

Final Project

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Introduction

The research question we tried to answer dealt with finding out the negative impacts on the lifetime experiences of people who use the Internet frequently. The main concepts for this question had two variables: the independent variable was the frequency of Internet usage, and the dependent variable was the negative impacts on those people's lives. Internet usage can be defined as time spent on the Internet using a computer, smartphone, tablet, or any similar devices to access services (e.g. social media, dating applications, or any such sites) or content (e.g. information) on the Internet. The frequency of Internet usage deals with spending time on various social media sites, dating applications, and any other time spent using the Internet. The negative impacts are measured based on the effects on the person's mental and emotional health, the rate of cyber victimization, and the likelihood of those people becoming victims again. Mental health includes a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. This impacts the way a person thinks, feels, and acts (e.g. self-esteem, depression, loneliness, anxiety, and stress). Overall, this particular topic is an important one to study as the Internet is such a prevalent vice that affects most, if not all, people alive today. The effects of spending time on the Internet vary as well, with the majority of it being negative. These variables are being studied together because we noticed a significant increase in mental health issues among kids and adolescents that seem to be directly linked due to Internet usage.

Literature Review

The correlation of negative mental health and Internet usage was especially noticeable during the COVID-19 pandemic as most in-person events were switched to online and people were spending more time online in general; for kids, this led to an ineptitude in social situations, which will likely have substantial long term effects, as well as an increase in mental health issues

among adolescents and college students. Figuring out if there were any connections between these two in any previous studies became very important to us as we wanted to see if there were any ways to prevent or retroactively help those who have been afflicted by substantial Internet use; moreover, through all the studies that we found, there is a significant correlation between the frequency of Internet use and the negative impacts on people's lives, which supports our research question and confirms our suspicions of the dangers of the Internet becoming more and more prevalent in our lives.

The first research we explored was done by Kaakinen et al. was to see if there was a correlation between online dating applications and victimization of young adults/adolescents ages 15 to 18 in Finland, Spain, South Korea, and the United States via receiving unwanted sexual advances, solicitation, or if the over-sharing capabilities of online relationships contributed to cyber-abuse (Kaakinen, M., et al., 2021). There were two studies done with the first having controls in place for the amount of sharing done by participants on social media and sociodemographic factors. The independent variable was about the level of activity on dating sites and services, with the dependent variable being if the participants were ever a target of online harassment. The results of Study 1 found that online dating app use was positively correlated with an increased risk of online victimization with no real statistical difference between genders. The second study within Kaakinen et al.'s research was conducted in Finland and focused on the measure of delinquency in young adolescents and measures various victimization experiences, backgrounds, risk factors, and others. It used the Finnish Self-Report Delinquency survey for 9th graders, ages 15 to 16 years old, and is meant to measure delinquency in young adolescents and measures various victimization experiences, backgrounds, risk factors, and others. The different variables included in the survey were victimization to

online sexual harassment, victimization to other cybercrime, sexual victimization by adults, sexual victimization by peers, online dating apps use, risky online activities, offline risk behavior, peer delinquency, parental control, and low self-control with controls for social media and instant messaging use, gender, and relationship status. (Kaakinen, M., et al., 2021). Study 2 found that the most prevalent victimization experience was sexual victimization by peers, followed by sexual victimization by adults, and victimization to online sexual harassment and to other cybercrimes. This study also found a stronger correlation between women and those identifying as other genders from male with sexual harassment and victimization on- and offline, meaning that both of these studies prove that online dating app use is associated with higher likelihood of sexual harassment victimization, sexual victimization by both peers and adolescents, and cybercrime victimization, and that all these relationships are driven by risky online behaviors.

A similar study from Swirsky et al. (2021) discussed the impacts on young adolescents based on their activity online, without focusing on the amount of time spent online. The study showed that activities, such as self-disclosure, could often have both positive and negative results, such as greater pro-social support and increased victimization online respectively. These results also changed by gender due to how boys and girls often used different platforms. For example, boys tend to use online video games more, while girls tend to prefer social media sites. Boys tended to receive less pro-social support, which was theorized to be due to falling out of line with their perceived gender roles (Swirsky et al., 2021). The studies indicated a wide array of negative impacts on people's lives with very few positive effects, even though the age groups vary.

The next research we looked into was from Jattamart et al. (2021) on university students, whose purpose for the research project was to identify potential solutions to decrease cyberbullying through identifying risky online behaviors that increase the likelihood of cyberbullying as well as potentially preventing those factors. It was designed using the I-Change Model (ICM) Theory, which has been applied to a variety of health behavior modification processes, but is mainly used with studies of coping mechanisms, rather than focusing on how to prevent victimization situations like this study focuses on (Jattamart, A., et al., 2021). This study also focuses on the factors involved in the motivation to change via the ICM Theory and seeing if there is any connection between motivation and outcomes. The results in Jattamart et al.'s study showed a positive correlation between predisposing family factors and awareness factors in potential victims of social media cyberbullying. This means that those who had open-minded discussions as a family were more likely to be aware of and avoid ending up as a cyberbully victim. Moreover, being more aware of the factors that lead to cyberbullying has a positive correlation with avoiding an outcome as a victim. Lastly, the awareness of past victims allowed for a lower likelihood of becoming a victim again; however, being lonely led to a higher likelihood due to the desire for closeness, regardless of knowing the risk factors or being a victim in the past (Jattamart, A., et al., 2021). This is the most interesting part of the entire study, as it disregards that some may be participating in risky online and offline behavior as accidental or due to a lack of proper safety education, like proposed in Kaakinen et al.'s studies, but rather displays that those who are lonely enough will disregard being safe even when they know it is being risky all due to their need for connection. Young adolescents and even late adolescents are in a critical time of their lives when feeling lonely is extraordinarily common, and that loneliness leads to risky online behavior, ultimately increasing the chances of these people becoming

victims to cyber crimes, potentially repeatedly; the knowledge on how to avoid such cyberattacks are rendered useless since they choose to ignore them to conduct their risky online behavior anyway, leading the overall impacts of the Internet to be largely negative in light of both Kaakinen et al. and Jattamart et al.'s research (2021).

Similarly, a study conducted by Reed and Reay (2015), supported the aforementioned conclusions that problematic Internet usage led to problematic conditions including loneliness. While the primary purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between levels of problematic Internet usage and university students' motivation to study, researchers also recognized the negative impact of problematic Internet usage on individuals' psychological conditions, as loneliness was one of the variables tested in this study. This study specifically utilized the Emotional–Social Loneliness Scale, which examined levels of emotional and social loneliness using a 11-item scale. The results of this study recognized that problematic Internet usage does, in fact, negatively impact university students' psychological condition when it comes to loneliness, further supporting prior research that indicates a correlation between problematic Internet usage and loneliness (Reed and Reay, 2015). These findings create a vicious cycle that cannot stop on its own because those who are lonely will not follow the proper guidelines to avoid being victimized online, and spending that time online will make them more lonely, resulting in more victimization and so on and so forth.

Problematic impacts of Internet usage can also be viewed in the research done in India where college students ages 18 and above are presenting social anxiety and social phobia due to the amount of Internet usage that they have had throughout their lifetime. 90% of the participants had Internet addiction, and social anxiety was present in more than one-third of the participants while also finding that Social Anxiety Disorder was related to Internet addiction; “Social

Anxiety Disorder is a common mental health disorder affecting adolescents often associated with comorbidities like depression, suicide ideation, and substance abuse” (Jaiswal, A. et al., 2020, p. 1). There is a positive correlation between Internet addiction and the social anxiety scale and primary health systems need to place more attention on how the Internet is affecting the development of children throughout their adolescence up to adulthood. The World Health Organization has brought to light that excessive Internet use is identified as a public health concern: “Mental health comorbidities have also been observed among individuals with Internet addiction like insomnia, depression, low self-esteem, anxiety disorders, and personality trait disorders” (Jaiswal, A. et al., 2020, p. 2). It is vital that mental health disorders should not be taken lightly since this also affects the way an individual may look at themselves and their self-esteem on a daily basis. Internet addiction should be a standard diagnosis in the DSM-5, even though Internet addiction is not on the DSM-5 currently, in order to provide help to individuals who may be going through difficult stages in their lives due to their mental health being affected by the overuse of social media.

Another research study conducted in Kerala, India on adolescents, on people ages 14 and 16, supports the aforementioned conclusion that problematic Internet usage, being excessive Internet consumption and abbreviated with PIU, throughout a person’s lifetime can cause mental health disorders as well as impact one’s self-esteem. According to Mathew and Krishnan (2020), “problematic Internet use has become a global phenomenon that causes serious problems to the affected individual leading to impairments in psychological well-being” (p.122). The results from the study indicated that there is, in fact, a significant relationship between excessive Internet usage and self-esteem. More specifically, a cross-sectional descriptive correlation survey showed a negative correlation between self-esteem and problematic Internet usage, as increased

PIU tended to be associated with low self-esteem. Researchers concluded that mitigating the risks of PIU is important because of its negative effects on self-esteem in addition to other subsequent impacts including the development of mental health disorders (Mathew and Krishnan, 2020). Evidently, all of these studies come to support the overarching conclusion that problematic Internet usage throughout a person's lifetime can cause mental health disorders as well as impacting self-esteem.

We have now established that problematic Internet usage throughout a person's lifetime can cause mental health disorders as well as impact self-esteem, but another major impact of Internet usage is its impact on education. One study began with children in fourth grade at eight different schools in eastern Hungary, where they surveyed 190 students in total. Students surveyed typically had been able to use the Internet for around three years, but some students had used it for six (Nagy, 2014). With how long the students have used the Internet, they could be more capable of using it effectively, which could result in it being used more often due to their innate ability to use it easily. However, as the amount of time that a student spent online increased, it was found that it had a negative correlation with their academic performance. A way to counteract this common danger is by having parents monitor their child's Internet usage and how long they use it for, which increases students' academic performance overall (Nagy, 2014). This idea is interesting when compared to the results of a previous study, which showed that limiting a child's Internet usage could result in the child being more interested in using the Internet, creating a desire for the forbidden Internet fruit so-to-speak. (Swirsky et al., 2021) This interest being piqued would cause the children to find a way to use the Internet without their parent's knowledge, removing any of the benefits of parents' monitoring their Internet access could have since they cannot monitor what they do not know about.

These conclusions relate to Reed and Reay's study that focused on the relationship between levels of problematic Internet usage and university students' motivation to study as it incorporated multiple psychological variables, such as depression, anxiety, and social isolation, all of which support the aforementioned conclusions that problematic Internet usage negatively impacts a person's mental health as well as having an independent, negative impact on a student's motivation to study. They effectively narrowed the negative impact of problematic Internet usage to university students' motivation to study when it applied to intrinsic goal orientation, control over learning, and self-efficacy for learning (Reed and Reay, 2015). The broader implications of these studies emphasize that a push toward increased Internet usage in primary education and higher education may not be the best for students' educational experience, as it has created problems for most students' motivation to study as well as their overall academic performance.

There is yet another research project that aimed to see if excessive use of the Internet on a daily basis causes depression, anxiety, and stress in college students, but this time it was conducted by students of professional colleges in the Jammu region. The subjects of the study were college students, both male and female in almost equal proportion, who attend medical and engineering colleges in the Jammu region (Kumari, R., et al., 2022). They did a cross-sectional study on 480 undergraduate students ages 18 to 24 attending medical and engineering colleges in the Jammu region in order to see how addicted individuals were to the Internet using Young's Internet addiction scale and the DASS 42 scale to measure depression, anxiety, and stress (Kumari, R., et al., 2022). According to Kumari, R., et al. (2022), "Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS) is a 42 questionnaire that includes three self-report scales designed to measure the negative emotional states of depression, anxiety, and stress" (p. 326). This research

study concluded that Internet addiction is associated with psychopathology, which is “the study of the same concepts within the realm of mental health (or illness)” (Cuncic, 2020).

Understanding psychopathology is very important because it helps individuals explore the problems that are related to mental health as well as helps people understand, interpret, and solve mental health issues. Internet addiction was also found in 78.7% of the respondents, and there was a higher prevalence in males than females when it came to Internet addiction.

The impacts of problematic Internet usage shows the negative and harmful effects that online dating, social media, and time spent on the Internet in general has on young adults/adolescents. The increase in potential victimization to sexual harassment both online and offline as a result of oversharing and having other risky behaviors online show that the effects of the Internet can be harmful to those of all ages, both male and female, and displays a shocking correlation between online dating application use and higher probability of victimization experiences. This study seems to display that people are aware of the dangers, and for the most part they avoid those that could lead to becoming a victim of cyberbullying. The most important instance where this is not true is in the case of loneliness, where those people who are aware of the dangers do not care and continue to conduct risky online behavior anyway. There is also a positive correlation with Internet-addicted people having a mental health disorder that deals with depression, anxiety, or overwhelming stress. An urgent need exists for health professionals to develop an effective strategy in order to prevent Internet addiction as well as victimization and bring awareness to mental health. Mental health is very important, and it can be highly detrimental for a person to deal with the barrage of issues associated with Internet addiction. Not only does problematic Internet usage lead to mental health issues, but it also creates a detrimental decline in students' education and motivation to study. All of these factors from several different

studies show the severe negative impact prolonged use of the Internet has, in addition to what needs to change in the world to help protect those who use the Internet from suffering some of these drastic consequences.

Methods

Participants

We plan to have a few different target populations as we would like to get a clearer picture of what is happening to people as they develop as a result of the Internet. We would first use purposive sampling to get the wider range of 5th to 8th grade students from the Green Bay area, High School students from the Green Bay area, Saint Norbert College students, and Saint Norbert College faculty and staff. After we have as many within these subsections take the survey, we will then switch to systematic sampling to ensure we are getting a more random sample as well as making sure we are not smothered by responses. We would take every 5th response and include that within our study. To recruit people to take our survey, we would go to each school, give a small presentation to the class we are trying to get responses from that day, and then give them the surveys to do after we take questions. Same would go for high school, and then, for college, we would send out a survey link via email after a little description and have posters everywhere to promote the survey to both students and faculty.

The demographic information that would be necessary is age and gender. The age would be necessary since the research involves how Internet usage impacts people throughout their lives. The impacts, both positive and negative, will be different depending on how old the person is and how much time they spend on the Internet. As information is different with age, it is also important for gender. Due to the way society functions, gender has a powerful role in people's lives, and it logically follows that it will impact their virtual lives as well. Society has roles it

expects people to fall in based on how they identify, which may involve them using the Internet for support.

Survey

For our survey, we created a link instead of writing it out in the document to save space as well as make it easier to view. By doing this, we also allowed for a more realistic approach to our survey as we could share the link with those whom we wished to survey. Our survey intro will be: Hello, and thank you for participating in this survey! This survey will ask you questions regarding emotions you have felt and experiences you have had while using the Internet. As a participant in this study, we ask that you please fill out a survey that focuses on Internet usage and its subsequent impacts on users. The study will include questions about your demographics, experiences with the Internet, and perceived personal impacts from Internet usage. Please answer all of the questions to the best of your ability. Please read each question carefully and respond as honestly as possible. The responses that you give for this survey will remain anonymous. We greatly appreciate your participation in making this data the best possible!

The link is as follows:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfFgTRe64aT8W65nu1zrXNtyNk7uWWbq_ZtuItSkUI2Gil4Eg/viewform?usp=sf_link

Interview

To start our interview protocol, we will have a small introduction similar to the survey introduction. It will be: Hello and welcome to our interview! We are truly excited that you are able to join us and help us get a better understanding of our research by answering a couple of questions. We will be asking you questions regarding your Internet usage and habits, experiences on the Internet, your personal thoughts and opinions about the Internet, and perceived personal

impacts from Internet usage. All of your answers will remain confidential and anonymous as we will only refer to this session in numerical format. We only ask that you answer each question as truthfully as possible and to the best of your abilities. Thank you for being willing to participate in this interview today and we appreciate your answers!

Our finalized interview protocol will be listed below in the order that we would ask the participants. We would try to maintain the same questions in the same order to ensure the most uniform qualitative answers as possible to try and avoid the chance that a change in order would give different answers.

1. What are your Internet habits and tendencies (e.g. time spent, devices used, platforms visited, ect) including how much time do you spend on the Internet daily?
2. What facet of the Internet do you spend the most time on? It can be a specific app, a general area (like online shopping or social media), or anything in between that you spend lots of time on.
3. After spending time on social media, how do you tend to feel? Does it vary based on the websites used?
4. How would you describe your overall satisfaction/experience while using the Internet?
5. Building off the previous question, how would you describe your emotions before, during, and after using the Internet?
6. How has your experiences with Internet usage personally impacted your life?
7. What is the most useful and/or helpful aspect or part of the Internet according to you? What is the most harmful? Is there anything else you consider to be a benefit and/or a drawback of Internet usage?

8. Do you think that there should be a minimum age that one has to achieve before being able to use the Internet in general? Why or why not (if yes, what age)?
9. In your opinion, has our society benefitted or been harmed by the Internet in general?
Explain your opinion.
10. Please reflect on your Internet usage within certain aspects of your life such as education (e.g., motivation to study) and personal well-being (e.g., mental health). In what ways has Internet usage specifically affected these areas of your life?
11. Do you think there is any correlation between mental health and the Internet? Is that correlation positive or negative? Explain.
12. Do you think that taking breaks from the Internet should be encouraged? Why or why not?
13. Have you ever experienced cyberbullying, a cybercrime, or have been pressured to do something you did not want to as a result of the Internet? If yes, and you are comfortable sharing, what was it?
14. Do you use the Internet more for class, work, or for recreation?
15. In your experience, has education benefited from being online, or has the increasing switch to more digital learning platforms done more harm than good?
16. Does using the Internet make you more or less productive?
17. How would you describe someone who is addicted to the Internet? Do you fall under that definition? Does anyone you know fall under it?
18. Do you think there is a section of the population (age wise) that should be protected when it comes to having access to the Internet and/or social media? What would that age range look like?

19. When was the first time that you were first introduced to social media, and how did you react to it? Do you wish that someone would have protected your online usage when you were younger/currently?
20. How meaningful are your relationships on social media? If you consider your social media relationships important, do your connections on social media take precedence over your in-person relationships/do you prioritize your online relationships more?
21. In all honesty, do you show your true self on social media? If you answered no, why do you try to hide certain information about who you truly are?
22. When you look at images on social media that society deems as “perfection,” do you tend to wish that you looked or were like that individual? If answered yes, how does this affect your self-esteem, if at all?

Similar to before the interview, after our interview we will end with a short conclusion to wrap up the interview and it will be: Thank you so much for participating in this interview. We are truly grateful for the time you have granted us to help with our research project and appreciate hearing your thoughts on the variety of matters we discussed. If there is anything else that you wish to speak on, share, or clarify regarding what we talked about, please do so now as we are at the end of our time. You can also reach out to us if you have any other questions or concerns regarding the survey. Thank you so much again for your time and participation!

Anticipated Results

It is anticipated that the quantitative survey results should align with the aforementioned research, revealing the negative effects of excessive Internet usage for participants who frequent the Internet. Furthermore, results obtained from the survey and Likert scale type questions should support the pre-existing notions that problematic Internet usage does, in fact, have

negative impacts on a person's mental health, including but not limited to: self-esteem, depression, and loneliness. Additionally, data gathered from the survey should also indicate the harmful impacts of excessive Internet usage on cyberbullying, as it would increase the likelihood of victimization. Lastly, results should highlight that problematic Internet usage also decreases a person's motivation to study and learn when it comes to educational motivation. Because this survey is quantitative, the format will generate answers that can be statistically analyzed using computer software and numerical analyses to support the aforementioned predictions.

It is anticipated that the interview results should align with the previous research, indicating the negative effects of problematic Internet use for participants who frequent the Internet. The results gathered via an interview with research participants should support previous research that emphasized how excessive Internet usage does negatively impact a person's mental health when it pertains to areas such as loneliness, depression, and self-esteem. Furthermore, themes and units achieved from the answers of the interviewees should show the harmful impacts of problematic Internet usage on cyberbullying victimization and online dating. The results should also reveal the negative impact of excessive Internet usage on a person's motivation to study and learn, as evidenced in educational systems. Overall, the results gathered from the subsequent interview process should provide more personalized information and experiences pertaining to the negative effects of problematic Internet usage, given the fact that qualitative research is more subjective.

Conclusion

Our study uses qualitative and quantitative methods to research the impacts of Internet usage on people throughout their lives. The data collected involves people's perspectives on their use of the Internet and its impact on their lives, which can be used to generalize how others feel

about technology usage. The answers that we hope to find include ones that support our research question where technology, namely the Internet, has a significantly negative impact on our lives. The negative effects the Internet has on a person's mental health can lead to depression and loneliness, which in turn leads to risky behavior online as well as increased Internet usage. This is a vicious cycle that we hope to find as the results should also conclude that there is a decrease in motivation to study as a result of Internet use. Moreover, we hope that our findings align with previous research and that there is a correlation between cyberbullying, online dating, and overall Internet use that is problematic and leads to an increased risk in cyber victimization. The Internet is a major part of everyday life, and this data can help people realize the potential harms that can come along with such a useful and commonly utilized tool. Understanding how the Internet has impacted the past and present of one's life is an important step towards realizing the cognitive effects that it could have and potentially lead to proper resources to help quell some of these negative side effects.

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Appendix

Group Work Log

Group Member Name	Tasks Completed
1. Anna Claerbaut	• Added own survey and interview questions to Shared Drive • Found more definitions to clarify our variables • Worked on conclusion of Literature Review to make it more concise • Discussed concepts for methods section • Worked on the anticipated results sections following the surveys • Compiled the best questions into a separate document for both the surveys and the interviews • Used some of my questions for the quantitative survey and qualitative interview • Worked on shortening conclusion • Minor review of final document
2. Stephanie Faudoa	• Added own survey and interview questions to Shared Drive • Created the survey and related link for the study questions for easier accessibility • Compiled the best questions into a separate document for both the surveys and the interviews • Had to make a second survey on Google because Survey Monkey link was not working properly. • Made sure other individuals would be able to access the survey. • Turned in final paper!!

	• Looked over references sheet and made sure minor mistakes were fixed.
3. Katie Holcombe	• Created the Final document • Added own survey and interview questions to Shared Drive • Compiled professor's comments from the Literature Review to our own shared document • Fixed citations and created References section • Revised parts of the Literature Review and copied it into the final document • Described how the surveys would be conducted and what the target populations were • Wrote the explanation for the survey section and why we chose to use a link • Emailed the professor for clarification • Contributed to the conclusion paragraph and worked on fine tuning the details • Compiled the best questions into a separate folder for both the surveys and the interviews • Used and edited both my own and others' interview and survey questions to create the final draft • Created the introductions and conclusions for the survey and interview protocol • Organized and inserted the interview protocol into the final document • Worked on formatting for the final document • Made edits and looked over the final product
4. Lauren Stoeger	• Created a Shared Drive • Added own survey and interview questions to Shared Drive • Double-checked citations for accuracy • Described the demographics that would be studied • Wrote conclusion paragraph • Minor edits on survey questions and anticipated results sections • Compiled the best questions into a separate document for both the surveys and the interviews • Minor edits in literature review