THE EFFECTS OF COMPULSIVE INTERNET USE ON ACADEMIC PROCRASTINATION
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INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that college students are at risk for allowing the Internet to interfere with their academic work due to the distractibility of the Internet. Nearly 70% of students procrastinate academic work due to excessive Internet use and develop an Internet addiction (Klassen & Kuzucu, 2009). Chen and Peng’s (2008) study examined the relationship between Internet use and academic performance. Participants spent a weekly average of 17 hours online and only 3.59 hours was used for academic purposes (Chen & Peng, 2008). Differences between heavy Internet users and non-heavy Internet users were found in quality of academic work and grades. Non-heavy Internet users had significantly better grades than heavy users. The results showed students who used the Internet excessively had a harder time completing assignments, studying, and getting enough sleep in order to complete work (Chen & Peng, 2008).

Chen and Fu’s (2009) study found that poor academic performance was related to Internet use. The researchers hypothesized that a heavy Internet user would be lower than students using the Internet to socialize (Chen & Fu, 2009). Internet use that involved socializing and online gaming was positively associated with lower academic achievement and procrastination. In fact, it was found that students who used the Internet substantially performed poorly on academic examinations because they postponed studying. When the students used the Internet excessively for leisure and social purposes, it may impact academic performance (Chen & Fu, 2009). Therefore, the more time students spend online, the lower their academic performance will be.

Zarick and Stonebraker’s (2009) study sought to explain why college students were more adept at procrastination. Three potential outcomes of academic procrastination were measured: low project quality, late assignments, and low exam scores. Nearly half of all respondents reported procrastination affected at least one of the three outcomes. The results also showed that students with lower GPA’s were more likely to report lower project quality, late assignments, and lower exam scores due to procrastination (Zarick & Stonebraker, 2009).

School work was seen as a chore, so pleasurable activities were given priority. Activities that give instant gratification, like the Internet, lead to procrastination and reduce academic performance. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to examine the effects of compulsive Internet use on academic procrastination.

Previous literature has focused on academic procrastination and compulsive Internet use individually. However, this study specifically examined the relationship between compulsive Internet use and academic procrastination. The Internet has the potential to become addictive and impact people’s well-being. When students engage in online activities, they delay their academic work and personal obligations. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to examine the effects of compulsive Internet use on academic procrastination.

Hypotheses

(1) Participants that report higher levels of time spent online will report lower GPAs.
(2) There is a positive relationship between level of Internet use on the CIUS and higher levels of procrastination with procrastination being a problem (Table 2). A correlation showed there was significance between the CIUS (M = 13.44, SD = 10.19), with levels of procrastination (M = 18.20, SD = 5.51), r(106) = .268, p = .003 and procrastination as a problem (M = 15.36, SD = 5.64), r(106) = .322, p = .001.
(3) There is a relationship between level of Internet use on the CIUS and desire to decrease procrastination.

METHOD

Participants

For the first hypothesis, the study selected participants from a four-year private university. A total of 106 participants (76 females, 11 males) were selected. The sample was comprised of the following ethnic groups: Hispanic (40%), Caucasian (27%), BI/Multiracial (12%), Asian American (7%), African American (7%), Other (6%), and Native American (9%). The participants ranged in age from 18-39 (M=21.12).

Measures

Independent Variables

There were no independent variables in this study.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in this study were level of Internet use, time spent online, GPA, and level of academic procrastination. The Compulsive Internet Use Scale (CIUS) developed by Merkerk, Van Den Eijnden, Vermulst, and Garretsen (2009) was used to evaluate Internet dependency. The CIUS had 14 statements and used a 5-point Likert scale (0= never to 4= very often). High scores indicated higher compulsive Internet use.

The Procrastination Assessment Scale-Students (PASS) designed by Solomon and Rothblum (1984) was used to measure procrastination. The PASS consisted of 44 statements with two parts: frequency and reasons for procrastination. The frequency portion was used solely in this study and consisted of 18 statements within three subscales. The frequency of procrastination subscale was a 5-point Likert scale, (1= never procrastinates to 5= always procrastinate). The procrastination as a problem subscale was a 5-point Likert scale, (1= not a problem to 5= always a problem). The desire to decrease procrastination subscale was a 5-point Likert scale, (1= do not want to decrease to 5= definitely want to decrease).

Procedure

With permission, participants were asked to participate on a voluntary basis during regular scheduled class sessions. All participants were informed that their responses were confidential. All participants signed and returned informed consent forms prior to receiving the survey. Once the surveys were completed, they were collected for analysis.

RESULTS

The first hypothesis was that participants who reported higher levels of time spent online would report lower GPAs (Table 1). A Pearson r correlation showed that there was a relationship between GPA (M = 3.95, SD = 1.02) and online hours (M = 2.81, SD = .79), r(106) = -.286, p = .005.

The second hypothesis was that there would be a positive relationship between the level of Internet use on the CIUS and higher levels of procrastination with procrastination being a problem (Table 2). A correlation showed that there was significance between the CIUS (M = 13.44, SD = 10.19), with levels of procrastination (M = 18.20, SD = 5.51), r(106) = .268, p = .003 and procrastination as a problem (M = 15.36, SD = 5.64), r(106) = .322, p = .001.

The third hypothesis was that there would be a relationship between level of Internet use on the CIUS and desire to decrease procrastination (Table 2). A correlation showed there was no significance between the level of Internet use on the CIUS (M = 13.44, SD = 10.19) and desire to decrease procrastination (M = 21.89, SD = 6.84), r(106) = .169, p = .05.

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of compulsive Internet use on academic procrastination. These findings indicate that compulsive Internet use leads to procrastination and can negatively impact academic work These findings are consistent with past research and demonstrate that academic procrastination due to excessive Internet use is a problem. College Internet users have difficulty completing reading assignments, homework, and studying for exams. Mitchell and Bearl (2010) noted that college students can develop an Internet addiction and suffer withdrawal symptoms if separated from the Internet for too long. This addiction may then reduce one’s quality of life and ability to meet personal obligations such as academic work. Thus, academic achievement is negatively impacted due to procrastination as a result of compulsive Internet use.

There were several limitations to the present study. One factor that may have impacted the findings was the limited sample. The participants were selected conveniently and may not be a representative sample of the diverse population. There were also more women than men in this study. In addition, participants were given a self-report questionnaire. Participants were required to state their GPA and respond to a series of questions regarding their personal Internet use and academic work. Thus, participants may have not been honest when disclosing information for fear of being seen as inferior academically and socially.

Future research should address the implications of the growing number of Internet addicts among college students. There are several Internet applications that people can develop a dependency on, yet there is very little research. For instance, online gaming, chat rooms, IMing, and social networking sites can make one Internet dependent. Also, research should focus on treatment since little to no research has been done on this topic. This research would benefit individuals that wish to reduce their Internet dependency to regain control over their lives or assist professionals in establishing programs to reduce dependency.