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Authors: Ryan Altawali, Abdulaziz Abaoud, Fahad Alhowaymel

Title:

Influence of internet addiction on Anxiety among college students.

Background:

Internet addiction has become a global public health concern that affects college students. Internet addiction has influenced individuals' psychological and emotional health such as anxiety. However, internet addiction's impact on anxiety among college students in Saudi Arabia is not clear.

Objective:

To assess the level of internet addiction and anxiety among college students and to examine the relationship between them.

Methods:

The study utilized a cross-sectional design and was conducted among college students who attended undergraduate programs at one university in a suburban area of Riyadh province. Participants included 200 students from different majors. A snowball sampling technique was performed using an online survey that was distributed via electronic platforms. The measurement tools included demographic questions, the Internet Addiction Test (IAT), and the GAD-7 anxiety scale. Descriptive statistics (i.e., means, percentages, and standard deviations) were calculated and multiple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the study's aim.

Results:

Participants' mean age was 20.96 years and in terms of students' gender, they were almost equal. Approximately 24% of the participants were nursing students. Most students were in the first and third year of their programs (24.5% and 25%, respectively). The mean score for internet addiction was 44.75. According to the IAT manual categories, the results revealed that 55.5% of students were considered average internet users, 34.1% experienced occasional or frequent problems because of internet use, and only 4.4% experienced significant problems related to internet use. The mean score of anxiety was 8.57 which indicated mild anxiety. The regression analysis showed that internet addiction significantly predicted anxiety ($\beta=.538$, $t=8.57$, $p<.001$). This means for every one-unit increase in the IAT score there is a 0.157 unit increase in the GAD-7 score among college students. Among included demographic variables (namely: gender, major, and academic year), the only major was significantly related to anxiety.

Conclusion:

The findings of the study revealed that internet addiction is a significant predictor of anxiety among college students. The results of this study shed light on the importance of universities' role in educating their students about the effective, useful, and safe use of the internet which will reflect on their health. Future studies should include students from different settings and consider other health and academic outcomes.