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Psychological and Cultural Factors in Internet Addiction

PDF

Loubna Seffari

Abstract

Background: Internet addiction (IA) is a widespread problem that affects people of all ages and cultures. It can have negative consequences for both physical and mental health, and the severity of these consequences can vary depending on the individual and their cultural background.

Objective: The primary goal of this study was to conduct a comprehensive review of the psychological and cultural factors that are associated with internet addiction.

Methods: We conducted a systematic review of various reliable international articles and research

Results : Psychological factors of Internet addiction:The psychological damages are represented in symptoms likeloneliness, anxiety, and depression.low self-esteem,social maladaption.Cultural factors of Internet addiction: Cultural specificity determines the emotional ink to the Internet with a collective denial mechanismin estimating the degree of Internet use, with male dominanceover females, and the

Psychological and Cultural Factors in Internet Addiction

Loubna Seffari[1]

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Abstract :

Background: Internet addiction (IA) is a widespread problem that affects people of all ages and cultures. It can have negative consequences for both physical and mental health, and the severity of these consequences can vary depending on the individual and their cultural background.

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Conclusion: The present study was able to synthesize the literature and demonstrate the association between psychological and cultural factors related to internet addiction. These findings can be beneficial for future research.

Keywords : Internet addiction, psychological factors, cultural factors.

Introduction :

Since 1996, Internet addiction (IA) has been the most studied behavioral addiction, and it is usually conceptualized as the excessive generalized usage of Information and communication technologies (ICT)(Lopez-Feranadez, 2015, p.01)

A crucial step forward was taken in May 2013 When the American Psychiatric Association (APA) proposed including the term Internet gaming disorder (IGD) in the appendix of the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) as a condition warranting more empirical and clinical research. The recognition of this new phenomenon as a possible mental disorder has had a strong impact on the international scientific community.(Lopez-Feranadez , 2015,p.263)

Since the average South Korean high school student spends about 23 hours each week gaming, another 1.2 million are believed to be at risk for addiction and require basic counseling. In particular, therapists worry about the increasing number of individuals dropping out of school or working to spend time on computers. As of June 2007, South Korea has trained 1,043 counselors in the treatment of Internet addiction and listed over 190 hospitals and treatmentcenters.

China is also greatly concerned about the disorder, Tao Ran,Ph. D. Director of addiction medicine at Beijing Hospital reported that 13.7 % of Chinese adolescent Internet users meet Internet Addiction diagnostic criteria –about 10 million teenagers.As a result, in 2007 China began restricting computer game use; current laws now discourage more than 3 hours of daily game use.

In the United States, accurate estimates of the prevalence of the disorder are lacking. Unlike in Asia, where cyber cafes are frequently used, In the United States games and virtual sex are accessed from the home. Attempts to measure the phenomenon are clouded by shame, denial, and minimization.The issue is further complicated by comorbidity.About 86 of Internet addiction cases have some other DSM-IV diagnosis present.In one study, the average patient had 1.5 other diagnoses. In the United States patients generally present only for the comorbid conditions.Thus, unless the therapist is specifically looking for Internet addiction, it is unlikely to be detected.In Asia, however, therapists are taught to screen for it.

Despite the cultural differences, our case descriptions are remarkably similar to those of our Asian colleagues, and we appear dealing with the same issue.(Block,2008,p.306)

Nevertheless, there is an evident lack of findings regarding how the culture and economic indicators of countries can explain the level of Internet addiction.Previous findings suggest that culture should be considered in explaining this phenomenon.(Blachnio ; Przeprorka,2019,p.3)

Definition of Internet addiction :

Social media addiction is defined as the irrational and excessive use of social media at a level that negatively affects the daily life of the user. When social media use reaches the level of addiction it can prevent the establishment of real, face-to-face social relationships(Burnay et al, 2015,p.28)

Internet addiction can be described as a disorder in which an individual's inability to control his or her use of the Internet causes marked distress and/or functional impairment and that furthermore creates psychological, social, school, and/or work difficulties (isolation, lower grades,conflicts with relatives)

The main tendency that has attempted to explain Internet addiction consists of viewing this disorder as a « behavioral addiction » marked by high impulsivity and that shares most features

with drug addictions (e.g.,tolerance, withdrawal,craving, loss of control, relapse (Beard & Wolf, 2001, Block 2008, Shapira et al 2003)

Distinguishing between Internet addiction and excessive Internet use :

More recently, Lee and al conducted a small-scale study using a sample of 125 male Korean adolescents to investigate the differences between excessively addicted and non-addicted users.More specifically, comorbidity rates were significantly higher in the addicted group than in the excessive group. Moreover, sleep disorders, mood changes, and preoccupation were more prominent in the addicted group.

Additionally, while excessive users may not present with all six core criteria of addiction and are likely to experience fewer problems related to their internet use in comparison with addicted users, the latter is usually characterized by significant improvements in several life domains as they continue to use the Internet despite adverse consequences.(Pontes et al, 2015, p.14)

Classification of types of Internet addiction :

In the literature, because of the scope of technology addiction, the reference isusually, to generalized Internet addiction, which goes beyond the addictive behavior of online gaming. The phenomenon includes other excessive behavior mediated by the Internet, such as online gambling, online betting, social networks, and cybersex.Davis distinguished two types of pathological Internet use: à general type where excessive use of the Internet is not concentrated on a single activity, and a specific one, where on the contrary, dependence is linked to specific Internet functions or applications like online gaming or gambling(Sanchez-Fernandez et al,2023,p.2)

The passion for online gambling –a pathological tendency to gamble in virtual casinos. Online gambling is a hyper-fascination with individual and /or online gaming.Pathological dependence on virtual dating involves a hyper fascination with social networks, dating sites to establish new contacts in cyberspace and try on new « self-images » and create new pages.

(Asieieva,et al,2021,p.52)

Cybersex addiction (Cybersexual addiction) is an irresistible urge to discuss sexual topics in erotic chats, visit pornographic sites, and engage in cybersex.Passionate online reading or pathological online reading is a hyper fascination with reading both online and downloaded books to a gadget or other electronic device.Cyber-oniomania is the desire to make new purchases in online stores without the need to purchase them and take into account their financial capabilities, and obsessive participation in online auctions.

Cyber-communicative addiction (Cyber-communicative addiction) is a special type of Internet addiction, characterized by dependence on communication in the most common communication environment of the Internet –social networks.

(Asieieva, Y., Aymedoc,C., Horishchak,S.,Mierlich, S.,Riabukhin,K,2021,p.53)

Gadget addiction is a passionate desire to own a specific mobile device or electronic device that has access to the Internet and an uncontrolled desire to constantly use the gadget.Addictive Internetsurfing (web- -surfing) is a psychological passion for constant, superficial wandering on websites A relatively new type of cyber-addiction is fabbing a bad habit of often being distracted by a mobile phone while talking to someone. (Asieieva et al,2021, p.53)

Digital addiction is directly associated with an obsessional-compulsive disorder (OCD)over which individuals have no control. Basic elements of its development include compulsion or anxiety about being apart from their phone.

(Rachidi T&Yangzom D. 2022, p.06)

One of the consequences of this dependence is the development of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) It describes a problem of digital dependency that primarily affects young teenagers.Teens are less likely to interact in person, reinforcing their reliance on social media. It quickly becomes a source of anxiety and illness for adolescents who can't live without mobile devices.(Rachidi &Yangzom,2022, p.07)

Psychological repercussions of Internet addiction

Internet addiction has been considered a psychological escape mechanism to avoid real-world problems and has been proven to be associated with both mental and physical symptoms. Examples are the higher risk of Internet addiction, inferior mental health outcomes, suicidal ideation, depression, and anxiety. In addition, intense back pain, headaches, and increased body mass index have been observed among Internet-addicted youth, furthermore, Internet addiction has been identified to negatively impact the ophthalmologic system in the form of eye strain, and an increase in sleep disorders has been reported among Internet addicted youths compared with non-addicted individuals.(Lin et al .,2020,p.02)

It has been found that online game addiction, which is one of the subtitles

Onthe internet, addictions create depression, anxiety, decline in academic achievement, aggression, and sleep problemsEspecially in children,results such as associating the game with their real life, disrupting their duties due to playing the game, and preferring playing to other activities occur.It is thought that these situations will negatively affect the socialization and academic success of the child and the perception of reality may change.Violent games can lead to the development of an angry and aggressive personality in individuals, as well as an increase in

feelings such as insensitivity to violence and fear. This will affect both individuals and societies negatively and will cause an increase in economic, social, and interpersonal problems. (Kizilok & Özok ,2021, p.445)

Social media addiction, another type of internet addiction, is a psychological problem that develops with cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes and causes problems such as occupation, mood regulation, repetition, and conflict in many areas of life such as private,academic, work-related, and social life. Researchers have found that Social media addiction causes problems related to education and academic failure, decreased work performance, negative emotions such as unrest and loneliness, social anxiety, depression, and anxiety disorders. There are behavioral addictions within social media platforms that cause addiction and create a new type of addiction. For example, Facebook addiction caused by excessive use of Facebook can turn into a lifestyle and turn into social and psychological problems such as anxiety, loneliness, self-esteem, and poor interaction. In addition, excessive use of this type of social media can lead to a decrease in academic success, asocial behaviors, narcissistic tendencies, and aggressive movement, and can also harm family and friend relationships. (Kizilok & Özok ,2021, p.445)

There have been many studies showing the relationship between Internet addiction and psychological traits, including self-esteem, social self-efficacy and locus of control,shyness, life satisfaction, and loneliness. (Blachnio ; Przeprorka,2019, p.3)

Based on Caplan's model, individuals who have self-perceived social incompetence,tend to experience negative mood states like loneliness. These individuals prefer communicating via online routes and engage in online social communication as an escape from their negative, and consequently further reinforce internet use.Studies have reported that people who excessively use the internet, spend less time interacting face to face which in turn results in depression and loneliness.Similarly, people who experience high levels of loneliness use the internet for emotional support. (Youssef et al,2020, p.2)

Many studies on social media usage and mental health have shown that the prolonged use of social media such as Facebook is positively associated with mental health such as stress, anxiety,and depression and negatively associated with long-term well-being

One factor that may underlie the negative effects of social media addiction is self-esteem. Although viewing or editing one's profile enhances self-esteem, according to the hyperpersonal Model(Hou et al.,2019, p.2)

Personality and Internet Addiction :

In a study investigating the validity of profiles in young people in Turkey, frequent and prolonged Internet use confirmed the strong trend since it was directly associated with

psychological and social problems.According to these researchers, young people who are not psychologically mature and who attempt to adapt to an environment characterized by very high speed and performance at any price are also more at risk of developing Cyberaddiction.Some youths seek emotional and social support online, whereas others, on the contrary, go online to escape from major personal, affective family, or financial problems. Finally, a lower level of social support from family and friends or weak social ties among young people contributes to the increase and incidence of Cyberaddiction.(Suissa,2015, p.2)

Consequences of Internet addiction

Researchers have identified social isolation,neglect of personal responsibilities, relationship difficulties, and overwhelming internet preoccupation as consequences of excessive and problematic Internet use. Additional studies acknowledge the pervasive nature of IA and its impact on cognitive and behavioral symptoms including diminished impulse control, loneliness, depression, distraction, irritability, and using the Internet as a tool for social comfort. As a social comfort tool,the Internet tends to provide a distraction that allows addicts to procrastinate or avoid stressful events, tasks,or thoughts. Internet addicts tend to display behavior symptoms commonly found in all technology addictions including salience, withdrawal,conflict, relapses and reinstatement, tolerance, and mood modification.(Chen,Nath, 2016,p,39)

Definition of Culture :

Each of us is a part of the culture we live and we are a reflection of it. Culture has been one of the most emphasized concepts in social science (Haddon,2004). Hofstede (2011) defines culture as a collective programming of the mind that separates one group of people from another. According to Elmes (2013), culture is the common experience of people who share the same language, geographical location, and traditions.Matsumoto and Juang (2007) defined this concept as a unique meaning and information system that ensures survival, provides the pursuit of prosperity,and is passed on from one generation to the next. Accordingly, culture is a journey from the past to the future, from one generation to the next. From the common points in these definitions, it is understood that each society and nation has a unique culture with a special language, history, and tradition. (Kizilok ; Özok ,2021, p.442)

Cross-cultural research :

Cross-cultural research uses information from different social groups in its attempt to obtain a general explanation of a phenomenon.This type of research provides a comparison between different cultures by identifying patterns, as well as by looking for commonalities such as universally shared knowledge.After two decades of research production in IA, only a few Cross-cultural studies have been conducted in this field with potential technology use disorders.

The cultures most frequently compared usually involve three continents:Asia, America, and Europe, and, remarkably, no studies have been conducted in Oceania or Africa.However, a large multinational study conducted in Europe confirms approximately 4 %of IA in adolescents with the YDQ, finding differences among the 11 EU countries (Lopez-Feranadez,2015, p.04)

It should be noted that there are significant ways in which likening internet addiction to problematic gambling is inadequate.All existing behaviors or substances that have been shown to lead to addiction, such as alcohol, gambling, tobacco, or drugs, have structural constraints on their usage either by law or by social etiquette.Consuming alcohol at the office or school is sure to land one in trouble;conversely, instant messaging or surfing the web is likely not to.Cultural influences both mandate and facilitate that we spend time « online » meaning that teetotalism is not an option.

Existing research on Internet addiction has also highlighted specific subpopulations that are at increased risk, including those with other psychological comorbidities, including attention-deficit /hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, and social isolation. (Christakis,2010, p.1741)

In Iran, National Youth Organisation research analysis indicates that the number of Internet users in Iran, with a growth of about 90٪ 7.1 million people with a penetration rate of 2/5 ٪ in 2000 has increased to 3.2 million with a penetration rate of 4/9 ٪ by the end of 2011.(Mohammadkhani et al,2017, p.141)

The investigation by Mohamdi et al and Tamanaeifar et al indicates that there is no significant difference in the prevalence of Internet addiction among girls and boys.While explaining these results, in developed societies and classes where the Internet is more incredibly accessible and there is no significant difference between boys and girls, the factors of culture and the region could have a huge impact on Internet addiction.(Mohammadkhani et al,2017, p.145cross–cultural studies are important as IA has become a global phenomenon.Many countries have reported alarming statistics regarding IA. For example, a study estimated that over ten million Chinese teenagers met diagnostic criteria and the South Korean government now considers IA one of the most serious public health issues. The global emergence of IA has intensified as mobile access to the Internet is widely available and this has sparked the need for a better understanding of the characteristics of IA in different cultures.Cultural differences may affect how IA is diagnosed and treated in different countries and how a multinational organization manages IA among its employees. Furthermore, clinical studies have reported conflicting results regarding the outcomes of IA treatments administered in different countries that might be due to cultural differences.Therefore, identifying the key cultural differences in IA could lead to useful recommendations about the appropriate diagnosis and treatment approaches in different cultures.(Chen,Nath, 2016, p,39)

Cross-cultural Perspective Internet Addiction

Cross-cultural studies have shown that cultures may psychologically differ in a host of different areas, such as cognition, sense of self, emotions, coping strategies, and causal attributions. Two cultural groups that have often been compared are Asian and Western samples because of the vast range in which they differ on some of these dimensions. (Ko ; Yao,2019,p.144)

Because psychological theory and diagnosis have arisen in the West, it is important to recognize the boundaries and cultural biases that may be inherent in the measures and assumptions they produce.For instance, two important dimensions implicated in the study of IAD are individualism/collectivism and independent/ interdependent self-construals. Cultures may differ on a societal level.(Ko; Yao,2019,p.147)

Cultural motivations in terms of how and why individuals use the Internet are often neglected but may be driving forces in explaining the prevalence and the difference in Internet Addiction between cultures, one of the problems in bridging the cultural gap may be in how IAD measurement has arisen, Most of how IAD measurement has been founded on a Western model of mental illness and has subsequently been translated but perhaps not adjusted to culturally express mental illness.(Ko ;Yao,2019,p.147) , not only are rates of adoption different between the East and the West, but howthe Internet is used may also differ.Qiu, Lin,and Leung (2013) suggest that online environments may act similarly to offline environments in how they enforce and promote cultural norms, de Mooji (2014) suggests that individuals from the West use the Internet more for information searching and sharing, whereas those in the East use the Internet more for maintaining and strengthening social ties. If individuals from different cultures derive a different sense of utility from the Internet,it also implies that the motivations towards Internet use and perhaps problematic use differ as well.(Ko ;Yao,2019,p.150)

Anthropology and Internet Addiction :

The higher prevalence among Asian people can be explained mainly by cultural factors.According to the anthropologist Elisabeth Papineau who lived and studied these issues in China, the greater propensity to pathological gaming in Chinese communities is explained by the external locus of control integrated into Chinese culture and values. In other words,Chinese people generally believe that the rewards and events of their lives are dependent on external forces. In the area of gambling, for example, fate or socioeconomic conditions can be modified by turning to chance to overcome the present conditions that one urgently wishes to change.(Suissa,2015,p.2)

Barriers to cultural studies associated with Internet addiction

The prevalence of Internet addiction in the studied countries ranges from 0 (in China and Romania) to 7.1 (in Greece). The reasons can be many, this may point to cultural differences,

but on the other hand, it may stem from the fact that in some cultures there is a mechanism of denying, or refusing to admit to, excessive Internet use. Attempts to determine the level of Internet addiction problems often encounter reactions of shame or minimization. It should also be remembered that denying addiction and losing control over the amount of time spent online is among the main symptoms of addiction, and perhaps in some cultures, this denial mechanism is stronger than in others.Second, the measurement of Internet addiction is difficult due to comorbidity.Patients diagnosed with Internet addiction are often also diagnosed with a different disorder in DSM-5.Third, there is no reliable data that our results regarding the level of dia Internet addiction in particular countries could be compared to. One of the reasons for this diversity of results may be differences in sample sizes and non-representative methods of data collection (online vs.Offline)(Blachnio; Przeprorka,2019,p.4), regarding the differences in prevalence rates of IA among males and females, almost half of the studies found a higher prevalence among males while only one study found higher rates in females.

Cheng and Li conducted a meta-analysis to estimate the prevalence rates of IA across several countries by searching for evidence stemming from empirical studies published between 1996 and 2012.(Bozoglan ,2017,p.3).

Internet addiction and psychosocial variables :

For a few decades, there have been plenty of studies investigating the associations between internet addiction and psychosocial variables. Several psychosocial factors connected to internet addiction have been discovered like attention deficit and hyperactive disorder (ADHD).(Bozoglan ,2017, p.174)Internet addiction directly affects the individual's academic professional,physical, relational, and financial lives.(Baltaci ; Bacanli,2020,p.662)

Wang et al (2015) investigated the relationships between teenagers' personality traits and their internet addiction and online activities. The results of the study showed significant relationships between internet addiction and high neurotic traits and less responsible traits.

Kuss shorter Van Rooij,Mheen, and Griffiths, (2014) examined the relationship between personality traits of university students and internet addiction components. Significant relationships were found between internet addiction low compatibility and high neurotic personality traits. Yan and al (2014) investigated the relationships between university students' internet addiction and the stressful life events they experienced.(Baltaci; Bacanli, 2020,p.663),their personality traits, and perceived family support.It was reported that those with addictive characteristics had low family support, lower extraversion levels, higher neuroticism, and psychoticism and experienced more stressful life events.Davis'in (2001) model demonstrated that individuals with negative thoughts and some psychopathological disorders such as depression and anxiety were at risk in terms of internet addiction.(Baltaci ; Bacanli , 2020,p.664)

Studies have indicated that IA is associated with different factors.Socio-demographic factors such as age (having lower age) and male gender. Reason for Internet use related factors such as making new friendships online, getting into relationships online, using the .less for coursework/assignments, visiting pornographic sites, and playing online games.(Zenebe et al ,2021,p.2)

Time-related and other factors such as higher Internet usage time, continuous availability online, and mode of Internet access.Clinical and substances-related factors such as insomnia, attention-deficient disorder, hyperactivity symptoms, being sexually inactive, low self-esteem,failure in academic performance, smoking, and potentially addictive personal habits of, drinking alcohol or coffee, and taking drugs. (Zenebe et al ,2021, p.3)

Internet addiction in Algeria

The Internet has become one of the most important activities attracting young university students in Algeria, especially with the launch of the fourth generation services, which make it easier for them to use the Internet from the mobile phone.(Fekih; Ticusan, 2020,p.26)

The Internet is the source of information gathering and communication with the outside world and has great advantages in making networks of individuals, It also contains many negative things as bad sites that promote online games, gambling, and pornography, with serious psychological and social consequences for children, adolescents, and young people and contributes to the globalization of crimes and the spread of the new addiction, such as digital drugs (digital or electronic addiction)

The Algerian national investigation on the exploitation of children in cybercrime by the initiative of the National Commission for the Promotion of Health and Research Development (NCPHRD) revealed the exploitation of 150 Algerian children by internet gangs in prostitution, theft and kidnapping. The study indicates that 63 of children, and adolescents are addicted to social networking sites.

Algerian females are more emotionally and mood-affected than males as a result of internet addiction; this is due to the weak, sensitive structure of females' personalities characterized by emotional fluctuation and liquidity, quick mood changes, and their inability to confront real crises. Both genders of students are affected by almost the same percentage in terms of social problems; as a result of their weakness in establishing social relations with others, even lack social ties, communication skills, and lack of social support. On the other hand, we note that Algerian males are more ethically affected than females. In terms of academic achievement we note that males are more affected than females; meaning that the excessive use of the internet by males makes them less academically effective when compared to females who are more likely to be consistent and persevering to have a higher social value despite the immersion of Internet use.

They realize that the more they learn, the better they succeed and socialize.(Fekih; Ticusan, 2020,p.37)

Conclusion :

The current study attempted to examine the relationship between psychological and cultural factors associated with internet addiction. The psychological component of the study focused on the mental health disorders and personality characteristics of internet addicts. The cultural component of the study focused on the characteristics of people and how they compare to each other, taking into account that each race has its own anthropological features that influence internet use and preferences.

The study found that there is a significant relationship between psychological and cultural factors in internet addiction. However, the study also found that cultural factors play a more important role in internet addiction than psychological factors. This suggests that future research should focus more on cultural factors in order to better understand and prevent internet addiction.

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