SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF INTERNET USE EXPERIENCED BY MARITIME STUDENTS

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Abstract

The experiences of students on the Internet were explored in this descriptive research study using the virtual theory as an interpretive lens.of (Rheingold, 2012). This research utilized the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) developed by Dr. Kimberly S. Young (netaddiction.com/internet-addiction-test/). The questionnaires were answered by 707 maritime students, who were enrolled during the first semester of the school year 2010 – 2011 in the Department of Marine Transportation and Marine Engineering of the Palompon Institute of Technology, Palompon, Leyte, Philippines. The researcher modified the responses description. Instead of using mild, moderate and severe levels, she preferred to use always, often, frequently, occasionally, and rarely with the equivalent range of mean values. The respondents felt socially accepted online. The research result revealed that social and psychological dimensions affected the respondents occasionally. This showed that the maritime students did not indulge so much on the Internet. Implications to this are their heavy study load and their high level of concentration in their studies for them to land a job in the companies primarily owned by the Royal Association of Shipowners of Netherlands (KVNR) and some cooperating companies. Conclusively, it provides relevant information on the use of the Internet. The IAT items were categorized by the researcher as social and

psychological dimensions. Since the frequency of exposure was looked into in this study, the levels were classified based on how frequent they were engaged in the identified statements.

Keywords

Internet use, maritime students, Palompon, Leyte, Philippines

1. Introduction

In the past, adolescents preferred to play outdoor games with their friends. They exerted physical effort in playing the games in order to win. Presently, they play online games; they want to achieve high scores betting their virtual playmates. Socially, there is an interaction but physical contact was not made possible. The complete transformation of the social world of both out-of-school youths and students using Internet technology created a silent environment. Even if people are sitting beside each other, they don't care what one is doing. Each of them is preoccupied with their varied online activities, especially when they are using the connection on an hourly rate.

Consequently, the researcher wanted to look into the frequency of exposure of maritime students to the Internet, so that in the stage of their collegiate endeavor they will be monitored in order to prevent Internet addiction. Once addicted, many things will happen to their academic achievement which undoubtedly affects their future employment. When their future employment is affected they can't contribute to the welfare of the family and the entire nation as a whole. The Internet contributes to the varied experiences of maritime students of the Palompon Institute of Technology (PIT), Palompon, Leyte. In most cases, the partner of people at home is the computer with unlimited Internet access.

The social and psychological exposures of the maritime students were determined in this study. This is done in order to confirm how focused the maritime students are in their studies.The principal objectives of the study were as follows.

- To determine the frequency of Internet exposure of maritime students on social and psychological dimensions.
- To recommend actions to be taken for them to avail the multifarious benefits of the Internet and to enhance their academic performance.

2.   Materials and Methods

This research utilized the descriptive survey method which used the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) (Young, 2009). The IAT is a 20-item questionnaire that measures mild, moderate, and severe levels of Internet Addiction http://www.globaladdiction.org/dldocs/GLOBALADDICTION-Scales-InternetAddictionTest.pdf). The instrument was validated. Conclusively, it provides a reliable measure of addictive use of the Internet (ravansanji.ir). The IAT items were categorized by the researcher as social and psychological dimensions. Based from the original questionnaire, item numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, and 19 were categorized as social dimensions; and items numbers 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, and 20 were categorized as psychological dimensions. Since the frequency of exposure was looked into in this study, the levels were classified based on how frequent they were engaged in the identified statements.

The questionnaires were answered by 707 maritime students who were enrolled during the first semester of the school year 2010 – 2011 in the Department of Marine Transportation and Marine Engineering.

The researcher modified the responses description. Instead of using mild, moderate and severe levels, the preference was to use always, often, frequently, occasionally, and rarely with the equivalent range of mean values displayed in Table 1 for easy scoring of the respondents' answer.

Table 1: *Interpretation Guide for the Respondents' Responses*

Response	Quantitative Description	Range of Mean Values
always	5	4.21 – 5.00
often	4	3.41 – 4.20
frequently	3	2.61 – 3.40
occasionally	2	1.81 – 2.60
rarely	1	1 – 1.80

3. Results and Discussion

The result of the study is presented in the following tables based on the weighted mean values as experienced by the respondents.

Table 2 presents the data on social dimensions experienced by maritime students. With reference to the data from Table 2, item number 1, states that the respondents stayed online

longer than they intended. This implies that self-control is difficult to observe when someone is actively involved in the Internet.

The respondents find themselves saying "just a few more minutes" when being online for item number 8. The borderless access to Internet elongates online engagement. Human settlement in a virtual place cannot be delineated. The entire composition of Internet users and newsgroups are conglomerations of thousands of individual in different places. This interactive community provides much enjoyment to the user; thereby, increasing the usual time allotted for Internet use. Although the researcher finds few cases of students who cut classes, this level may elevate soon rapidly, when their punctual attendance to classes is not monitored.

Table 2: *The Level of Exposure on Internet Use on Social Dimensions*

Social Dimension Indicators	Weighted Mean Values	Rank	Frequency of Exposure
1. How often do you find that you stay online longer than you intended?	2.676	1	frequently
2. How often do you neglect household chores to spend more time online?	2.093	11	occasionally
3. How often do you form new relationships with fellow online users?	2.306	5	occasionally
4. How often do others in your life complain to you about the amount of time you spend online?	2.179	8	occasionally
5. How often do you check your e-mail before something else that you need to do?	2.395	3	occasionally
6. How often do you fear that life without the Internet would be boring, empty and joyless?	2.273	6	occasionally
7. How often do you snap, yell or act annoyed if someone bothers you while you are online?	2.159	9	occasionally
8. How often do you find yourself saying "just a few more minutes" when online?	2.432	2	occasionally
9. How often do you try to cut down the amount of time you spend online and failed?	2.329	4	occasionally
10. How often do you try to hide how long you've been online?	2.082	10	occasionally
11. How often do you choose to spend more time online?	2.192	7	occasionally
Overall Weighted Mean Value	**2.283**		**occasionally**

In addition, the respondents check their e-mail before something else that needs to be done. This is item number 5. In e-mails, no more ink will be spilled and message transfer speed is fast that makes the activity enjoyable and exciting. This productive approach was availed of by the maritime students.

Moreover, they failed to cut down the amount of time they spend online, which is item No. 9. Compulsive Internet usage develops feelings of trust and group identity, they become more motivated and share more, leading to increased feelings of friendship. The feeling of being connected to a person on the other side of the world was important to maritime students.

On internet-mediated relationship which is item No. 3, posed a great threat to maritime students. This increases their imaginative power, which when not controlled will strongly affect their academic activities. The power of imagination needs to be curtailed to avoid mental destruction while studying. This destruction greatly affects focus in their studies. If not noticed in an early stage, this will lead to dropping out from classes and academic failure.

Moreover, social development is a contributory factor to increase the level of self-confidence of students. If they are ashamed to deal with people personally, they can have a practice related to the enhancement of their personality through an invisible link. In this case, there is no inhibition considering that what they are facing is the keyboard. In this way, they have unlimited chances of dealing with others with the use of Internet technology.

Although there may be some risks about too much exposure to the Internet, proper education from home through closer guidance from their parents may lead to the maximization of Internet usage that gives the utmost benefits. Moreover, teachers can support the students by Providing them some clues to support some deficiencies in the classroom and augment knowledge acquisition.

Socially developed maritime students can adjust well with the different cultures that they will meet and work with in the future. It becomes easy for them to address cultural diversity. It will enhance interpersonal relationship on board and ashore. In this way, they will not experience culture shock and becomes a well-adjusted person. They will understand how another culture behaves and knows how to deal with individual differences.They can work well happily without disturbing thoughts and become productive workers in the maritime industry. As productive workers, they will become fully engaged in their respective job assignments.

The figure that follows is the first three ranks of questions which the respondents answered correspondingly on social dimensions.
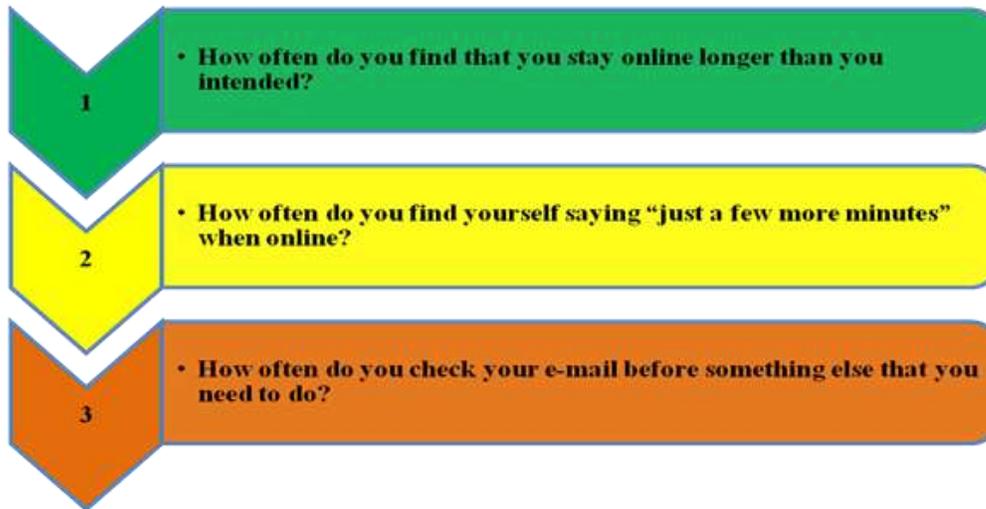

1 • How often do you find that you stay online longer than you intended?

2 • How often do you find yourself saying "just a few more minutes" when online?

3 • How often do you check your e-mail before something else that you need to do?

Figure 1: *Vertical chevron list on the first 3 ranks of questions on social dimensions*

Taking into account the experiences of maritime students on psychological dimensions, another table is presented, Table 3.

As reflected in Table 3, they prefer the excitement of the internet to intimacy with their online partner for item number 1. Some respondents who have online partners develop a certain level of intimacy. Online dating becomes a trend for students at the college level as reflected by the respondents. Noticeably, this is only done occasionally.

Moreover, item No. 6 in Table 3 was also categorized by the respondents as having occasional exposure. It is expected that once they have established a certain relationship online, they anticipate from it.

As a result, the respondents block out disturbing thoughts about their life with soothing thoughts of the internet, which is item number 5. This means that activities online are more interesting to them.

Not surprisingly, the students lose sleep due to late night log-ins, which is item number 7. If students failed to sleep on time when online, their mental consciousness will degrade. Poor quality of sleep and rest is detrimental to a person's health, which consequently affects the normal operation of cognitive capacities. As a result, cognitive function of the students weaken,

Table 3: *The Level of Exposure on Internet Use on Psychological Dimensions*

Psychological Dimension Indicators	Weighted Mean Values	Rank	Frequency of Exposure
1. How often do you prefer the excitement of the Internet to intimacy with your partner?	2.361	1	occasionally
2. How often do your grades or school work suffers because of the amount of time you spend online?	1.973	7	occasionally
3. How often does your academic performance or productivity suffer because of the Internet?	1.931	9	occasionally
4. How often do you become defensive or secretive when anyone asks you what you do online?	2.078	6	occasionally
5. How often do you block out disturbing thoughts about your life with soothing thoughts of the Internet?	2.109	3	occasionally
6. How often do you find yourself anticipating when you will go online again?	2.321	2	occasionally
7. How often do you lose sleep due to late night log ins?	2.097	4	occasionally
8. How often do you feel preoccupied with the Internet when offline, or fantasize about being online?	2.089	5	occasionally
9. How often do you feel depressed, moody or nervous when you are offline, which goes away once you are back online?	1.935	8	occasionally
Overall Weighted Mean Value	**2.099**		**occasionally**

they cannot participate well in the class and the retention ability decreases. Conclusively, late night log-ins negatively affects the studies of maritime students.

Moreover, item number 8, which says that the respondents often feel preoccupied with the Internet when offline, or fantasize about being online. This is a difficult situation. The respondents think that they are online when actually they are in the world of reality. The escape from the world of reality is a common practice in the mutual transaction through the Internet. The orderliness in real settings like having a good accommodation, appreciative venue with a fragrant room when talking to someone particularly when the issue talked about is emotional in nature are not anymore considered when engaged in an online transaction. This may be counted as a disadvantage.

This will strongly affect the socialization process with their classmates. When this is not attended to at an earlier stage, personality growth becomes out of balance.

The figure that follows is the first three ranks of questions which the respondents answered correspondingly on psychological dimensions.
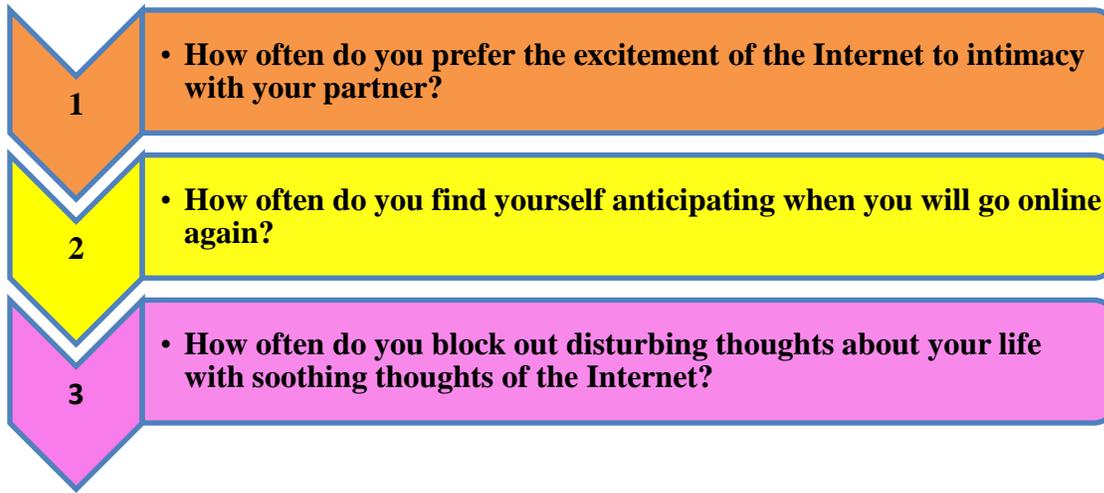
1 • **How often do you prefer the excitement of the Internet to intimacy with your partner?**

2 • **How often do you find yourself anticipating when you will go online again?**

3 • **How often do you block out disturbing thoughts about your life with soothing thoughts of the Internet?**

Figure 2: *Vertical chevron list on the first 3 ranks of questions on psychological dimensions*

The findings of this study present two major information on social and psychological dimensions of internet use of maritime students of the Palompon Institute of Technology. It is worth to note that the respondents were not able to experience intense immersion in the virtual world. They have focused on their studies and use only the Internet for academic support. This is manifested by the overall weighted mean values on social and psychological dimensions, which belong to the category of "occasionally."

It is a manifestation that they focused more on their future employment in order for them to help themselves and their families. This finding is supported by the observation of the researcher that the respondents exerted much effort for their academic achievement. They want to pass the pre-employment written examination in order to qualify for an apprenticeship in a vessel sailing internationally and thereafter pass the maritime board examination.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The maritime students were not immersed in the Internet world. They studied hard for their academic achievement and were exposed only on the worldwide web occasionally. However, it is strongly recommended that constant monitoring of the students' activities be done by both parents and instructors so that academic success will be experienced by the maritime

students.   A follow-up study for the new batch is also recommended.

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