**A STUDY ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNET USAGE AND ANXIETY AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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**Abstract**

The main objective of this study was to investigate the difference in internet usage and the anxiety level of Chinese primary school students in Johor Bahru, Malaysia across gender. The study was also carried out to identify the correlation between the internet usage and anxiety level among students. A total number of 396 primary school students from the Chinese primary schools in Johor Bahru, Malaysia have been involved in this study who are sampled by using stratified simple random sampling technique. From the study, it was found that excessive internet usage could occur in students of any gender depending on their patterns, purposes or motivations of using internet. However, male students tended to involve in excessive internet usage. There was no significance difference between the mean of total Internet Addiction Test (IAT) score of male and female students. There was a significance difference between the mean of total and Child Anxiety Symptom Checklist (CASC) score of male and female students. Female students tended to be troubled by the anxiety symptoms. Internet usage could predict the prevalence of anxiety problem although the correlation was weak. The findings of the study are to create awareness among parents, teachers, schools and community regarding the issue of excessive internet usage and anxiety in children, as well as to enrich the current empirical research data and theoretical evidence in Malaysia especially for primary school students.

**Keywords:** Internet usage, anxiety, correlation, primary school students

**BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

In Malaysia, there is 76.9% of Internet users reported in 2016 according to a survey administrated by MCMC CATI Centre in Cyberjaya 1. The survey found that 83.2% of children aged between 5 and 17 are Internet users 1. Most of the children spend their time online in text communication, social networking, online gaming, searching tools and videos viewing 1,2. As children grow up, the purposes of using Internet will also be varied and expanded3,4. Some students, especially children, spend plenty of time on using Internet because they gain more satisfaction on Internet compared to their daily real life5. This scenario is not a good sign and should be highly concerned by parents or caregivers.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of the study is to investigate the relationship between Internet usage and the anxiety level of Chinese primary school students in Johor Bahru. Besides, this study will also investigate the difference in internet usage and anxiety between male and female students.

**METHODOLOGY**

The research design of this study takes the form of the quantitative research approach. Statistical analysis of numerical data was done to deduct a conclusion to explain the issue. This research study was administered in 17 Chinese primary schools in Johor Bahru district of Johor state. This research applied stratified simple random sampling to determine the population samples. 386 students of Year 4 to Year 6 from the Chinese primary schools in Johor Bahru district had been randomly selected as the samples of the study.

**FINDINGS**

Table 1 showed the test statistics for the total IAT score of male and female primary school students. The significant value, .093, was greater than the alpha value, .05, thus failed to reject the null hypothesis. There was no significance difference between the mean of total IAT score of male and female students (*z* = -1.682, p = .093). The results suggested that there was no significant difference in Internet usage between male and female students.

**Table 1:** Test Statistics for the total IAT score of male and female primary school students

|  | IAT |
| --- | --- |
| Mann-Whitney U | 16782.500 |
| Wilcoxon W | 35503.500 |
| Z | -1.682 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | .093 |

Table 2 showed the test statistics for the total CASC score between male and female students. The significant value, .000, was less than the alpha value, .05, thus rejected the null hypothesis. There was a significance difference between the mean of total CASC score of male and female students (*z* = -3.983, p = .000). The results suggested that there was a significant difference in level of anxiety symptom between male and female students.

**Table 2:** Test Statistics for the total CASC score of male and female primary school students

|  | CASC |
| --- | --- |
| Mann-Whitney U | 14261.00 |
| Wilcoxon W | 32982.00 |
| Z | -3.983 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |

**DISCUSSION**

According to the findings, there was no significant difference in Internet usage between male and female primary school students. The findings showed that male students had higher prevalence of excessive Internet usage than female students as supported by several past studies 3,11-12. This might be due to the low self-controllability of male students in using Internet in which they were more likely to involve in excessive usage of Internet than female students18. This study had proven that excessive Internet usage did not necessarily occur in specific gender because there was no significant difference in Internet usage between male and female students. The gender gaps in accessing Internet had been reducing as Internet access at home and school were becoming more common19. Both male and female students might show equivalence of Internet usage but the patterns, purposes or motivations of using Internet would be different as supported by Mok3 and MCMC1.

The results suggested that there was a significant difference in level of anxiety symptom between male and female primary school students. The findings showed that female students had higher prevalence of anxiety problem than male students. According to most studies, females were usually found to have higher prevalence of anxiety disorder than males at a younger age13-14. This was probably because females were easier to be influenced than males in terms of emotion due to the gonadal hormones of females in increasing the prevalence and severity of anxiety disorders in females15-16. Females showed fear extinction more easily compared to males15. In contrast, male gonadal hormone was reported to have the function of reducing anxiety by reducing the reaction of stress17. Furthermore, females were more protected by their parents since young age. Therefore, the parenting style of protecting female children physically had increased their feeling of vulnerability20. Male children would be encouraged and praised for their assertiveness and independent more than female children and that gave the males stronger sense of security that they had control over the environment20.

**CONCLUSION**

This study focused on the relationship between Internet usage and anxiety among Chinese primary school students in Johor Bahru. It was found that excessive Internet usage could occur in students of any gender as there was no significance difference in Internet usage between male and female students. However, male students showed slightly higher tendency of excessive Internet usage probably due to their lower self-control than females18. Furthermore, female students had higher tendency to be troubled by the anxiety symptoms most probably due to the female godonal hormones that stimulated the prevalence of anxiety feeling and the overprotecting parenting style that might cause them to be more vulnerable to fear and anxiety20. There was a weak, positive correlation between the Internet usage and the anxiety symptom among students in this study. Internet usage of an individual could predict the prevalence of anxiety problem in that individual, although the correlation was weak. It was believed that primary school students were less likely to suffer from anxiety problems due to the protective parenting for children at age below 1221.

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**Conflict of Interest**:No

**Ethical Clearance**:Obtained from Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia

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1. Yong S.  Amro SA. Factors affecting stress in Malaysia: A Survey Study of Cancer Patients. Journal of Psychology, 2012 ,4(8), 236-245.

2. Davidson R. Econometric Theory and Methods. 2nd ed. Oxford: OUP Oxford 2009.

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2. Quote references in text using superscript (E.g: Previous studies proved that motivation is significant predictor of academic performance 1,2,3.)

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**Conflict of interest:** NIL
**Source of Funding:** Self source
**Ethical clearance: Done research committee**

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