

Original Research Article

Factors affecting internet use among university students in Sarawak, Malaysia: an empirical study

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ABSTRACT

Background: The internet has become an indispensable tool for communication, academic research, information and entertainment. However, heavy users of the internet lead to less confidence in social skills and the tendency to be isolated. The study aimed to assess the pattern of internet use and factors affecting problematic internet use among university students.

Methods: This cross-sectional study conducted among the students of a university in Sarawak, Malaysia. A multistage cluster sampling technique was adapted to select the participants. Data were collected from 463 students by self-administered questionnaire. Hierarchical binary logistic regression analysis was done to determine the potential factors for problematic internet use.

Results: The mean age of the students was 22 years, with a standard deviation of 1.6 years. Two-fifths (61.8%) of the students had no problematic internet use. However, 35.4% had moderate and 2.8% had severe problematic internet use. Hierarchical binary logistic regression analysis found that age of the students, year of study, duration of daily internet use and use of social networking like Skype appeared to be potential predictors of problematic internet use ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusions: This study was conducted in only one university, thus did not depict the overall scenarios of the country. The implications of the findings are still worth noting in the process of designing internet addiction studies among university students. Overall, this study has unearthed some useful insights which can serve as a guide to more elaborate studies.

Keywords: Internet use, Malaysia, Sarawak, University students

INTRODUCTION

The internet has changed the way we communicate, live and work. With its remarkable fast data speed, it brings communication across the globe to a new dimension. According to World Internet Use Statistics, 3.58 billion of the world population in 2017 were using the internet.¹ The majority of an internet user is from East and South Asia, where country such as Korea has the fastest internet

speed in the world. Internet use in Malaysia increases exponentially throughout the years. Recent data showed that 68.7% of Malaysian are using the internet and spending an average of 2.8 hours on the internet per day. The school-goers were found to spend on an average of 20.9 hours a week on the internet.² The numbers of internet users in Malaysia has increased from 70.1% in 2015 to 80.1% in 2017.³ A recent internet users survey in Malaysia revealed that male's internet users (57.4%)