

# The Exploration of Interest, Learning Motivation and Influence of Internet Usage among Secondary School Students Via Psychoeducational Approach

Norhasnah Hussin, Abu Yazid Abu Bakar & Ku Suhaila Ku Johari\*

Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, MALAYSIA

\*Corresponding Author Email: kusahaila@ukm.edu.my

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## Abstract

This study aims to explore the interest and learning motivation as well as the influence of internet usage among secondary school students. The research was conducted through psychoeducational group counseling involving six Form 4 respondents from SMK Putrajaya Presint 9(1). The data for this study was collected through five face-to-face counseling sessions. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, and the findings showed low interest and learning motivation among the respondents due to limited study time, which only occurs during school hours. However, the influence of high internet usage was evident among the respondents, as they allocate a significant amount of time, particularly on social media and online gaming.

**Keywords:** Counseling, Interest, Learning Motivation, Internet Usage, Psychoeducation

## Introduction

The advancement of science and technology has brought various changes to human civilization. According to Razali, Ani and Mohd Tohar (2020), Malaysia has undergone several changes, including social communication, the sophistication of computer usage, and modern technology. The progress in communication technology has connected the world without borders and limitations. The existence of various communication platforms has made the world of communication livelier by making cyberspace one of their ways of creating social networks. Social networking websites have also become attractive to teenagers, in particular, and not excluding adults and professionals (Din & Isam, 2019).

In this regard, students are a group that is easily influenced by the rapid growth of social networking sites. Consequently, this situation can affect the interest and motivation of students to focus on their studies. Interest and motivation are two psychologically significant factors that influence students' academic performance in school. Students who have a high

interest and motivation in learning usually achieve good academic grades, develop structured study habits, and have a solid understanding of the material (Black & Allen, 2016).

According to Tom and Tohalib (2018), most students in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) misuse the internet by accessing entertainment websites, watching online dramas, playing online games, and accessing pornography. This internet addiction has negative impacts on students, their families, and their social lives (Young, 2004). Internet addiction can disrupt students' focus during lectures, making it difficult for them to understand lessons and complete assigned tasks easily (Soh, Koay & Lim, 2018). Based on previous research findings, students, especially teenagers, are among the most affected by internet addiction. Moreover, this addiction can lead to various negative implications that affect students' mental health.

### **Research Background**

Learning interest is a feeling of liking or being attracted to a subject related to learning without being prompted (Slameto, 2010). This demonstrates the desire and intentional involvement in cognitive activities that play a vital role in the learning process, influencing what we choose to learn and how well we grasp the information provided (Klassen & Klassen, 2014). Furthermore, learning interest serves as a driving force for motivation in tasks and the desire to acquire knowledge (Sha, Schunn, Bathgate, & Ben-Eliyahu, 2016). Therefore, it can be concluded that learning interest is a motivating factor for learning driven by students' willingness to learn, involving aspects of motivational development, social interaction phenomena, and students' engagement in learning activities.

On the contrary, motivation is defined as a strong desire or strong spirit within a person that drives them to make efforts towards achieving a goal for success (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1991). Learning motivation is defined as an internal factor that consists of four components, namely the opportunity to succeed, fear of failure, interest, and opposition (Margarete & Hilbert, 2013). Learning motivation also refers to the expectations and values when students are capable of completing assigned tasks, and the grades signify the students' confidence strongly in achieving success in learning (Riconscente, 2014).

In addition, the internet is an international communication network that facilitates communication and allows the storage, collection, and acquisition of data for human convenience. It serves as a channel for knowledge dissemination to users. The internet is also a treasure trove of information that assists students in acquiring information for their learning and research processes, while provides advanced communication capabilities. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), there are six categories of social media, such as social networking sites like Facebook, community content platforms like YouTube, blogs, microblogs like Twitter, collaborative projects like Wikipedia, virtual social worlds like Second Life, and online gaming like World of Warcraft, which can lead to user addiction.

According to the study conducted by Ab Majid et al. (2021), it was found that students at the Malaysian Teacher Education Institute (IPGM) had a moderate level of emotional and cognitive attachment to the internet. However, despite this moderate level of attachment, the students at IPGM were still able to manage their daily lives and protect themselves from the negative influences of the internet. Nevertheless, the researchers expressed concern because the study indicated that internet addiction was at a moderate level rather than a low level among the students. Furthermore, a study conducted by Rahman and Abdullah (2021) among public university students in Malaysia found differences in smartphone addiction based on gender, in which the results indicated that males were significantly more prone to smartphone addiction compared to females.

Tapscott (2008) defines teenagers as the technology generation exposed to the internet and the web since infancy. Meanwhile, the research findings of Din and Isam (2019) revealed that teenagers experiencing screen addiction fall within the age range of 13 to 21 years old and are still attending school and Higher Education Institutions. It is found that the factors driving youth addiction to social media are the daily use of the internet, the availability of gadgets that can access social media applications and expand social networks, dependency on information sources on websites, entertainment consumption, online gaming, and reliance on communication through social media, whereby these factors contribute to the occurrence of addiction effects among the youth (Andrew et al., 2020). Although previous studies have extensively addressed the issue of internet involvement and addiction among teenagers, there is currently no extensive research on the application of psychoeducational group counseling to address internet addiction and its impact on students' interest and motivation. Thus, this research was designed with objectives as follows:

- a. to explore the interest and motivation among students through psychoeducational group counseling
- b. to investigate the influence of internet usage among students through psychoeducational group counseling

### **Methodology**

This study is qualitative in nature, conducted through psychoeducational group counseling sessions. The study participants are clients of the group counseling, consisting of six male students aged 16, who are the students of SMK Putrajaya Presint 9(1). The selection of the study participants is based on voluntarily basis, in which the respondents were willingly agreed to join the psychoeducational group counseling sessions.

In the psychoeducational group counseling sessions, the counselor explores two main themes. Firstly, the exploration is focused on the interests and motivation of the study participants (clients). Secondly, it revolves around investigating internet addiction among the study participants who are male students aged 16 years old. A total of five group sessions are conducted, encompassing five counseling phases, namely: a) building rapport, b) exploration session, c) problem identification session, d) alternative seeking session, and v) termination session.

The data obtained from the psychoeducational group counseling sessions with the study participants were analyzed thematically. The psychoeducational group sessions helped the researcher, who is a counselor, to explore issues or problems faced by students in terms of their interests and learning motivation, as well as to investigate the extent of internet addiction among students. The goal of thematic analysis was to identify themes, which are patterns in the data that are significant or meaningful, and to use these themes to explain the issues being studied. Typically, most themes are descriptive and depict patterns in the data relevant to the research questions.

### **Results and Discussion**

Before attending the group counseling, all respondents signed the Informed Consent Form whereby their demographic information was obtained. Concomitantly, the demographic traits of the respondents are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Data of Respondents

Respondent	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Birth Order	Daily Leisure Activities
A	16	Malay	Male	The eldest from two siblings	Hang out with friends, surf the internet, play games, watch television
B	16	Malay	Male	The youngest from five siblings	Help out with the family business, surf the internet, play games
C	16	Malay	Male	The third from four siblings	Surf the internet, play games, do outdoor sports
D	16	Malay	Male	The eldest from five siblings	Hang out with friends, surf the internet, play games
E	16	Malay	Male	The youngest from six siblings	Surf the internet, play games
F	16	Malay	Male	The eldest from four siblings	Surf the internet, play games

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the study participants based on age, gender, ethnicity, and birth order among siblings, as well as their daily activities after school or during school holidays. Based on the table, all respondents are 16-year-old males of Malay ethnicity. In terms of birth order among siblings, three of them are the eldest child in the family, namely respondents A, D, and F, two are the youngest child, respondents B and E, and one is a middle child, respondent C.

In terms of interest and learning motivation, all respondents admitted that the time allocated for studying was very limited, and they only studied during school hours. None of the respondents had issues with discipline or school absenteeism. Moreover, all respondents continued to study even if they did not particularly like certain subjects. In total, 50 percent of the respondents admitted that they find it difficult to study well. However, the other 50 percent of respondents mentioned that there are subjects that they find easy, such as Visual Arts and Physical Education, allowing them to excel in those subjects. Nevertheless, respondent B stated that he has a difficulty in understanding almost all the subjects studied and also acknowledged that he has trouble remembering what he has learned.

Furthermore, three out of the six respondents agreed that they require a good mood to study effectively. Additionally, four out of the six respondents found that their study time was insufficient, while all respondents agreed that a significant amount of time is spent on non-essential activities such as browsing the internet, using apps like WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, TikTok, watching YouTube videos, and playing games, both online and offline.

One of the factors that contribute to the respondents' lack of interest and motivation to study is self-related factor. Respondent A stated that he does not feel enthusiastic about reading books and only studies when he is in the right mood. On the other hand, respondent E feels content with his personal achievements. Here is an excerpt from respondent E.

"... I have no problem studying...It's just that I am lazy to do so...I always sleep late but not because of studying, but due to playing games until late at night and it makes me unable to sleep...I am the problem even though my parents often remind me'.

In contrast, respondent A stated that he is motivated to study only when encouraged by his girlfriend and feels enthusiastic about studying when he is together with that girlfriend of his. This aligns with Mubarak's (1999) view that the environmental factors are among the factors that influence human behavior. Objects surrounding a person, such as ecological aspects, architecture, timing, as well as social and psychosocial factors like social status, level

of education, and political beliefs, are environmental elements that contribute to a person's behavior. Meanwhile, respondent B only studies in the classroom and helps his family with their business when at home. Respondent B considers himself less motivated because when he doesn't understand many things during studying, he is hesitant to revisit the topics he didn't grasp, especially for subjects like Mathematics, History, Sciences, and English. However, respondent B is still motivated to go to school because the experience during the long Movement Control Order (MCO) traumatized him when studying with his strict sister. Moreover, during the study, respondent B was involved in sports events and served as an instructor for the school's sports cadet team, which made him enjoy attending school despite struggling in academics.

There is also no interest in learning within the respondents because they lack motivation, especially when they don't receive encouragement from both of their parents. Respondents C and D mentioned that their parents do not provide much encouragement or motivation for them to study. If they do not revise their lessons and spend a lot of time browsing the internet, their parents do not scold them as the respondents bought smartphones with the money they earn through work. In line with the conducted study, it was found that a person works harder, diligently, and produces good quality when the motivation for the task is intrinsic rather than extrinsic (Desa, 2002).

In terms of the influence of internet, there is no doubt that it has impact on students' learning style. As indicated in Table 1, respondents spent significant amount of time browsing the internet using smartphones, playing games, either online or on their phones, and hanging out with friends, after school or during school holidays. In addition, according to Tom and Tohalib (2018), high internet usage is due to the variety of applications available on the internet such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram (social media communication methods among internet users using the smartphone medium), TikTok, YouTube, Movie (applications that allow users to watch short stories or movies), and Mobile Legends (online gaming application that requires players to play in groups).

Table 2 shows the time allotted by respondents when browsing internet applications within a week. All respondents spent a lot of time surfing the internet. Among the applications that help users communicate is the WhatsApp application. This application is very popular when respondents interact with others in social media. All respondents used the WhatsApp application to contact as the application was available for free. The WhatsApp application allows users to send messages, make voice or video calls, and send files.

Table 2. The estimated allocation of time spent browsing internet applications within a week.

Respondent	Internet Application and Total Hours Spent by Respondent						Total Hours/Week
A	TikTok	YouTube	WhatsApp	Movie			
	15	6	6	5			32
B	Mobile Legends	TikTok	Instagram	WhatsApp	YouTube	Telegram	
	11	5	8	4	7	7	42

C	Mobile Legends	TikTok	Games	Instagram	WhatsApp	YouTube	
	7	6	3	2	2	1	21
D	TikTok	YouTube	WhatsApp	Instagram	Games		
	14	2	20	6	2		44
E	TikTok	WhatsApp	Instagram	Games	Mobile Legends		
	25	4	3	10	8		50
F	Mobile Legends	TikTok	Instagram	WhatsApp	YouTube		
	22	17	12	8	7		67

However, the influence of internet had negative effects on respondents' study habits. This is because all respondents except respondent A uses the internet to play games available on the internet or play via online. Among the adverse effects of internet influence on respondents is that they do not have enough sleep and that they cannot focus during school hours as stated in respondent B's statement on internet use:

"...Often when I was busy fiddling with my phone (surfing the internet), I forgot to do my school work. I slept late...usually at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning, then I would finally try to get some sleep. That's why I tend to wake up late. After school, my brother would always try to pick fights with me...which we always ended up fighting and made me build the habit of going outside of the house to gather with my friends...we talked while playing games."

Similarly, respondent C, D, E and F agreed with respondent B that they often sleep late and wake up early in the morning, causing them to sleep in the classroom on school days. These are statements from respondent D, E and F:

"...I really couldn't study because I was too sleepy...I would just sleep regardless of having teachers advise me. But there were times that we did not sleep since the teachers were really frustrated about it. Sometimes, there were also times when the teachers are too tired to get angry at us"

"...The reason we are always with our mobile phones is due to the MCO...We were stuck at home...We got bored because we had nothing to do, thus we just played with our mobile phones. During online classes, we would just sleep throughout them due to having our cameras turned off"

"...It's a relief that MCO has lifted...I can finally go to school...At first, it was fun staying at home...But later on, it shifted to the opposite due to always getting scolded...It's better off if I go to school...At least, I can converse with friends"

According to respondent C, he does not surf the internet after school hours because he is always busy with sports activities "outdoors". However, he surfs the internet at night for a short period of time and during school holidays, as stated in his excerpt below:

"...I'm an athlete...If I'm too busy with my mobile phone, I would not get selected to be the school representative for the sports I enter. Every evening I play football



outside, hence I can't study at night...I'm tired...I use my phone at night only for a while just to relax... My vacation is spent jogging for stamina and then I would be playing with my mobile phone”

Consequently, other negative effects of internet influence are exposure to pornographic or sex-related websites, cyberbullying, online fraud, and sedition. This is aligned with findings of a local study about the implications of using social media on adolescents during Covid-19 pandemic that contributes to mental problems such as depression, panic, fear, stress and anxiety (Abdul Aziz, Kasmani & Ab Razak, 2021).

### **Conclusion**

In a nutshell, through psychoeducational counseling sessions and appropriate guidance methods will help students and other educational stakeholders to understand the whole issue in greater details. Furthermore, it can give birth to a future generation of students that is intelligent, able to identify themselves, and will be able to become excellent in the academic fields; in other words, their excellence will not stop at school, but will continue to the higher educational institutions.

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