Relationships between Internet Addiction and Loneliness, and Internet Addiction and Teenage Social Skills: A Case Study of Mathayom Suksa Students in the Northern Region

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Abstract

This study looks at the Relationships between Internet Addiction and Loneliness, and Internet Addiction and Teenage Social Skills: A Case Study of Mathayom Suksa Students in the Northern Region. This study aims to describe the relationships of internet addiction and lonely teenagers, and internet addiction and social skills of teenage students from 8 provinces in the upper northern region. This study used quantitative research methodology by collecting data from 400 questionnaires and qualitative research methodology by collecting data from the focus group to verify the study results.

This study found that Internet Addicts (AD) were 14.75 percent of the sample. It is also found correlations between internet addiction and loneliness as AD correlated to Possible Loneliness at the positive coefficient (R=.158; P ≤.01), but differed significantly in the negative coefficient to Not Lonely (R=-.137; P ≤.01).

In studying the relationship between AD and social skills, it found that AD correlated to Social Skills in negative behaviors as: Aggressiveness/ Antisocial Behavior (F=28.061; P≤.05), Conceit/ Haughtiness (F=17.017; P≤.05) and Loneliness/ Social Anxiety (F=23.603; P≤.05) at the positive coefficient. Nevertheless, in the relationship between AD and social skills, AD did not significantly correlate to positive behavior as Social Skills and Assertiveness

Keywords: *Internet addiction, Loneliness, Social Skills, Teenagers*

Introduction

Amid an information-based technological age, new innovative development called 'Information Technology' has much influence on society. It shrinks time and space in communication between people all around the world. The internet is one type of communication that helps people connect with others. There are numerous internet users in Thailand. In 2009 a survey by the National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) found that internet users increased from 6.9 million users in 2004 to 18.3 million users in 2009 (NECTEC surveys of internet users in 2009). It also found that the majority of internet users were aged between 10-19 years.

In 2009 there was a study by Prapimpan Suwannagoot and Atsara Prasertsing on internet effects which interfered with the physical and mental health of Thai teenagers. The study showed there were both positive and negative impacts upon teen internet users. However there were more negative effects upon teenagers than positive ones. An impact upon internet users could

be seen generally in the media that many teenagers spent too much time playing online games and some of them overused the internet resulting in failure of their studies.

An uncontrollable use of technology has been defined as a symptom of internet addiction (Young K.S., 1996). He also identified an addictive use of internet as the criteria for pathological gambling defined by the DSM-IV of the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 1994). Internet overuse can influence daily life and may affect real-life relationships because the internet creates a virtual world where people can spend too much time in that virtual world, tending to isolate themselves from the real world. Social isolation can affect daily life and some relationships with others. Those who spend too much time on the internet (internet overuse) might have problems in real life, especially teenagers, who are the largest group of internet users, and who easily risk using it inappropriately. Moreover, because teenagers are between childhood and adulthood, they have reached a particular milestone in their social and emotional development as adults. An interesting aspect of this study proves the relationship between internet use and the emotional and social aspects of teenagers.

This study aims to describe the relationships of internet addiction and lonely teenagers, and internet addiction and social skills of teenage students from 8 provinces in the upper northern region. It is also hoped that the results of this study will be advantageous to beneficiaries through protection and prevention of harmful internet overuse and abuse among adolescents.

Objective of this study

1. To describe the relationship between internet addiction and lonely teenagers among students in 8 provinces in the upper northern region.

2. To describe the relationship between internet addiction and the social skills of teenagers among students in 8 provinces in the upper northern region.

Research methodology

This study used quantitative research methodology to collect data from questionnaires and qualitative research methodology by collecting data from the focus group to verify the study results.

The questionnaire consisted of 4 parts as follows:

1) Demographic section and use of the internet among respondents

2) Internet addiction parts, which used the Internet Addiction Test (K.S. Young, 1998) and were translated into the Thai language.

3) Loneliness test, which used the UCLA Loneliness scale (Russell, D.W., 1996) and were translated into the Thai language.

4) Social skills test, which was applied from MESSY: the Matson Evaluation of Social Skills with Youngsters (Maycolm, L.M., 2005) and translated into the Thai language.

Data collection used multi-stage sampling by sending questionnaires to 14 provincial schools in 8 provinces in the upper northern region. 400 respondents completed the self-administered questionnaires. Data analysis used percentage and average on demographic sections, and correlation statistics in defining relationships between internet addiction parts and loneliness tests, and used F-Test statistics to explain relationships between internet addictions and social skills.

Results

This study found that Internet Addicts (AD) comprised 14.75 percent of the sample. Additionally there were more boy internet addicts than girls.

It also found correlations between internet addict behavior and loneliness as AD correlated to Possible Loneliness with a positive coefficient of

(R=.158; P ≤.01), but differed significantly with a negative coefficient to Not Lonely of (R=-.137; P ≤.01), as shown in the table below.

Table 1: shows the relationship between Internet Addiction and Loneliness

Loneliness level	Internet Addiction		
	Internet Addicts (AD)	Possible Addicts PAD	Moderate User (MU)
Excessively Lonely	-.067	.062	-.012
Possibly Lonely	.158**	-.047	-.106*
Not Lonely	-.137**	-.027	.111*

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01

In studying the relationship between AD and social skills, it found that AD correlated to Social Skills in negative behavior as, Aggressiveness/Antisocial Behavior (F=28.061; P≤.05), Conceit/Haughtiness (F=17.017; P≤.05) and Loneliness/Social Anxiety (F=23.603; P≤.05) as positive coefficients. Nevertheless, in the relationship between AD and social skills, AD do not significantly correlate positive behavior as Social Skills and Assertiveness, shown in the table below.

Table 2: shows the relationship between Internet Addiction and Social Skills

Social Skills	Between groups	Mean Difference
1. Aggressiveness/Antisocial Behavior	AD & PAD	.640*
	PAD & MU	.481*
	AD & MU	1.121*
2. Social Skills/Assertiveness	AD & PAD	.082
	PAD & MU	.155
	AD & MU	.237
3. Conceit/Haughtiness	AD & PAD	.557*
	PAD & MU	.392*
	AD & MU	.949*
4. Loneliness/Social Anxiety	AD & PAD	.551*
	PAD & MU	.481*
	AD & MU	1.033*

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01

Discussion

This recent study found 14.75 percent of sample students to be internet addicts, similar to previous studies such as in South Korea (Park S.K., Kim J.Y., and Cho C.B., 2009) which found 10.7 percent of students to be internet addicts. In Iran (Ghassemzadeh L., Shahraray M., Moradi A., 2008) 3.78 percent of Iranian students were found to be addicted to the internet and 5.93 percent was found in a Taiwanese study (Chou C., Hsiao M.C., 2000)

In Thailand there were also a previous study (Chatpong Tungmanee and Arunee Kamlang, 2002) which found that 9 percent of university students were addicted to the internet.

The findings of this study showed that internet addiction is related to possible loneliness, and in a different way, the moderate user relates to normal people as not-lonely. The basic emotional feeling of loneliness may affect daily life activities. Because of the significant relationship between MU and Not-lonely, it would be advantageous to limit internet use among teenagers to normal literacy use. Emotional problems wouldn't then be caused by internet use.

Regarding the relationship between internet addiction and social skills, data in table 2 shows that internet addiction has caused negative social skills behavior, namely aggressiveness/antisocial behavior, conceit/haughtiness and loneliness/social anxiety. Internet addiction is related to negative behavior of teenagers and has no significant relationship with positive social skills.

In conclusion internet addiction, as a behavioral addiction, is related to the level of loneliness and negative social skills among teenagers. They should be encouraged to use the internet properly including as an educational tool to enhance their education. Parents and supervisors should be aware of internet use among teenagers and should guide them towards internet literacy and wise use.

Further study

1. This study would be beneficial in the prevention of internet overuse among teenagers.

2. This study describes the relationship between internet addiction and loneliness but it does not define the direction of these two factors. That will be studied later.

3. This study only reflects the broad concept of the relationship between internet addiction and social skills. In addition, further study would focus more on details of how the internet affects social skills.

Disclosure Statement

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English Language

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