

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Journal of Adolescence

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jado

The Generalized Problematic Internet Use Scale 2: Validation and test of the model to Facebook use



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 12 May 2016

Received in revised form 10 November 2016

Accepted 13 November 2016

Keywords:

GPIUS2

Facebook use

Adolescence

Portuguese version

ABSTRACT

The main goals of the present study were to test the psychometric properties of a Portuguese version of the GPIUS2 (Generalized Problematic Internet Use Scale 2, Caplan, 2010), and to test whether the cognitive-behavioral model proposed by Caplan (2010) replicated in the context of Facebook use. We used a sample of 761 Portuguese adolescents (53.7% boys, 46.3% girls, mean age = 15.8). Our results showed that the data presented an adequate fit to the original model using confirmatory factor analysis. The scale presented also good internal consistency and adequate construct validity. The cognitive-behavioral model was also applicable to the Facebook context, presenting good fit. Consistently with previous findings we found that preference for online social interaction and the use of Facebook to mood regulation purposes, predicted positively and significantly the deficient self-regulation in Facebook use, which in turn was a significant predictor of the negative outcomes associated with this use.

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1. Introduction

Internet is nowadays a powerful source of information and communication worldwide, rising many questions about its use and the social and psychological consequences of it (Guitton, 2014). Adolescence, as a developmental period, in which young people are developing their sense of identity (Erikson, 1959) as well as expanding their social networks (Collins, 2003) may be particularly sensitive to this mean of communication. Recent statistics report that 47% of the people in Europe between 16 and 74 years use Internet to participate in social networks (Eurostat, 2015). A Portuguese study found that about 68% of Portuguese adolescents actively use social networks (Microsoft, 2010).

A significant part of adolescents' social interaction occurs today in the online environment and as a result, online social networks have become a potential developmental context, where adolescents express themselves, deal with the challenges of age and can take out developmental advantages (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008; Tzavela & Mavromati, 2013). Nevertheless, Internet use has been raising the problem of Internet addiction, bringing to discussion the potentially harmful use of Internet, leading to low performance at school (EU NET, 2013) and difficulties in establishing social relationships (Kraut et al., 1998).

The present study adopts the concept of problematic Internet use (PIU), as it is used in Caplan studies (Caplan, 2002, 2005, 2010), and rooted in Davis' cognitive-behavioral theory (Davis, 2001). Davis' model proposes PIU as a distinct pattern of

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Internet-related cognitions and behaviors that result in negative life outcomes, dividing it in specific PIU and generalized PIU. Specific PIU involves overuse or abuse of some specific Internet functions (e.g., gambling), and generalized PIU refers to a multidimensional overuse of Internet itself resulting in negative consequences to individuals' lives (Davis, 2001). In line with this model, Caplan (2002) constructed the Generalized Problematic Internet Use Scale (GPIUS), to assess the generalized PIU and later improved this measure to the Generalized Problematic Internet Use Scale 2 proposing a two-step approach to the theory and measurement of generalized problematic Internet use (Caplan, 2010). Other studies have also acknowledged a distinction between specific and generalized online addictive behaviors (Griffiths & Pontes, 2014; Montag et al., 2015).

The cognitive-behavioral model of PIU (Caplan, 2002, 2003; Davis, 2001) explores the role of dysfunctional cognitions and learning processes in the development and maintenance of PIU (Davis, 2001; Caplan, 2002; Douglas et al., 2008). The model suggests that PIU involves cognitive processes as well as dysfunctional behaviors, which result in negative consequences to individuals' lives (Davis, 2001). According to the model, in terms of direct effects, individuals with a preference for online social interaction are more likely to use Internet to regulate their mood (Caplan, 2005, 2007, 2010) and also tend to present a deficient self-regulation in terms of Internet use (Kim & Davis, 2009). Individuals who use Internet for mood regulation purposes tend to present a deficient self-regulation (LaRose, Lin, & Eastin, 2003). Additionally, a deficient self-regulation in Internet use leads to negative outcomes in individuals' lives (Caplan, 2005; Kim & Davis, 2009). The model also contemplates some indirect effects between variables, stating that the relationship between Preference for Online Social Interaction (POSI) and Deficient Self-Regulation (DSR) is mediated by Mood Regulation (MR); the relationship between POSI and Negative Outcomes (NO) is mediated by DSR and the relationship between MR and NO is mediated by DSR (see Fig. 1). In a longitudinal study, Gámez-Guadix, Calvete, Orue, and Las Hayas (2015) found that DSR at time 1 predicted an increase in POSI interactions, in MR, and in NO of the Internet at time 2. This result highlights the importance of diminished self-control over cognition and behaviors in the maintenance of PIU, understood as a deficit in self-conscious processes that allow the individual to monitor, judge, and adjust his or her own behavior (LaRose, 2011; LaRose et al., 2003). Deficient self-regulation is then a key component in maintaining PIU overtime.

Research has found evidence to support the relationship between PIU and many psychological and well-being variables. Associations have been found with loneliness (Ceyhan & Ceyhan, 2008; Kim, LaRose, & Peng, 2009), low self-esteem (Armstrong, Phillips, & Saling, 2000; Fioravanti, Dettore, & Casale, 2012; Kim & Davis, 2009) and social anxiety (Ko, Yen, Chen, Yeh, & Yen, 2009; Lee & Stapinski, 2012), highlighting the utility and validity of PIU.

In the present study, we intended to apply the model of problematic Internet use to Facebook use in adolescence, trying to understand if all the paths proposed by the cognitive-behavioral model remain the same and if this social network can be approached as part of Internet addiction and studied in similar ways. Facebook is the most used social network worldwide, and in Portugal statistics show that there are 5.600.000 active users (Internet World Stats, 2015), and 25% of them are adolescents (Statista, 2014). Since adolescents are extending their peer network as part of the process of developing their sense of identity and autonomy, online communication might have a strong developmental impact (Smahel, Brown, & Blinka, 2012). As this communication is mainly done currently on Facebook, this seems to be an important field to study PIU and to test whether the cognitive-behavioral model applies to this context. There are reasons to assume there are similarities between Internet use and Facebook use, because the last is a computer mediated communication based on Internet. However people use Internet for more reasons and different functions compared to Facebook that continues to be essential used for social networking purposes. So, although there are reasons to believe that the cognitive-behavioral model of the problematic Internet use applies to what we call "problematic Facebook use", studies on the validation of this model to this context should be conducted.

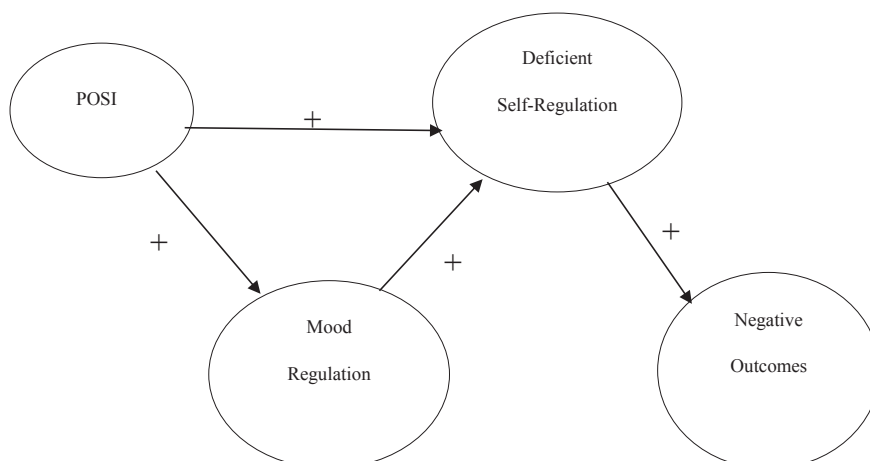


Fig. 1. Hypothesized model of GPIUS 2.

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