

INTERNET ADDICTION AND PERSONALITY TYPES

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ABSTRACT

In this Information age, millions of people are using the Internet everyday for information, communication, research, electronic commerce, and entertainment. Some people who use the Internet, are finding it hard to know when to stop or how to control the usage and thus become addicted to it. Prior research has shown that some Internet users have lost their jobs, failed in their school or college and strained their social relationships due to spending excessive time on the Internet. The Internet started in Malaysia in 1992, and based on the present data, the number of Internet users are on the rise. This study explores to see if Internet addiction is prevalent in Malaysia, the pattern of Internet usage and the types of personality that are addicted to it. Previous research done in the area of Internet addiction has not investigated, whether different personality types, that is type A or type B personality, are more prone to Internet addiction. A questionnaire was created and posted on a website and it was publicized. A total of 175 valid responses were used for analysis. The respondents were classified as addicted to the Internet if they answered 'yes' to five of the 8 criteria given by Young (1996). In terms of addiction, 55 percent of the respondents are addicted to the Internet. 82 percent of respondents who are addicted to the Internet are having personality type A. However, the hypothesis testing, using the Chi-square test revealed no significant difference between Internet addiction and personality types. But this study found that a relationship existed between Internet addiction and mode of payment for Internet access at the 90 percent confidence level. It was also concluded that a relationship existed between Internet addiction and frequency of Internet access.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The volatile movement of the human race into the dynamic explosion of the Information Age has created tremendous interest in the Internet. Internet is now available in over 90 countries and there are currently over 60 million users of the Internet worldwide. In the mid 1940's the micro technology computing started and the telecommunication technology also developed independently. The convergence of the two technologies: computing and telecommunication brought about Information Technology (IT). Then came the interactive content development, which combined with the computing and telecommunications to create the multimedia technology. The Internet came about when America's foremost cold war think tank (RAND Corporation), started building a post-nuclear command-and-control network in 1964. In 1969, ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network), which was sponsored by the Pentagon emerged. This was originally used for military purposes. Later it became very useful also to scientist and researchers to share one another's computer facilities by long distance.

Then later, when the ARPANET failed, the network started becoming public domain and the basic technology was decentralized and it prompted many people to start linking

up with the branching complex of networks. On the commercial side, there was interconnectivity like Local Area Network (LAN) and Wide Area Network (WAN), within companies and countries spreading out and then when these networks were linked together it came to be known as the "International Network" or Internet.

People surf the Internet for various reasons like: e-mail (electronic mail), discussion groups (communications), long distance computing, file transfers, entertainment, research and business. As for the businessmen, Internet is also an avenue for business information of suppliers, vendors and a powerful medium of advertising. The Forrester research company, a United States market data firm, predicts that in the next five years Cyber commerce/Electronic commerce (business through the Internet) will grow to a staggering 40 fold from US\$ 8 billion in 1997 to US\$ 327 billion (Asiaweek, 1997).

Increased dependency on computers for information, games, fun, diversion, entertainment, and a wide range of legal, financial, health and social services can create problems for the society. "As the Internet become an increasingly important tool in our lives, it could, if allowed, dominate rather than serve our lives", says Orzack (1996). Another very attractive aspect of the Internet is the social aspect of cyberspace communications. Interaction through the Internet are done by various ways like e-mail, discussion groups ("newsgroups"), chat rooms, bulletin boards and MUD (Multi-User Dungeon or Dimension). According to Suler (1996) and Young (1996), the interpersonal exchange with others is so stimulating, rewarding and reinforcing that some people are finding it hard to know when to stop.

Psychologists are not sure yet what to call this phenomenon. Goldberg (1996), one of the pioneer researchers in this area, proposed the term 'Internet Addiction Disorder' (IAD) for compulsive Internet usage. Suler (1996), of Rider University calls it 'Computer Addiction' and 'Cyberspace Addiction'. Young (1996), a leading researcher in this area, used the following criteria for assessing Internet Addiction in her study, which includes the amount of time spent on the Internet, how much one misses the Internet when off-line, the ability to control on-line usage and reasons for staying on-line. She estimated that there were roughly 5 million American Internet addicts and a substantial number of these were children.

The Internet addiction does affect people seriously. "Some people are definitely hurting themselves by their addiction to the Computer and Cyberspace by losing their jobs, or flunk out of school, or are divorced from their spouses" (Suler 1996). These extreme cases are clear cut but for some it affects them in other ways like a drop in productivity at work, reduces time with people in their social world and family members

Suler (1996), discusses the process of why some people are addicted to Cyberspace while playing in the Internet and how this activity fulfills all of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Cyberspace is very attractive as it fulfills the first level of the hierarchy. Interpersonal contact fulfills the second level on the hierarchy by providing social recognition and a sense of belonging. Next self esteem is derived from mastery of the