Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL ANXIETY AND INTERNET ADDICTION AMONG UNIMAS UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS

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70832

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This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Nursing with Honours

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: With a steadily rising prevalence globally, social anxiety and internet addiction have emerged as major public health issues including among nursing students. **Objective:** The present study was conducted to assess the prevalence of social anxiety, the prevalence of internet addiction and to determine the relationship between social anxiety and internet addiction among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students. **Method:** In this study, a quantitative research, cross-sectional study and simple random sampling method were implemented among 146 UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students to screen for social anxiety using Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN) and to screen for internet addiction using Internet Addiction Test (IAT). The data was analyzed using Spearmen Correlation of IBM SPSS version 26. **Result:** The majority of respondents were between the ages of 19 and 29 years old (M= 21.69, SD= 1.357). The mean prevalence of social anxiety was 34.41 and the standard deviation was 13.864 (M= 34.41, SD= 13.864) while the mean prevalence of internet addiction is 36.76, and the standard deviation is 16.783 (M = 36.76, SD = 16.783). The study found that the relationship between social anxiety and internet addiction were weak correlated yet positively correlated (r_s = 0.456, p = 0.0001). **Conclusion:** The UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students have a significant prevalence of social anxiety and almost half of the students had an addiction to the internet and there was a weak positive correlation between social anxiety and internet addiction. These findings offer baseline information for preventive measures of getting social anxiety and internet addiction that can be used for nursing department.

ABSTRAK

Pengenalan: *Dengan prevalensi yang terus meningkat di seluruh dunia, keresahan sosial dan ketagihan internet telah muncul sebagai isu kesihatan awam utama termasuk di kalangan pelajar kejururawatan.* ***Objektif:*** *Kajian ini telah dijalankan untuk menilai prevalensi keresahan sosial, prevalensi ketagihan internet dan untuk menentukan hubungan antara keresahan sosial dan ketagihan internet di kalangan pelajar kejururawatan sarjana muda UNIMAS.* ***Kaedah:*** *Dalam kajian ini, penyelidikan kuantitatif, kajian keratan rentas dan pensampelan rawak telah dijalankan di kalangan 146 pelajar kejururawatan sarjana muda UNIMAS untuk memeriksa keresahan sosial menggunakan Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN) dan untuk mengesan ketagihan internet menggunakan Internet Addiction Test (IAT). Data telah dianalisis menggunakan Spearmen Correlation daripada IBM SPSS versi 26.* ***Hasil:*** *Kebanyakan responden berusia antara 19 dan 29 tahun (M = 21.69, SD = 1.357). Prevalensi purata keresahan sosial ialah 34.41 dan sisihan piawai ialah 13.864 (M= 34.41, SD= 13.864) manakala purata ketagihan internet ialah 36.76, dan sisihan piawai ialah 16.783 (M = 36.76, SD = 16.783). Kajian ini mendapati bahawa hubungan antara keresahan sosial dan ketagihan internet adalah berkorelasi lemah tetapi positif kolerasi (rs = 0.456, p = 0.0001).* ***Kesimpulan:*** *Pelajar kejururawatan sarjana muda UNIMAS mempunyai prevalensi keresahan sosial yang signifikan dan hampir separuh pelajar mempunyai ketagihan internet dan terdapat korelasi positif yang lemah antara keresahan sosial dan ketagihan internet. Temuan ini menawarkan maklumat asas untuk langkah-langkah pencegahan keresahan sosial dan ketagihan internet yang boleh digunakan untuk jabatan kejururawatan.*

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Section 1.0: Introduction

This study was conducted to determine the relationship between social anxiety and Internet addiction among UNIMAS nursing students. This chapter sets out the background of study regarding social anxiety, Internet addiction and its relationship between each other. Problem statement, research questions, research objectives, the significance of study and definition of terms also will be described in this chapter.

Section 1.1: Background of study

Social anxiety is a common and debilitating psychiatric disorder among youth especially among university students and it costly public health burden. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), social anxiety can be defined as a persistent fear of one or more social situations in which an individual is exposed to scrutiny or has the possibility of negative evaluations by others. For example, talking to a stranger or friend, or giving a speech in front of a large group of people (Ye S et al., 2021). Globally, the prevalence of social anxiety among college students is as high as 45.7% (Li et al., 2019).

Social anxiety also frequently associated with comorbidities such as alcohol and substance abuse, depression, increased suicide risks and lower educational and work attainment (Honnekeri et al., 2017). According to Dsouza et al. (2019), medical students have a wide range of mental health issues due to the demanding and lengthy curriculum of their professional education which as well as nursing students. The pattern of medical teaching, learning and evaluation such as like clinical case presentations may exacerbate students'

nervousness about being watched in public. Other than that, as we know, nursing students must frequently deal with a variety of stressors and it is crucial to learn how to cope in order to succeed academically and professionally (Reta et al., 2020).

Internet addiction or known as problematic internet use is the urge or behaviour of excessive use of the internet on a smartphone or computer which can lead to impairment or distress (Techopedia, n.d.). As in the world population internet users statistics, there are 53.6% from the Asian population, 13.7% from Europe, 9.9% from Latin America, 11.9% from Africa, 6.4% from North America, 3.9% from the Middle east and 0.6% from Australia (Internet World Stats, 2022). These statistics demonstrate the growing importance of the internet in people's lives around the world. As we are aware, internet have so many benefits to our daily lives such as it can help people to develop cognitive abilities, social skills, increase knowledge and ideas but despite all the benefits it gives us, it also can cause problems if we use it excessively such like insomnia, decrease academic performance, increase depression, loneliness, suicidal ideation, low self-esteem and one of it is social anxiety. Besides, using the internet for studies, nursing students should learn how to use internet to assist patients in finding answers to the health related queries. Educating patients who increasingly turn to online resources for health information to help the patient make health management decisions is a critical role that nurses working in health care facilities play.

Besides, as to relate with social anxiety, internet and smartphones may be useful tools for socially anxious people to alleviate their anxiety by not going through face-to-face interactions with people especially for university students. University students that have social anxiety might avoid the negative feelings that come with face-to-face

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communications by communicating online and these people feel more at ease while communicating online than in person (Xiao and Huang, 2022). In consequences, individuals with social anxiety are more prone to have internet addiction especially in university students and nursing students appear to be a group of particular concern.

Section 1.2: Statement of problem

Social anxiety and internet addiction have become a global public health concern with slowly increasing prevalence worldwide. According to epidemiological research, the lifetime prevalence of social anxiety disorder varies from 3 to 13%. Besides, the global prevalence of internet addiction is between 1.6 to 18% and is higher among college students (Pujazon-Zazik & Park, 2010, as cited in Ye et al., 2021).

According to many studies, those who suffer from social anxiety frequently struggle with despair, suicidal thoughts and substance addiction which then cause many impairments in their life such as quality of life causes productivity loss, education, relationships and social network (Jaiswal et al., 2020). On top of that, medical students who struggle with social anxiety have high tendency to score poorly in clinical exams. In addition, social anxiety could make the students more susceptible to substance abuse, which makes it difficult to find employment in the future (Reta et al., 2020).

As a result of the significant expansion in internet users, many researchers are investigating the negative impacts of internet use which particularly among adolescents and college students. Overuse of the internet has been deemed a public health risk by WHO although DSM-5 does not yet recognize internet addiction as a valid diagnosis. Through many studies regarding internet addiction, some mental health comorbidities such as sleeplessness, sadness, low self-esteem and social anxiety disorders have also been seen in people with internet addiction (Jaiswal et al., 2020).

Numerous research on social anxiety and the internet alone has been conducted worldwide among a variety of populations, including adolescents, university students, medical and health sciences students and the general public. Although the results of this research vary, they generally show that high prevalence in both social anxiety and internet addiction. Most of the studies found more focused on the relationship between internet addiction with mental health issues like depression and anxiety but less about social anxiety. Internationally, only several studies have been done on the relationship between social anxiety and internet addiction in various populations which mostly among adolescents and college students.

As well as globally, in Malaysia, there is limited research available to assess the relationship between social anxiety and internet addiction among university students especially among nursing students. The lack of studies in Malaysia shows that there is a lack of awareness of the negative consequences of social anxiety and internet addiction which in turn may lead to higher prevalence. The nursing student needs to be aware of the consequences of social anxiety and internet addiction. A higher quality of life for future nurses can be achieved by implementing good communication skills with people to avoid any mental health comorbidities that may affect their future. Numerous research on social anxiety in university students have been undertaken globally but only a small number of research, however, have identified the relationship between social anxiety and internet addiction in nursing students. As a result, this study will assess the prevalence of social anxiety and internet addiction and identify the relationship between those two variables among UNIMAS nursing students. When the problem's main cause has been ruled out, appropriate preventive measures can be put in place.

Section 1.3: Research questions

The research questions for this study are:

1.3.1 What is the prevalence of social anxiety among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students?

1.3.2 What is the prevalence of internet addiction among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students?

1.3.3 Is there any relationship between social anxiety and internet addiction among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students?

Section 1.4: Objectives

The research objectives for this study are:

1.4.1 To assess the prevalence of social anxiety among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students

1.4.2 To assess the prevalence of internet addiction among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students

1.4.3 To determine the relationship between social anxiety and Internet addiction among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students

Section 1.5: Significance of study

According to nursing research, the main findings in this study could be a reference especially in Malaysia since there are lacking studies about the relationship between social anxiety and internet addiction among nursing students. Determining the prevalence of social anxiety and internet addiction among UNIMAS nursing students can help provide baseline information on the relationship between social anxiety and internet addiction among nursing students. Besides, in terms of education, early awareness and prevention are essential among nursing students because internet addiction and social anxiety could lead to other consequences such as sleep problems, depression, and burnt out which then may affect their academic performance or relationship with patients during clinical practice. Hence, the nursing department can use the findings of this study to provide some interventions to lessen the prevalence of social anxiety and internet addiction such as awareness programmes and Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).

Section 1.6: Definition of terms

For a better understanding of this study, the following terms are defined:

Section 1.6.1: Social anxiety

Conceptual definition: According to APA Dictionary of Psychology, social anxiety is fear of social situations such as making conversations, talking with stranger in which the feeling of embarrassment and getting negatively evaluated by others occur.

Operational definition: Fear in social situations experienced by UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students which in this study, it is being measured using Social Phobia Inventory

(SPIN). The questionnaire consists of 17 items covers the range of symptoms associated with social anxiety including fear, avoidance and psychological factors. Each item graded with 5-point Likert scale which 0 (Not at all), 1 (A little bit), 2 (Somewhat), 3 (Very much) and 4 (Extremely). A total score of equal to or more than 19 points suggests a diagnosis of social anxiety disorder.

Section 1.6.2: Internet addiction

Conceptual definition: Internet addiction is the urges or behavior of excessive use of the internet on smartphone or computer which can lead to impairment or distress (Techopedia).

Operational definition: In this study, the severity of internet addiction among UNIMAS undergraduate nursing students was measured using Internet Addiction Test (IAT). This questionnaire consists of 20 items with 5-point Likert scale which 0 (does not apply) to 5 (always applies). The individual answer to the questions will be computed to obtain the total score. The total score varies that show severity of internet addiction whereby total score of 0 to 30 as no internet addiction, 31 to 49 to mild internet addiction, 50 to 79 as moderate internet addiction and 80 to 100 as severe internet addiction. This show that the higher the total score, the higher the severity of the internet addiction.

Section 1.6.3: Nursing students

Conceptual definition: defined as "An individual who is enrolled in professional nursing or vocational nursing education program" (Law Insider, n.d.)

Operational definition: In this research, a nursing student is defined as an individual that enrolled in the Bachelor of Nursing with Honours program in UNIMAS for four years.

Section 1.7: Summary

Social anxiety and internet addiction are one of the main mental health issues among the university and one of it is among nursing students. Previous studies have determined the prevalence of social anxiety and internet addiction among university students but very few of them have specifically targeted nursing students. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to find out how common social anxiety and internet addiction are and whether is there a relationship between social anxiety and internet addiction. Three objectives of research questions will be used to guide this investigation. This chapter provides background information and operational definitions regarding social anxiety and internet addiction.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Section 2.0: Introduction

In this chapter, literature review will be presented to establish a general idea of the research topic. Section 2.1 describes the prevalence of social anxiety among university students. The prevalence of internet addiction among university students are presented in Section 2.2. Next, the relationship between social anxiety and internet addiction is presented in Section 2.3 and the summary of the literature review is presented in Section 2.4. The articles used in this literature review are from trusted sources such as Google Scholar, PubMed, Research Gate and Science Direct. The articles reviewed are retrieved from 2012 to 2022. This literature review excluded articles published for more than ten years and articles that did not mention the date of publication. Common keywords used were social anxiety, internet addiction, nursing students, university students and its relationship.

Section 2.1: Social anxiety

Numerous studies have been done to examine the prevalence of social anxiety across different demographics, including college students, adolescents, the general public and even rural communities. Among college students, social anxiety is regarded as another prevalent, incapacitating psychiatric disorder. Social anxiety was very common among college students as college students have more commitments to make communication with people which in one study of Li et al. 2019 reported that up to 45.7% of college students have social anxiety.

A study by Jaiswal et al. (2020) reported that the prevalence of social anxiety among university students in India was 15.3%. having social anxiety and 31.3% have social phobia based on the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS) questionnaire. Studies done by Dsouza et al. (2019) and Reta et al. (2020) found that the prevalence of social anxiety was quite high which is 30.5% and 32.8% respectively among medical students.

On the other hand, a study in Malaysia done by Al-Naggar et al., (2013) found that 45.6% of university students have moderate social anxiety and 42.8% have severe social anxiety which measures using Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN). As from the result, it shows that the prevalence of social anxiety among university students was high. However, limited studies regarding social anxiety among nursing students in Malaysia show that there is a lack of awareness of social anxiety and lack knowledge on how it affects the nursing students and how it can be managed if the students have social anxiety.

Section 2.2: Internet addiction

In the twenty-first century, internet has grown in popularity along with the accessibility of various technology. More than five billion people used the internet as of April 2022, making up 63.1 percent of the world's population. 4.7 billion people, or 59 percent of the world's population, used social media out of this total. (Worldwide Digital Population, 2022). Increased smartphone use frequency that is out of control results in uncontrolled conduct which causes problems in the users' relationship and day-to-day life (Khalil et al., 2016). As from lack of control in using internet and a maladaptive pattern of internet use, people more tend in getting internet addiction which then may result in clinically significant dysfunction or distress such as depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation including social anxiety.

Over the past few years, the frequency of internet addiction has been the subject of numerous investigations. A study in India done by Jaiswal et al. (2020) found that 3.3% of the university students had a severe internet addiction, 48.2% had a moderate internet addiction and 42.3% had a mild internet addiction. Other than that, according to study in Turkish done by Yücens & Üzer (2018), 23.7% of the medical students had moderate internet addiction, 3.3% had severe addiction and 73% had no internet addiction. Besides, internet addicts use the internet as a means of avoiding their unpleasant feelings in order to feel less intimidated and challenged.

Meanwhile, a study in Jeddah done by Khalil et al. (2016) found that the prevalence of internet addiction among university students is 59.6% were in moderate internet addiction, 38.4% were in mild internet addiction and 2.1% were in severe internet addiction. On top of that, 54.3% of the nursing students of University Malaysia (IIUM) Kuantan was mostly mildly addicted to internet, 37% was moderately addicted, 5.3% was strongly addicted and 3.4% was not addicted to internet (Azenal & Zaw, 2021).

The result from all the studies showed that majority of the university students including nursing students across the world had high prevalence of internet addiction. This is due to the fact that university students are among the high-risk populations for developing an internet addiction because they use the internet for both educational and non-educational purposes including communicating with friends and finding entertainment as well as completing assignments and searching for information. Most studies also found that severity of the internet addiction is often associated with mental health comorbidities especially depression and anxiety. This implies that greater attention must be placed on the intervention to help the students that have internet addiction in control the use of internet.