On the Nature of Internet Addiction : What is it and how is it measured?

Engl. transl.: On the Nature of Internet Addiction : What is it and how is it measured?

# Keywords

* adolescents
* compulsive Internet use
* cross-sectional research
* Internet addiction
* psychometrics
* measurement
* scale development and validation

# Details

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* Internet usage, practices and engagement
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## Sample

N=1914-2400, adolescents aged 12 to 18

## Implications For Educators About

Professional development

## Implications For Stakeholders About

# Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to increase understanding of the nature of Internet Addiction (IA) among adolescents (aged 12 to 18 years), focusing on what IA is and how it is measured. Particular emphasis is given to the measurement of IA, and different variables are considered in order to deepen understanding of its various aspects. Accordingly, five studies have been conducted. Study I examines various Internet uses and gratifications (U) among adolescent Internet users by developing a valid and reliable 27-item Internet gratification scale (N = 1,914); Study II investigates the role of adolescents’ demographic, technology accessibility, unwillingness to communicate attributes, and sought Internet U in predicting their tendency to experience IA (N = 1,914); Study III examines the effect of adolescent Internet users’ background characteristics (e.g., demographics, technology accessibility, unwillingness to communicate attributes) on predicting different Internet U and heavy Internet use among adolescents (N = 1,914); Study IV investigates the psychometric properties of the Compulsive Internet Use Scale (CIUS), and the relationship between the CIUS and adolescent Internet users’ background characteristics (e.g., demographics, ICT accessibility and Problematic ICT use) (N = 2,369); and Study V focuses on the development and validation of WhatsApp (WA) addiction scales for adolescents (N = 405).

Cross-sectional research and psychometric theory based analysis reveal the following findings. First, a valid and reliable Internet U instrument (27- item) addresses six dimensions of Internet U, namely information seeking, exposure, connecting, coordination, social influence, and entertainment (Study I). Second, the following are risk factors for adolescent IA: being male, lower academic performance, high daily time spent on Internet use, strict Internet parenting at home, higher approach avoidance and reward seeking, looking for more connecting, coordination and social influence seeking, and pursuing lower information seeking and exposure gratifications (Study II). Third, older females, adolescents with higher academic performance, higher reward seeking and lower daily Internet use content gratifications such as information seeking exposure; male, adolescents seeking higher approach avoidance and reward seeking tend to seek higher social gratifications such as connecting coordination; and higher approach avoidance and reward seeking tendencies predicted process gratifications such as social influence entertainment (Study III). Fourth, the CIUS possesses good psychometric properties with fairly high reliability, homogeneity and validity. Male, older adolescents, those with lower academic performance, lower life satisfaction, active Internet use (including daily Internet use, excessive Internet use and overall Internet activity) and problematic Internet use significantly predicted compulsive Internet use among adolescents. The study confirmed the findings of Study II (Study IV). Fifth, three original IA scales were adjusted to access WhatsApp (WA) addiction among adolescents. The data showed that they were valid and reliable self-reporting instruments. In addition, a shorter version of each of the three adapted instruments and a 16-item unified scale were also developed and validated. All five studies (Studies I, II, III, IV, V) examined various perspectives on the conceptualization of IA with a strong focus on the measurement and development of valid and reliable instruments to measure IA

To conclude, the results indicate that not all adolescents equally experience IA; rather, some are more vulnerable than others. The studies have clarified situations, attributes or behaviors that lead to IA among adolescents. Moreover, new Internet U have been identified to help to conceptualize IA. In addition, the developed and validated instruments (27-item Internet U, 14-item CIUS, 14-item WA addiction test, 8-item and 10-item compulsive WA use) will serve as handy tools for teachers, educational psychologists, and counsellors. By utilizing these instruments, one can easily screen compulsive Internet users from a normal population and provide vulnerable students with timely help and support. The present study confirms the findings of earlier IA literature available in the context of Internet users from a wider age group, and different cultural and demographic settings. The current studies are important, especially because the target user group is adolescent Internet users (aged 12 to 18 years) who have been overlooked in IA and Internet U literature. These findings also emphasize the importance of recognizing IA as a problem among adolescents, which many adolescents unknowingly are or become vulnerable to be in daily life settings. The findings are valuable in terms of education and research.

# Outcome

Some adolecents are more vulnerable to internet addition than others. The study identifies risk groups and personality indicators along with behavioral indicators for internet addiction. Compulsive Internet Use Scale (CIUS) is psychometrically developed and validated.