Problematic internet usage self-regulation dilemmas: Effects of presentation format on perceived value of behavior

David Dunbar*, Michael Proeve Dr., Rachel Roberts Dr.
School of Psychology, University of Adelaide, Australia

Abstract

A model of the dynamics of self-regulation describes two patterns of commitment or progress that individuals may follow when selecting goal directed behaviors. In the commitment pattern, individuals are more likely to highlight congruent goal behavior choices while in the progress pattern individuals are more likely to balance between incongruent and congruent goal behavior choices. This study set out to test the model in the context of problematic Internet usage. After being primed about problematic Internet usage, a sample of 97 undergraduate university students completed an online survey rating the value of Internet, academic and social-related behaviors across three conditions. The three conditions paired behaviors so that they appeared to complement each other, appeared to compete against each other, and presented them individually. Results showed that Internet behaviors were rated more highly when presented as complementary than when presented as competing, supporting the prediction that presentation format primes progress and commitment frameworks and leads to higher ratings of incongruent goal behavior in the progress condition. While results did not fully support the model’s predictions regarding congruent goal behavior, they were in the predicted direction with small to moderate effect sizes. This study may inform clinical interventions by suggesting that individuals experiencing issues with problematic Internet usage would benefit from framing self-regulatory dilemmas in a competing format.

1. Introduction

A research program conducted by Ayelet Fishbach and colleagues over the last decade has investigated a dual representation model of goal directed behavior (Fishbach & Shen, 2014; Fishbach, Zhang, & Koo, 2009). This novel research investigating the simultaneous pursuit of multiple goals and temptations and the effects on subsequent behavioral outcomes has uncovered many processes and variables contributing to the dynamics of self-regulation. At the heart of their research is the fundamental proposition that goals can be represented as commitment to, or progress towards, a desired end state, and that these two representation frameworks drive different behavioral choices (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005). For a brief overview see Table 1 and for a more comprehensive discussion see Fishbach and Zhang (2009).1

A commitment framework promotes highlighting of the focal goal instead of temptations (or incongruent goal behaviors) and leads to more goal congruent behavioral choices, whereas a progress framework promotes balancing choices between the focal goal and other goals or temptations, leading to the likelihood of fewer goal-congruent choices and more goal-incongruent outcomes (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005). These two representational frameworks can be primed by a variety of processes and factors (Fishbach et al., 2009). To date, the frameworks have been utilized in marketing and consumer studies (Campbell & Warren, 2015; Fitzsimons, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, 2008; Wilcox, Vallen, Block, & Fitzsimons, 2009) but have yet to be applied in a clinical setting. The present study seeks to apply the theory in a clinical context: specifically, the domain of problematic Internet usage (PIU).

1 The term model is used throughout the paper in reference to the overall concepts, hypotheses, and principles described by the self-regulation theories developed by Fishbach and colleagues. The term framework is used in reference to the two mental representation frames that an individual can adopt of commitment or progress, as predicted by the model.
1.1. Problematic internet use

Problematic Internet usage is a growing and global public health concern (Jelenchick et al., 2014; Spada, 2014) and despite the first published case being recorded in 1996 (Young, 1996), psychological research has not kept up with the technological advances (Aboujaoude, 2010) and growing popularity of Internet usage (World Internet Users and 2014 Population Stats, 2014). Mobile platform penetration has reached more than 90% worldwide with almost 7 billion mobile subscriptions (International Telecommunication Union, 2014). Mobile Internet usage recently surpassed desktop usage illustrating that individuals have more and more constant internet access (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2014; comScore, 2014).

Psychological research on PIU has blossomed in recent years, but there is still not enough known about PIU to draw anything other than preliminary conclusions (Winkler, Dorsing, Rief, Shen, & Glombiewski, 2013). New terms are being proposed for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), such as nomophobia (fear of being without a mobile device) to describe issues individuals are experiencing (Bragazzi & Del Puente, 2014) with smartphone addiction a rising concern (Pavia, Cavani, Di Blasi, & Giordano, 2016; Samaha & Hawi, 2016; Sapacz, Rockman, & Clark, 2016; Wang, Wang, Gaskin, & Wang, 2015). Even with the rise in research there is still yet to be consensus in the literature, with problematic Internet usage also known as Internet addiction, pathological Internet use and Internet dependence (Spada, 2014). Despite a lack of consensus overall, numerous studies have shown excessive use of the Internet is associated with poorer academic achievement and personal relationship quality for adolescents and young adults (Aboujaoude, 2010; Jelenchick et al., 2014; Lopez-Fernandez, Honrubia-Serrano, Freixa-Blanxart, & Gibson, 2014; Muusses, Finkenauer, Kerkhof, & Billedo, 2014; Wang, Jackson, Gaskin, & Wang, 2014; Yau, Potenza, & White, 2013).

1.2. Fishbach research program and model

The research program conducted by Fishbach and colleagues identified many processes and variables that influence the dynamics of self-regulation. These include the following:

- the type of feedback that is sought and offered when under commitment or progress framings (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005; Fishbach, Eyal, & Finkelstein, 2010);
- high versus uncertain commitment to a goal, and focusing on accomplished goal progress or unaccomplished goal progress (Koo & Fishbach, 2008, 2012);
- focusing on an abstract or high level goal versus an individual sub-goal or concrete action when receiving positive or negative feedback (Fishbach, Dhar, & Zhang, 2006);
- future expectations of goal progress (Zhang, Fishbach, & Dhar, 2007);
- the influence of mood attribution towards success or failure of goal attainment (Fishbach & Labroo, 2007); and
- how presentation format can affect how two behaviors can be perceived (Fishbach & Zhang, 2008).

It is the last factor, presentation format, which will serve as the starting point for testing the theories in a clinical context. Presentation format can be established with no interaction with other processes or variables in the model, which allows us to test the fundamental principle of highlighting and balancing and the effect those dynamics have on subsequent behavioral choices in the new clinical context.

1.3. Current study context from model

Previous research (Fishbach & Zhang, 2008) has found that presentation format can prime the two representational formats such that when different behavioral choices were presented and arranged so that they appeared to complement each other a pattern of balancing was promoted (a progress framework), but when the choices were arranged so that they appeared to compete against each other a pattern of highlighting (a commitment framework) was promoted. The respective primed progress and commitment representations then resulted in higher evaluations of goal-incongruent behavior compared to goal-congruent behavior in the progress group and lower goal-incongruent evaluations of behaviors compared to goal-congruent behaviors for the commitment group (Fishbach & Zhang, 2008).

1.4. Why self-regulation is important

Self-regulation dilemmas are a daily occurrence (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007), for example: “Should I have the chocolate cake or do I go for the salad?” or “Should I surf the Internet right now and then study for my exam?” Given the ubiquity of the Internet in modern living (World Internet Users and 2014 Population Stats, 2014) it seems unrealistic that the final goal for any treatment of problematic Internet usage would be complete abstinence. Therefore, a more likely intervention approach would be directed at some form of moderation training and this treatment would involve developing and implementing behavioral strategies for coping with self-regulation dilemmas (Rotgers, 2004). Factors that decrease the likelihood of incongruent goal actions and increase the likelihood of congruent goal actions would be promoted in such an intervention.

Throughout any intervention, clinicians ask questions and provide feedback to clients (Beck, 2011; Miller & Rollnick, 2012). If the presentation format of the question and feedback can sway later behavioral choices of the client then it is important for a clinician to know how to present the questions and feedback in order to ensure the best possible results.

1.5. The present research

The present study sought to apply the dynamics of this self-regulation model in a clinical context by looking at the basic premise of highlighting (a commitment framework) or balancing (a progress framework), asking if they can be primed by presentation format, and determining if those two representations produce opposite behavioral outcomes as predicted by the model. A goal to reduce personal Internet usage was primed by way of reading a
دریافت فوری
متن کامل مقاله

امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات