

Review Article

The relationship between IT consumption and anxiety in Pakistani youth

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Abstract

The present study was designed to measure the relationship between the consumption of Information Technology (IT) and anxiety among Pakistani youth. The inquiry included 200 conveniently selected Pakistani youth aged 16 to 24 years from 4 cities. The anxiety subscale of Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale was administered along with a demographic information questionnaire. It was hypothesized that higher use of IT would be positively correlated with higher levels of anxiety among Pakistani youth. The results significantly supported the hypothesis, and it was established that the excessive use of IT is positively and significantly correlated with anxiety. The results are consistent with similar studies carried out in countries other than Pakistan.

Introduction

The debate of the pros and cons of Information Technology (IT) from a psychosocial and cultural perspective has been widely generated. IT, without any doubt, has facilitated humans in their daily lives by making their tasks easier and easier; hence creating a dependency on its frequent use. Apart from the positive contributions of IT for human beings, there are still certain areas which are badly affected by the spread of IT around the globe. Professor Dr. Allama Mohammad Iqbal, the national poet of Pakistan, sensitized his nation on the cultural impact of technological advancements some hundred years ago. Several researchers, during the last two decades, have noticed the negative outcomes of IT. Hacker and Barden [1] blamed IT for causing major social problems. Modern information technology was positively associated with psychological stress and anxiety by Raub [2]. Interacting with technology and being anxious are found correlated with one another [3]. Person spending more time with computers is more prone to develop anxiety symptoms as compared to others e.g., spending less time with technology [4].

Anxiety is considered as an undesired mental state in which one feels unknown danger and worries without logic. The intensity of this danger has full potentials to disturb the daily life patterns of the anxious. Anxiety, being an umbrella term, refers to certain specified symptoms which are labeled

More Information

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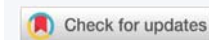
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individually as generalized anxiety disorder, phobias, panic disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder [5]. Generalized anxiety disorder involves an extravagant fear and its symptoms include restlessness, impatience, disturbed sleep, unpleasant physical symptoms and inability to concentrate. A consistent and vexatious terror or horror from a specific item, action, circumstance or location is named as phobia. Phobias can further be categorized as specific and social phobias. Unforeseen and unexpected rush of devastating anxiety and fright is called a panic situation. This situation may be short lived, stretched out to highest level and may vanish in almost ten minutes [6]. Tenacious thinking, imaginations and urges that devastatingly impact one's life are defined as obsessions. The compulsions are reoccurring and firm behaviors that are considered important to be performed to vanish anxiousness [7].

“Information technology rage” [8] or “technostress” [8] appears when individual finds himself incapable to deal with modern technology. This puts individual in a state of frustration eventually decreasing the use of technology and enhancing anxiety level while interacting with contemporary technology. Brod [9] calls it as a disease of adaptation when individual feels that he is deficient of skills to adopt computer technology. “Disconnectivity anxiety” is another type of anxiety related to modern information technology in which

individuals can totally quit the use of modern technology e.g. computers because of stress and anxiety [10]. Low motivation, absenteeism, group conflicts and eventually low output are the results created by technology anxious individuals at work place [11,12].

The relationship between the excessive uses of information technology with anxiety related problems is not much studied in Pakistan. The current study, therefore, was designed to explore the relationship between the consumption of IT and the levels of anxiety among Pakistani youth. It was hypothesized that higher use of IT would be positively correlated with higher levels of anxiety among Pakistani youth.

Method

The consumption of Information technology in the current study was operationally defined as the total minutes spent per day for using internet and making phone calls or text messages.

Participants

The sample of the study comprised of 200 conveniently selected participants with age range of 16 to 24 years from 4 cities of Pakistan i.e. Islamabad, Peshawar, Jhelum and Rawalpindi.

Instruments

Demographic information questionnaire: The demographic information questionnaire included age and information on the frequencies of daily usage of information technology by the respondents.

Depression, anxiety and stress scale [13,14]: The sub scale of Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS) for measuring anxiety comprising of 14 items was administered. It is a self-report inventory and measures major characteristics of anxiety i.e. autonomic arousal, skeletal muscle effects, situational anxiety, and subjective experience of anxious affect. Respondents are asked to use 4-point severity/frequency scales to rate the extent to which they have experienced each state over the past week. Gamma coefficients that represent the weight of the scale on the overall factor (total score) is .86. Reliability of the scale is considered appropriate and test-retest reliability is similarly considered adequate with .79 Brown, et al., 1997. The DASS anxiety scale correlates .81 with the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI).

Procedure

The participants of the study were contacted by the researchers by visiting different academic institutions of the conveniently selected cities of Pakistan. The issues of confidentiality and compliance to the ethical standards were given proper consideration. The data obtained was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results

The table 1 indicates that the Anxiety sub-scale of DASS was found excellently reliable in the current study i.e. (.97).

The table 2 reveals a highly significant positive correlation between IT consumption and anxiety.

Table 1: Chronbach's Alpha reliability for Anxiety sub-scale of DASS (N =200).

Scale	No of Items	Reliability
Anxiety sub-scale of DASS	14	.97

$p < .001$.

Table 2: Pearson Product Correlation coefficient for IT consumption and Anxiety (n = 200)

	Anxiety
IT consumption	.592***

*** $p < .001$

Discussion

The current study was aimed at analyzing the relationship between IT consumption and anxiety among Pakistani youth. It was hypothesized that higher IT consumption would be positively correlated with higher levels of anxiety. The results confirmed the hypothesis on a highly significant degree and are in aligned with earlier studies of similar nature.

The intensive use of computers is heavily associated with several psychological problems [15-17]. Internet, being a significant part of information technology, is frequently used by youth for several purposes e.g. chatting, social networking, viewing movies and pornographic content, etc. The available literature reveals a strong and positive association between internet use and anxiety disorders [18]. Excessive use of internet may also lead to several social fears [19]. Youth that use internet excessively may also spoil academic performance [20] which may cause anxiety related symptoms. Social networking is another purpose for which youth is heavily inclined towards IT. The websites associated with social networking offer their users to modify and manage their image to the society. Rejection or being removed from a friend's list (cyberostracism) and other unpleasant incidents on social networks may lead to psychological problems including anxiety.

The findings of the current study would alarm Pakistani youth to remain careful and purposeful in using information technology as the improper and excessive use of computers, internet, mobile and smart phones may lead them to several psychological problems including anxiety disorders.

Limitations

The current study did not involve other relevant psychological conditions with relation to the consumption of information technology. Future researchers can see the relationship between the consumption of information technology with fear of missing out and may associate their findings with certain other demographic factors such as gender, age, and marital status.



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