet, which eventually result in symptoms of being anti-social like being dishonest, having poor achievement, and lethargy. With the advancement of the internet and technology, the cyber world has embodied a network of virtual communications and connections as a liaison for people to get connected without restrictions. The internet brings a lot of changes to the society, people are relying too much on the internet due to the simple click of a button and countless information can be obtained across the globe.

The Impact of Internet Addiction on Youths

In the past, internet addiction has been proven to cause individuals to lose control over their internet usage, which eventually result in psychological, social, school, and work difficulties in their personal life (Davis, 2001). Griffiths (2000) claimed that individuals with irrational

cognitive assumptions about themselves were likely to show symptoms of lower self-esteem and be involved in addictive behaviors to relieve themselves temporarily of their negative cognitive assumptions about self. Furthermore, symptoms of low self-esteem, low motivation, and social isolation are among psychological problems related to the overuse of internet. The ease of access and affordability of internet subscription services also led to internet addiction (Yang, 2005). In a study by Beutel et. al (2017), they found that loneliness may result from the excessive use of internet. Loneliness is related to a number of mental issues such as depression, anxiety, and suicide ideation. Loneliness also influences people to over rely on the internet for social support, in this situation they risk their social life by being addicted to the internet (Yu-Chun et. al, 2008). Internet usage addiction is especially eminent among youth generations because past studies have found that undergraduate students are susceptible to be addicted to internet usage as they have more leisure time and lack parental monitoring. (Jiang, 2014; Stavropoulos et. al, 2013).

Internet addiction is reported to instigate negative consequences in the daily routines among youths (Chou, 2000). It is noted that the amount of hours spent on the internet would cause the individual to be addicted to the internet, as they spend less time with their family and friends, these individuals are being reprimanded on their anti-social behavior but to no avail it was difficult to limit their internet usage (Chak et. al, 2004). Internet addiction is known to trigger insomnia among youths, disrupting their diet and limiting their physical activities (Cao et. al, 2006). Past studies by Tan (2016), Chen (2016), and Lam (2014) have examined the relationship between sleep quality and the overuse of internet, all three studies concluded that youths diagnosed with sleep difficulties were predisposed to incessant internet addiction while another study by Choi et al. (2009) found that internet addicted individuals suffered from disruptions to their circadian rhythms. Moreover, Young (2007) noted that internet addiction result in poor academic performances among students due to them being more interested on spending their time on surfing the internet rather than focusing on their tasks as a student.

Methodology

Method

This study uses quantitative methods and the data collection process was conducted from January to August of 2018. About 400 respondents were selected based on stratified random sampling to ensure that these samples are represented by the current proportion of races in Malaysia. The respondents were selected from the rural and urban areas of Kedah, Terengganu, Johor, and Sabah. Each state was represented by 100 respondents. Drawing on current ratio of races by the Statistical Department of Malaysia (2015), the Malaysian population consists of 56% Malay, 24% Chinese, 13% Sabahan/Sarawakian, and 7% Indian. Thus, the sampled respondents are represented by 280 Malays, 120 Chinese, 65 Sabahan Bumiputeras, and 35 Indians. These respondents volunteered to be part of this study, questionnaires were administered and collected back on the same day. They took approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey.

Instrument

The study's questionnaire is divided into three parts. Part A encloses the respondents' demographic information, which includes gender, age, races, education level, household number, job status, income per month, and the duration of residence in that area. For Part B, the respondents were questioned about their internet usage experience, online activities, and

online surfing behaviors such as internet usage frequency (less than once a month to several times a day), duration (less than 30 minutes to more than 4 hours daily), problems that arise from internet usage, and motivations (or reasons for using the internet, e.g., Facebooking, messaging, seeking information for university projects/assignments, etc.). The final section, which is part C, measures the level of internet addiction through scores using a 20-item Internet Addiction measurement. Each item is measured using a 5-point Likert scale.

Analysis

The data from this study was then analyzed through SPSS software. Descriptive analysis and inference like frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were analyzed to answer the research's objective.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Factor

Majority of the respondents are female (66.5%). About 41.3% of the respondents fall within the 21-25 years old age group, followed by those below 20 years old (26.5%), 26-30 years old (16.8%), and above 31 years old (16.8%). The mean score recorded for age group was 24.5 years old.

In terms of education level, most of respondents finished their tertiary education (56%), followed by upper secondary school (39.5%), lower secondary school (2.3%), and primary school (2%). Most of the respondents have between 4-5 household members (42.3%), while 32% of them have 6 or more household members 32%, and another 25.8% have 3 or less household members. With regard to their job status, more than half have permanent jobs (54%) whereas the other 18.8% were unemployed.

The monthly incomes generated by these youths are mostly below RM1000 (55.4%) while the other 44.6% earned more than RM1001. These youths have resided in the area for more than 21 years (refer to Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic factors

Factors	Frequency	Percentage	Mean score
Age (years)			24.5
<20	106	26.5	
21-25	165	41.3	
26-30	67	16.8	
>31	62	15.5	
Gender			
Male	134	33.5	
Female	266	66.5	
Education level			
Never been to school	1	.3	

Primary school	8	2.0	
Lower secondary school	9	2.3	
Upper secondary school	158	39.5	
Tertiary	224	56.0	
Number of household members			
3 or less	103	25.8	
4-5	169	42.3	
6 or more	128	32.0	
Job status			
Permanent	216	54.0	
Contract	74	18.5	
Self-employed	35	8.8	
Unemployed	75	18.8	
Income per month (n = 325)			RM1,472.99
<RM1000	180	55.4	
>RM1001	145	44.6	
Duration of staying in the area (years)			16.1
10 or less	132	33.0	
11-20	115	28.8	
21 or more	153	38.3	

Statement Measuring Internet Addiction

Table 2 demonstrates the item statements measuring internet addiction among multiracial youths in Malaysia. The statement “the internet has become part of my daily routine” (M = 4.28) yielded the highest mean score, followed by statement “I feel left out when I’m not browsing the internet even for a while” (M = 3.60), and “I feel that life without Internet must be boring” (M = 3.58). The lowest mean score however was recorded by the statement ‘I refuse to carry out my daily responsibilities due to spending more time on the Internet’ (M = 1.93).

Table 2

Internet Addiction among Malaysian Youth

Statements measuring internet addiction	Mean score
The Internet has become part of my daily routine.	4.28
I feel left out when I'm not browsing the Internet even for a while.	3.60
I feel that life without Internet must be boring.	3.58
I find that I use the Internet longer than I should be	3.43
I spend more time on the internet than socializing with others.	2.69
I often spend time playing games on the Internet with friends.	2.56
I have often been deprived of sleep due to Internet surfing late at night.	2.48
I often think of the Internet when I am not using it.	2.39
My preference is to surf the Internet as opposed to doing other works.	2.07
My work/study performance is reduced because I spend a lot of time on the Internet.	1.97
I refuse to carry out my daily responsibilities due to spending more time on the Internet.	1.93

Recommendation

Several recommendations are highlighted to reduce internet addiction among youths. Firstly, community activities should be highlighted and encouraged among youths for their participation because it is considered as a better time passing to reduce internet addiction. An excessive use of the internet reduces human interactions in the real world and promotes low mobility, which trigger social isolation (Chao, 2018). Therefore, the best solution would be to encourage youth involvement in community activities such as volunteering programs, extracurricular activities, and societal events will prevent them from turning anti-social. Moreover, the more time they spend interacting with their surroundings will also reduce the amount of time they spend on the internet.

Secondly, at their age, youths need to be physically and mentally healthy. Thus, healthy activities such as wellness programs or mental health programs can help individuals suffering from internet addiction disorders. Mental health programs offer expert consultations from legal therapists who can give good counselling and help solve problems regarding internet addiction.

Thirdly, awareness on internet addiction should be rationalized. Awareness on the symptoms of internet addiction is vital among university students and counsellors for a timely prevention and intervention. Internet addiction affects cyber ethical issues (accuracy, property, access), hence cyber ethics awareness should be emphasized in schools through campaigns or seminars. Internet addiction elicits youth to spend more time browsing the virtual world rather than focusing on their studies or jobs, which later affects their academic achievement or job productivity. In response to this issue, a proper time management and self-discipline

are needed to gear them into time management and limit their internet usage while at the same time encourage them to be more involved in offline activities.

Conclusion

The internet is an advanced form of technology that allows people to have a wider access to the virtual world. People nowadays have countless and borderless access to information with just a click. Albeit the positive use it has, the internet also triggers an undesirable social disease called internet addiction. The overuse of internet has its consequences, it slowly affects people psychologically; their lifestyle; academic/job performance, productivities and more. In realizing this issue, the current study examined internet addiction among the most active internet users in Malaysia – youths. Based on the data obtained from the four main zones in Malaysia, the study concluded that concerns arise as these youths perceived the internet to be an important part of their life. They also stated that they felt left out if they are not connected to the virtual world and ominously, some youths even demonstrated a high reliance on the internet by stating that their life is boring without the internet. Therefore, several recommendations are made related to participation in community activities, mental health programs, proper time management, and self-discipline.

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