Putting the Spotlight on Internet Addiction

Brian Lin

CSE 300 Literature Review

With the start of the internet in 1990, 20 years later who could ever imagine that the internet would become what it is today. People spend a substantial portion of their time browsing the internet every day. But how much is too much? Internet addiction occurs when one's internet usage starts to interfere with normal living and causes severe stress on the people around them and oneself, summarized it is a compulsive behavior that dominates the addict's life. With the world's technology becoming more and more advanced, people now are beginning to think that the internet is human right, and everybody should have access to it. There is now a much higher risk of more people becoming internet addicted than there ever was. Because internet addiction has only been in the spotlight for a small number of years, there are no definitions that clearly outline the habit-forming nature and its consequences. There is still much to learn about internet addiction and the more we can understand it, the more we can learn to counter it. There are four questions about internet addiction that characterize internet addiction. How does one diagnose internet addiction? How does internet addiction begin in an individual? What are the impacts of internet addiction on one's life? And how can we treat or cure internet addiction? With these questions in mind we can learn more about this new phenomenon and begin to develop strategies to help combat the illness.

To start to understand internet addiction, the first thing one should know is how internet addiction can negatively impact someone's life. In the first journal named Examination of the Correlation Between Internet Addiction and Social Phobia in Adolescents published by Western Journal of Nursing Research, it explores the impact of internet addiction on the adolescent population. With a population of 24,260 students

aged between 11 and 15, a sample size of 1,450 was chosen to find out if how strong the correlation between internet addiction and social phobia was in adolescents. The sample was given a questionnaire asking about that internet usage and how else they spend their time. Tying the questionnaire with the internet addiction scale and social phobia scale, the study was able to determine a correlation between internet addiction and social phobia. It found that adolescents with internet addiction were much more likely to develop a social phobia compared to adolescents without internet addiction. Social phobia defined as an irrational anxiety of social interactions is damaging to a growth of an individual. At such an early age it is imperative for one to develop the necessary skills that can help progression in life including social skills. When one doesn't develop these required skills, it can lead to negative outcomes. With the absence of a social drive one can be driven into a corner where they have little to no social interaction throughout adolescence and can develop into an adulthood life with no social skills. This negatively impacts society in the case where internet addiction is helping create individuals with no drive to socially interact with other people causing the natural process of social interactions to become unnatural.

A second study studies the negative impact of internet addiction on college aged individuals. A journal named A Study on Internet Addiction among College Students describes a study to determine the association between internet addiction with anxiety and depression among college students. The study's method was 267 students whose age ranged from 18-24. By using the internet addiction test to test for internet addiction and using the hospital anxiety and depression scale to find if anxiety or depression was also in the subject's diagnosis. The results found that internet addiction is associated

with depression however internet addiction was not associated with anxiety. This study gives evidence that not only adolescents are negatively impacted by internet addiction. The study shows that people of older ages too can become internet addicted. With this addiction also comes depression, internet addiction is shown to be no laughing matter. Effecting both younger and older age groups it seems that no age group is safe from this gripping behavior. Further research should be put into the reason why anxiety is not a result from internet addiction in older age groups but can be invoked at a younger age level. This information could be vital in the treatment of internet addiction at various ages.

If you spend a couple hours of your day on the internet, it doesn't necessary mean you have internet addiction. Therefore, it is essential to understand the criteria that differentiate normal from pathological internet use. In a journal named Internet Addiction written by Kimberly S. Young, she defines internet addiction as an impulsive-control disorder that does not involve an intoxicant. Young list questions that can help recognize whether or not a person has an internet addiction. Some include: Do you feel the need to use the Internet with increasing amounts of time to achieve satisfaction? Have you repeatedly made unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop Internet use? Do you feel restless, moody, depressed, or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop Internet use? Have you jeopardized or risked the loss of a significant relationship, job, educational or career opportunity because of the Internet? Have you lied to family members, therapists, or others to conceal the extent of involvement with the Internet? Do you use the Internet as a way of escaping from problems or of relieving a dysphoric mood (e.g., feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, depression)?" These set

of questions used as criterions are closely relatable to what someone would ask to diagnose if someone had a drug addiction. These questions all involving finding out if a person's internet usage is negatively impacting various parts of their life. A question about time spent on the internet and satisfaction investigates whether internet usage is affecting their personal time management. Whereas a question such asking if their internet consummation has jeopardized life opportunities for oneself or negatively impacting family ask if consumption has negatively impacted their own self-growth or the people around them. However, unlike drug addiction which has existed for several hundred years, internet addiction is not legitimately recognized as an impulse control disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, there must be further evidence to show that internet addiction is a real thing and there is a need for the professional community to recognize and respond to the threat of its rapid growth.

After a definition of internet addiction is established. One must then want to know how internet addiction begins to manifest in individuals and how it can be treated. The article A Study of Internet Addiction: Status, Causes and Remedies explores a possible explanation as to how internet addiction can manifest. It argues internet addiction can be caused by alienation. The author Sunwoo Kim explains Alienation as "the sense of self-estrangement as a human being, it is a psychological experience perceived by individuals under a specific social structure". Alienation can be broken down to three parts: powerlessness, normlessness and social isolation. The article explains how there studies have been performed that have linked internet addiction and alienation together. The link being that individuals become internet addicted to compensate for an emotional disturbance in which the user lacks self-control and independence. In a study done

where a survey was given to internet users aging from 15 to 39 years old, using a questionnaire of rating their internet usage to measure addiction as well as another questionnaire to measure their alienation score. The study has found research that also connects internet addiction to low-self-esteem. It was reported that internet addicts as a group had low self-esteem at statistically significant levels. The study has helped us understand that internet addiction can stem from emotional turbulence. If a person is having trouble dealing with their emotions, they can turn to the internet to begin browsing to make themselves feel better, forget about their problems. This in turn will become a problem as this is only a temporary relief from their problems and isn't a permanent solution. In the end of the article it suggests to combat internet addiction, the information of how to properly browse the internet should be known to the public. Spending too much time on the internet and ignoring all other responsibilities is telling-sign that one should not continue their internet consumption habits. Also informing people that the sense of alienation, the feeling of powerlessness, will only increase if they continue to use the internet as a means for an escape from their alienation emotions.

Researchers have studied several reasons as to how internet addiction can be acquired. A research article published called A Longitudinal Study for the Empirical Validation of an Etiopathogenetic Model of Internet Addiction in Adolescence Based on Early Emotion Regulation describes a study evaluating the possible effects of early emotion regulation strategies on the development of internet addiction in adolescence. They wanted to test a new idea that argued the reason why adolescences developed internet addiction is because of the way they dealt with their emotions at an early age.

In the study 142 adolescents with internet addiction in a 12 year period were visited at the ages of 2, 8 and 14 years old. At 2 years old the child's emotional regulation strategy was recorded. At 8 the child's mother was given a behavioral checklist to find out the personality of the 8 year old and at 14 the adolescent was given a clinical interview to check for internet addiction. The results found that early emotion regulation has an impact on the emotional behavioral functioning in middle childhood (8 years of age), which in turn has an influence on the onset of internet addiction in adolescence. Children at such a early age do not know how to deal with their emotions. They learn through life experiences on how to deal with emotions. This is the time their personalities begin to shape who they are, and they are very valuable to making mistakes. The mistake here is for a child to develop a bad coping mechanism for their emotions through escapism methods. These habits will turn into not dealing well with emotional situations and that leads to them using the internet for emotional regulation. Internet addiction seems to be able to infest at any age. Whether the person is in their adolescents or older or at the age of 2 or 8 they are already at risk. This is why it is important to understand the development of internet addiction and being to form methods that can effectively reduce the chances of internet addiction to take root.

People are starting to recognize that internet addiction is a real thing and have even begin researching effective methods that can prevent internet addiction. A 2 year long research study was conducted on junior high school students in Jinan City whose purpose was to find out methods that could prevent internet addiction. In the article named A 2-year longitudinal psychological intervention study on the prevention of internet addiction in junior high school students of Jinan city it describes a study that

was conducted to investigate the effect of psychological intervention on the prevention of internet addiction. The method: a total of 888 junior high students were assessed with the internet addiction disorder diagnostic scale. Of the 888, 57 were found to have internet addiction. After the 57 received psychological intervention, it included the education of knowledge of internet addiction, self psychological adjustment and health care, self-psychological decompression, and psychological counselling. After the four years students were then again tested for internet addiction. The results showed that psychological intervention can effectively improve the mental health of junior middle school students and help reduce the onset of internet addiction. Preventing internet addiction seems to stem from psychological measures. Research has shown that emotional problems is a huge factor of having internet addiction. People now are beginning to treat internet addiction more effectively by find the cause of the problem in this case emotional turbulence and fixing it through psychological repair can soon be a staple treatment for internet addiction.

Internet addiction is expanding, as more and more people are starting to have access to internet they do not know the risk of over usage. The public should become more aware of exactly what internet addiction is, how to spot it in an individual and how they can effectively treat it. There needs to be more general knowledge about how people like ourselves can help others who do have a problem. Research has shown internet addiction to afflict people at all ages beginning as early as 2 years old. Research has also proven that internet addiction stems from ineffective emotional regulation, people can use the internet as a means of escape from their emotional problems of isolation and can develop into an unhealthy habit. Hopefully the world can

now begin to realize the danger this addiction presents as the child and teenagers with internet addiction will become the worlds next generation of working adults.

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