



Internet function and Internet addictive behavior

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Available online 9 April 2004

Abstract

Ju [Research on personal characteristics, the behavior of using Internet and Internet addiction for Taiwanese college study. Master thesis. Taiwan, 2000] found the Internet function was related to the severity of Internet addiction, and this study explored the relationship between the Internet function and the Internet addictive behavior. Seventy-six college students were included in this study and had completed the Internet use function questionnaire (social function, informational function, leisure function and the virtual emotional function) and the Chinese Internet Addiction Scale (compulsive use, withdrawal, tolerance, time management problem and interpersonal and health problems). The study revealed not only the relationship between the social function and the index of the Internet dependence (compulsive use, withdrawal, tolerance and the problems in the interpersonal relationship and health), but also the correlation between the information function and the index of the Internet abuse (the problems in the interpersonal relationship and health). We found the social function played the core role in the Internet addictive behavior and the mechanism needs further discussion.

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Keywords: Internet; Addiction; Interpersonal

1. Introduction

The Internet using was popular among the college students and they spent 164 min/day using the Internet on average (Yu, 2001). In Taiwan, 6% of the college students are Internet addicts (Chou & Hsiao, 2000). Therefore, the Internet using problems deserve careful attention.

Various epithets are used to describe people who engage in excessive Internet using that results in negative outcomes such as “Internet addicts”, “computer-mediated

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communication addictive”, “problematic Internet use” (Caplan, 2002) and “the pathological Internet use” (Davis, 2001). “The problematic Internet use”, “Internet addiction (disorder)”, “Internetomania” and “pathological Internet use” were the pseudonym terms (Shapira et al., 2003). The “Internet addictive behavior (disorder)” was the clearest conceptualization and appeared with the highest frequency in the related studies (Fung, 2002; Ju, 2000; Yu, 2001). At first, Goldberg (1995) used “the Internet addiction disorder” to represent the human who has some problems following the Internet use, and Young (1996) defined the Internet addiction from the aspects of compulsive use, withdrawal, tolerance and related consequences of Internet dependence (Ju, 2000). In Taiwan, Cheng, Weng, Su, Wu, and Yang (2003) followed the concept of Young’s Internet addiction model and designed the Chinese Internet Addiction Scale (CIAS) to assess the Internet addictive behavior among Internet users in Taiwan (Fung, 2002). The subscales of CIAS were following the substance-dependent concept of DSM-IV. The subscales of CIAS not only included the core criteria like tolerance, withdrawal and dysfunction, but also added the impulsive use as an important criterion which was also a criterion in DSM-III-R. In this study, the CIAS was used to assess the Internet addictive behavior.

There were already many studies discussed the factors related to the Internet addictive behavior (IAB). The psychopathology factors like depression and anxiety (Yu, 2001), the personality factors, like neurosis, openness and consciousness (Yu, 2001), sensation seeking (Lin & Tsai, 2002), self-esteem (Ju, 2000), attachment (Wang, 2000), the Internet use behavior and gender (Fung, 2002) were related to the IAB. There are many intrapersonal and interpersonal variables relating to the IAB. However, those studies only explored the relationship between the above-referred variables and the Internet use behavior (addictive or problematic use) without further constructing a model to explain the addictive or problematic use.

Davis (2001) used the cognitive-behavior model to explain the pathological Internet use (PIU), which was similar to the Internet addictive behavior. According to his model, maladaptive cognition and social isolation played the proximal roles in the pathological Internet use. Caplan (2002) further included 386 college students to explain PIU by using the cognitive-behavior model and he found that one’s preference for computer-mediated social interaction played a role in the etiology, development and outcome of generalized PIU. Caplan (2002) found the interpersonal factor yielded the generalized PIU. Ju (2000) found the Internet function was related to the severity of Internet addiction and the social function ($r = 0.62$) of Internet for the college student can be the best example. Those studies had revealed that the interpersonal factors play the important role in the Internet behavior spectrum.

As the addictive behavior, the substance had functioned as a stuff which cannot be abandoned (DSM-IV). Taking tobacco for an example and we found tobacco had the social, pleasure, empowering, emotional and full-fledged function for the adolescents who had the tobacco dependence. Young (1998) found the Internet dependence user used Internet for social interaction (Ju, 2000). Therefore, the social function of Internet may be an important issue in the Internet addiction study.

The interpersonal aspect was important for the Internet users (Amichai-Hamburger & Ben-Artzi, 2003; Cornwell & Lundgren, 2001; Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2003). As shown in those studies, the interpersonal factor played an important role in the IAB. Although those studies disclosed the interpersonal function of Internet and its influence

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