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**Original Article:**

Internet Addiction Among University Students: Psychometric Properties of Three Factor Model Internet Addiction Test

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Abstract: Incursion of the Internet into daily life has become problematic for an increasing number of people, particularly for individuals with the affliction which is often referred as Internet Addiction (IA). Burgeoning global research has demonstrated the perceptible adverse consequences of IA, especially among students. Of the available scales that assess IA, thus far the most extensively used has been the Internet Addiction Test (IAT). However, several prior psychometric analyses have portrayed ambiguous factor structures. The main aim of the present study was to provide data on its factorial structure and ascertain its reliability in a sample comprising 307 university students. Convenience sampling technique was employed in this cross-sectional study wherein a bilingual version of IAT was administered to participants. Findings revealed that nearly 32% students could be considered as moderately addicted, and 3% as severely addicted. Examination of the latent structure of the IAT scale using both exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis revealed a 3-factor solution (lack of control, excessive use and compulsion) which explained 48% total variance. Also, low factor loadings on Item 8 prompted its exclusion. Subsequent multi-group CFA showed that the scores for this model were invariant in terms of gender. The resulting 19-item IAT with a three-factor structure appears to be a valid and reliable instrument for measuring IA. Though initial indications of construct validity were promising, additional research may still be required to elucidate the stability of factor solutions in a variety of settings and demographic backgrounds in Malaysia.

Key Words: Internet addiction, University students, Psychometric properties, Reliability

Introduction:

The past decades have witnessed exponential technological growth. The increasing pervasive presence of digital

technologies has led to its incursion into nearly every aspect of daily life. Within this context is the widespread usage of the Internet. Nowadays, one need not be physically sitting in front of the computer to access the internet in order to obtain information, interact with friends, watch videos or play games. An avalanche of internet-enabled connections allows an individual to access anything from anywhere with just phones, tablets or other electronic devices. Although there is little doubt as to the expediency of this technology, the risks associated with overuse of the internet, social media and online forms of entertainment are gradually becoming evident. Young people seem especially vulnerable; with case studies highlighting students whose academic performance plummets as they spend more time online.[1] Some also suffer health consequences from loss of sleep, as they stay up late to chat online, check for social network status updates or to reach the next game levels.[1]

The realization that certain attributes of internet may be fostering some addictive-seeming behaviors has raised concerns worldwide with regard to what has been labeled Internet addiction.

Besides 'Internet addiction', terms such as 'problematic Internet use', 'computer addiction', 'Internet dependency', 'pathological Internet use', 'compulsive Internet use' and many other labels have been proposed as ways to describe these behaviors.[2] Internet addiction (IA) commonly refers to an individual's inability to control Internet use, which in turn leads to feelings of marked distress and functional impairment in daily life.[3] Several studies have indicated that IA eventually may cause psychological and social problems, or even physical and mental disorders [4-9], thereby affecting the individual's occupational and academic achievement. Some experts have even suggested that IA appears to be a common disorder that merits inclusion in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fifth Edition (*DSM-V*).[10]