Problematic Internet Use in Malta Amongst Young People Aged Between 18-30 Years: A Quantitative Study

# Details

## Year

2015

## Issued

2015

## Language

English

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## Type

Report and working paper

## Publisher

President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society

## Place

San Anton Palace

## Topics

* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Risks and harms
* Digital and socio-cultural environment

## Sample

1507 young people in Malta aged between 18-30 years

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Stepping up awareness and empowerment

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

With over one billion users worldwide, the internet has become one of the major necessities of life in almost all countries (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2010). For most users, the internet is a tool that facilitates communication and information flow. However for others, it can lead to a “clinically significant behavioural or psychological syndrome [...] that is associated with present distress [...] and an important loss of freedom” (American Psychiatric Association, (APA) 2013).

Locally, estimates of Problematic Internet Use (PIU) amongst the Maltese population or a sub- section of the general population remain unknown. Therefore, this research is a first attempt to explore the prevalence of PIU and related socio-demographic variables among a representative sample of young people in Malta aged between 18-30 years.
The study has three particular aims:
1. to assess the prevalence of PIU amongst young Maltese people;
2. to explore the relationship between PIU and a number of socio-demographic variables, namely
age, gender, district of residence, educational status successfully completed, labour status,
type of occupation and relationship/marital status;
3. to contribute to international empirical research in the last decade and provide data that can be used to further understand the phenomenon of PIU and its related variables. To date, the classification of Internet Addiction is still contentious and no gold standard of assessment formally exists.
Young’s Internet Addiction Test (IAT) was used to measure PIU amongst the sample. The final questionnaire package consisted of the following:
• One open question asking participants what they use the Internet most for.
• The 20 IAT Likert-scale questions.
• An additional 8 close-ended questions related to socio-demographic variables: age, gender, locality, educational level successfully achieved, labour status, job title, relationship status and household composition.
The target population for this survey consisted of all persons aged 18 to 30 residing in private residences. A Stratified Random sampling process was employed for this survey. In addition to this, quotas were used throughout the data collection phase to ensure that the required number of individuals from each sub-group was obtained. Data was collected by means of Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) between 23 February and 11 March 2015.
A total of 4,233 persons were contacted for this survey, of whom 1,507 participated, while another 2,558 persons were not eligible to participate. This resulted in a net effective response rate of 90.0 per cent.
The current study revealed that the majority (65.9%) were average internet users (IAT scores