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REFINED PERSONAL FACTORS UNDERLYING INTERNET ADDICTION: AN ANALOGY WITH PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING

Abstract:

This study is furtherance of a previous study to relate an individual's degree of Internet addiction with his/her psychological characteristics of escape and excess and the attitude toward behaviour. These characteristics were proposed because escape and excess had been shown statistically in the literature to coexist with pathological gambling, which had in turn been shown to share "a common psychopathological dimension" with Internet addiction whereas the attitude toward behaviour had long been adopted in the literature to measure an individual's mental feelings about having particular behaviour, especially, in the use of an information system. Moreover, the authors' earlier study based on exploratory factor analysis and Pearson correlation analysis established that all these three characteristics positively and significantly correlate with the degree of Internet addiction.

As in the said earlier study, this study operationalized Internet addiction, escape, excess and the attitude toward behaviour by means of proven questionnaire items. Data was collected through 562 questionnaire copies in Macao, which was well known for being one of the world's gambling centres, and structural equation modelling was subsequently employed to arrive at a parsimonious, quantitative model relating Internet addiction with its key determining personal characteristic(s) out of escape, excess and the attitude toward behaviour.

This study indicated that excess, together with the attitude toward behaviour, exerted the major effects on Internet addiction whilst the effect of escape on Internet addiction might only be realized predominantly through excess and the attitude toward behaviour as mediators. The unstandardized factor loading of Internet addiction on excess is 21.46 ($p < 0.001$) whereas the unstandardized factor loading of Internet addiction on the attitude toward behaviour is -3.68 ($p = 0.006$). The said "common psychopathological dimension[s]" should include excess.

This study may matter not only to psychologists but also all stakeholders in the "new" economy of the Internet in that the way individuals are engaged by Internet activities is uncovered to some extent.

Keywords:

Internet addiction, pathological gambling, escape, excess, attitude toward behaviour

JEL Classification: C12, M15