



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROBLEMATIC INTERNET USE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING OF SEMINARIANS IN THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF TOMBURA-YAMBIO IN SOUTH SUDAN

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to establish the relationship between problematic internet use and psychological wellbeing of seminarians in Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan. The study was grounded on the theory of Cognitive Behavioral Model of Pathological Internet Use. The study employed descriptive survey design and used both questionnaires and interview schedules to collect primary data. A sample of 226 Seminarians was used through census method. The study established that nearly one-third of surveyed seminarians (30%) exhibited behaviors indicative of problematic internet use. The study revealed that the overall level of psychological wellbeing among seminarians was reported as moderately high (52.5%). The research revealed a moderate positive correlation ($r= 0.429$) between problematic internet use and psychological wellbeing among Seminarians. The intervention strategies suggested to address problematic internet use, included screening, awareness campaigns, promotion of healthy lifestyles, restricting access to harmful websites, implementing regulations, regulating internet usage time, and providing treatment for stress disorders. The study recommended that seminaries should implement screening measures to identify seminarians experiencing problematic internet use, as well as organizing awareness campaigns, workshops, and seminars to educate seminarians about the negative consequences of excessive internet use.



Key Words: Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio, Internet usage regulation, Pathological Internet Use, Problematic internet use, Psychological wellbeing, Seminarians.

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INTRODUCTION

The study sought to understand the relationship between problematic internet use and psychological wellbeing of seminarians in the light of the popularity of the internet and its indispensable role in providing answers to almost all problems of humanity. The term problematic internet use, excess internet use and internet addiction are used interchangeably in this study to imply a compulsive obsession with the internet content (Zeng, 2023) or inability to terminate use of internet beyond certain limit (Pal, 2017). Internet has become an indispensable tool of communication in our everyday life due to its immense opportunities, applicability and versatility (Ezechina et al., 2015). Internet was discovered in the 1980s (Ginige, 2017). Over the years, Internet has revolutionized the way people communicate, turning the world into a global village, where individuals worldwide are connected through worldwide web. Internet is being used in all sectors of the economy including education, communication, trade, research, recreation, mobile money among many others (Pazarbasioglu, et al., 2020). Therefore, the number of users and the frequency of use of the internet continue to increase each day worldwide. According to Endomba et al. (2022), the number of Internet users in Africa was close to 594 million by 2021.

Zewde et al. (2022) observed that appropriate use of the internet has many benefits in areas of communication, research, socialization, entertainment, among many others. However, the authors also noted that internet overuse is associated with addiction and mental health issues. This

excessive internet use also known as problematic internet use (PIU) or internet addiction is characterized by excessive and uncontrolled use of the internet. Ginige (2017) informed that the concept of internet addiction was raised in 1996 when excessive internet use was compared to substance dependence. Davis (2001) identifies symptoms of problematic internet use to be obsessive thoughts about the internet, diminished impulse control, inability to cease using the internet and withdrawal. Quaglio and Millar (2020) observed that uncontrolled use of the internet consumption is likely to lead to decreased physical and psychological wellbeing. This kind of situation is characterized by symptoms such as distress, anger, loss of control, social withdrawal and familial conflicts leading to isolation. Kuss et al. (2017) pointed out that studies from Taiwan, Korea and the United States revealed that the general clinical symptoms associated with problematic internet use are mood and anxiety disorders.

Li et al. (2015) noted that the most common triggers of excessive internet use are sadness, depression, boredom and stress. Social media use was the most commonly abused while the most common consequences of problematic internet use were sleep deprivation, academic underachievement, failure to exercise and to engage in face-to-face social activities and low concentration levels. Kuss et al. (2017) noted that those who are involved in excessive internet use do so as a coping mechanism from everyday stressors and as a way of regulating their emotions. This suggests that problematic internet users do so in order to relieve stress and to avoid the effects of daily hustles. The dysfunctional coping strategies include distraction, denial, self-blame, substance use, venting, media use, and behavioural disengagement.

Neverkovich et al. (2018) observed that internet addiction happens in stages such as mild fascination, passion, addiction, attachment. Ogachi et al. (2018) observed that more female students were susceptible to PIU compared to their male counterparts. The writers recommended timely identification of the problem and offer interventions to those affected by way of helping them to exercise moderation and self-control when using the internet in order to help them achieve their academic and lifetime objectives. Internet addiction is already a global concern. For instance, the global prevalence of internet addiction is estimated to be 26.99% (Meng, 2022). Durkee (2012)

put the European's prevalence of to be 4.4% among adolescents, but varied by country and gender, noting that adolescents lacking emotional and psychological support were at a higher risk. The most common online activities were watching videos, frequenting chat rooms, social networking and online gaming. Online gaming was higher in males while social networking was higher among females. Those susceptible to excessive internet use are those not living with a biological parent and those with low parental supervision. Confirming that the prevalence of Problematic internet use (EIU) in Europe was rising, Kaess et al. (2016) noted that it was growing at between 4.01% - 6.87%, except in Germany. Li (2018) noted that in China, the prevalence rate of EIU is 11.3% among university students.

Landry et al. (2019) noted that the rate of PIU among seminarians in Kenya was 38.7%, where the School of Philosophy had the highest prevalence at 47.1%. It was noted that many of the seminarians were not even aware that they were addicted to the internet. In Sudan, the prevalence of excessive internet use was 53.5% among secondary school students. Female students were more affected than their male counterparts. Access to computers, spending more than 8 hours on the internet and absence of parental supervision were blamed for the high prevalence of internet addiction (Mohammed, 2018). Ginige (2017) recommended the use of cognitive behavior therapy to treat internet addiction. However, Dossi and Buja (2022) found religiosity, which is closely associated with Seminarians to be associated with lower problematic internet use. Similarly, Utomo and Marianta (2023) concur by noting that seminarians who deeply indulge in spiritual based activities and seek support from friends in the seminary have reduced levels of internet addiction.

On relationship between problematic internet use and seminarian's psychological wellbeing, Arya and Kumar (2021) aver that the prolonged and frequent use of the internet affect the physical and mental health of an individual. Similarly, in Sweden, Pal (2017) associated problematic internet use to decline in psychological wellbeing Pawlikowski (2013) suggests that in order to address the problematic internet use, early diagnosis and treatment are essential. Kimberly S. Young has developed a standard measuring tool to test internet addiction. The scale uses a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire which contains 20 statements. Total scores that range from 0 to 30 points are

considered to reflect a normal level of internet usage; scores of 31 to 49 indicate mild level of internet addiction; 50 to 79 indicates a moderate level of internet addiction while scores of 80 to 100 indicates a severe internet addiction problem.

Statement of the Problem

Problematic internet use (PIU), commonly known as internet addiction, has become a growing global concern, particularly among young adults, including seminarians. According to Nebhinani (2018), problematic internet use among young adults is assuming epidemic proportions. Endomba (2022) indicated that four in every ten individuals in Africa is considered to suffer from problematic internet use. According to Zewde et al (2022), almost one third of university and high school students in Africa are addicted to the Internet.

Brooks et al. (2016) study showed that high levels internet addiction were associated with poor mental health and low self-esteem among university students, suggesting that PIU could potentially have negative implications on the psychological wellbeing of seminarians. Psychological wellbeing is a critical aspect in the life of seminarians as they prepare to become pastors, counselors, and leaders in their respective religious communities. Worse still, Landry (2019) observed that many seminarians are not aware they are addicted to the internet. Lack of awareness about the extent and impact of PIU among seminarians is a significant challenge in promoting holistic formation of the seminarians in readiness to serve their communities.

Although studies have examined problematic internet use in various populations, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is a paucity of research on the impact of problematic internet use on seminarians in the Catholic diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan. Therefore, it is essential to investigate the relationship between problematic internet use and the psychological well-being of seminarians to understand the potential risks associated with excessive internet use among seminarians and offer suggestion for possible interventions.

Objective of the Study

The study is guided by the following objective:

- a. To establish the relationship between problematic internet use on psychological wellbeing of Seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Psychological Wellbeing

Singer (2015) conducted a study on psychological wellbeing in terms of meaning, measurement and implications for psychotherapy research. The study was an empirical review of research done. The study summarized the concept of psychological wellbeing by highlighting the major attributes associated with positive psychological wellbeing which can be determined by one's happiness and satisfaction with life. The key concepts included self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, mastery of environment, purpose in life, and personal growth. The reviewed study has helped to expand the knowledge of psychological wellbeing and the attributes to look for. However, the reviewed study was an empirical review and did not associate PIU with psychological wellbeing as is the case with the present study which uses mixed research method approach and its main focus is to relate PIU with psychological wellbeing of seminarians in South Sudan. These are literature gaps to be filled by the present study.

Relationship between Problematic Internet Use and Psychological Wellbeing

Çardak (2013) investigated the relationship between Internet addiction and psychological wellbeing of university students in Turkey. The study enlisted 479 university students. Data was collected using questionnaires on Online Cognition Scale and the Scales of Psychological Well-Being. Correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to test the relationships between Internet addiction and psychological well-being. The study revealed that students with higher levels of Internet addiction were more likely to experience low levels of psychological well-being. The reviewed study was important in informing the present study about the relationship between problematic internet use and psychological wellbeing. However, the reviewed study was conducted among university students in Turkey while the present study is being conducted among seminarians in South Sudan. These are literature gaps to be filled by the present study.

Bal and Turan (2021) examined internet use in terms of psychological well-being. The study used descriptive and correlational research designs. The study tested the Internet addiction mental well-being and socio-demographic variables of the respondents. The study established that there was a significant relationship between internet addiction and psychological wellbeing. The reviewed study was able to shed more light on the relationship between internet addiction and psychological wellbeing. However, the reviewed study was done in Turkey while the current study is being conducted in South Sudan. These are literature gaps to be filled by the present study.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study used descriptive survey design. The study was conducted in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan. It is situated in former Western Equatoria State which borders Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo. The target population of the current study was 226 seminarians from two major seminaries from the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio. The study adopted census data collection method in order to accommodate all the seminarians in the two major seminaries. This implies that the sample for this study was 226 seminarians. The study used both self-administered questionnaires and interview schedules to collect both quantitative data and qualitative data.

FINDINGS

Severity of Internet Addiction

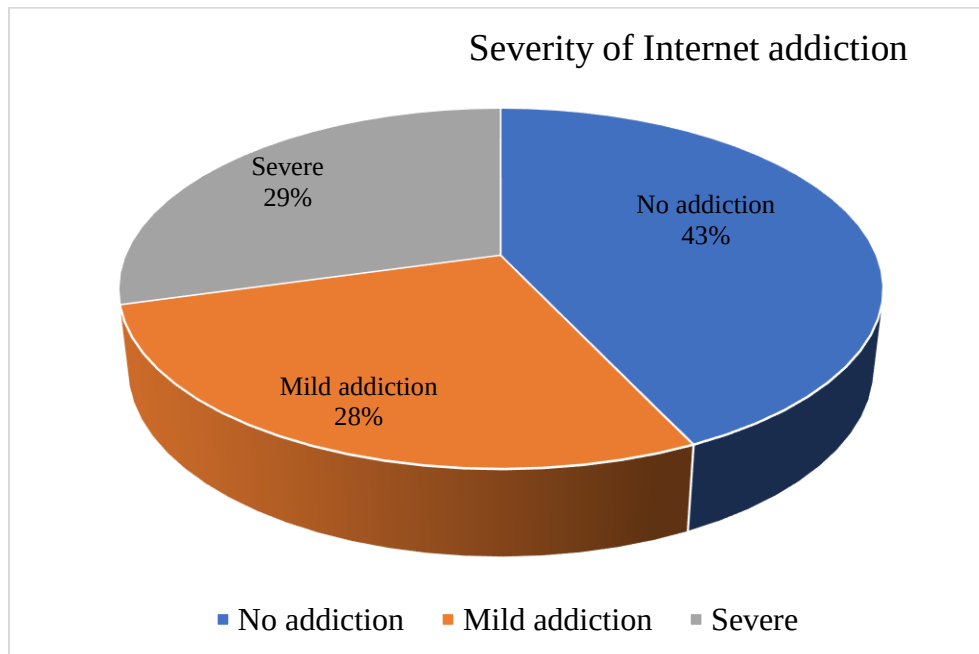


Figure 1: *Severity of Internet Addiction*

The study shows that 43% of the respondents had no addiction, 29% had severe addiction, while 28% had mild addiction. This implies that a substantial proportion of respondents exhibit problematic internet use. The combination of 28% with mild addiction and 29% with severe addiction indicates that over half (57%) of the respondents experience some level of problematic internet use. This suggests a significant prevalence of internet addiction among seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan. The 29% with severe addiction suggests that a considerable number of respondents are experiencing severe negative consequences due to their internet use. This may include significant impairment in academic, social, or occupational functioning, as well as psychological distress. While 43% of the respondents report no internet addiction, it's essential to recognize that a majority of respondents (57%) exhibit some level of addiction. However, it's positive that a portion of the respondents do not display problematic internet use.

Overall, these findings imply that problematic internet use is prevalent among seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan, with a significant proportion experiencing mild to severe addiction. Addressing this issue may require targeted interventions, education, and

support services aimed at promoting healthier internet habits and enhancing psychological wellbeing among seminarians in this context.

Level of Psychological Wellbeing

The level of psychological wellbeing of Seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan was found to be 52.5%. The ratings indicate that low level of psychological wellbeing is 40-45%; moderate is around 45-65% while high levels falls in the category of above 65%. This implies that majority of seminarians surveyed reported experiencing a moderate level of psychological wellbeing. This score suggests that a significant proportion of seminarians perceive their psychological wellbeing to be high. This indicates that many seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan are likely experiencing positive emotions, functioning well in their daily lives, and coping effectively with stressors.

Identifying the level of psychological wellbeing among seminarians highlights the importance of providing support and interventions to maintain or improve their mental health. This may include offering counseling services, promoting self-care practices, fostering social support networks, and addressing any underlying stressors or issues contributing to lower levels of psychological wellbeing. Therefore, a level of psychological wellbeing of 52.5% among seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan suggests a generally positive state of mental health, with opportunities for enhancement and support to ensure the overall wellbeing of this population.

The Relationship Between Problematic Internet Use and Psychological Wellbeing of Seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between problematic internet use and psychological wellbeing among Seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan. The study conducted a Pearson correlation between PIU and Psychological Wellbeing of the seminarians. Perception of the respondents was also sought regarding the impact of problematic internet use on Psychological wellbeing.

Correlation between Problematic Internet Use and Psychological Wellbeing

Table 1: *Pearson Correlation between Problematic Internet Use and Seminarians' Psychological Wellbeing*

Correlation Between PIU and PW of Seminarians		Problematic Internet Use	Psychological wellbeing
Problematic Internet Use	Pearson Correlation	1	.429**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	138	136
Psychological wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.429**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	136	136

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis indicated that the relationship between Problematic Internet Use (PIU) and Psychological Wellbeing (PW) among Seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan, scored a Correlation Coefficient (Pearson's r of 0.429). This value indicates a moderate positive correlation between problematic internet use and psychological wellbeing among Seminarians. This suggests that as problematic internet use increases, psychological well-being also tends to increase among the seminarians, and vice versa. The moderate positive relationship suggests that interventions targeting problematic internet use among seminarians may have implications for their psychological well-being.

The correlation coefficient suggests that there is a tendency for higher levels of problematic internet use to be associated with slightly lower levels of psychological wellbeing among Seminarians.

Therefore, the study rejects the following hypothesis:

H₁ There is a significant negative correlation between problematic internet use and the psychological well-being of seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan.

This finding is contradicted by that of Çardak (2013) which investigated the relationship between Internet addiction and psychological wellbeing of university students in Turkey. The study had established that students with higher levels of Internet addiction were more likely to experience low levels of psychological well-being.

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The Relationship Between Problematic Internet Use and Psychological Wellbeing of Seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan

The correlation analysis indicated that the relationship between Problematic Internet Use (PIU) and Psychological Wellbeing (PW) among Seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan, scored a Correlation Coefficient of 0.429 (Pearson's r of 0.429). This value indicated a moderate positive correlation between problematic internet use and psychological wellbeing among Seminarians. The findings from the interviews provided insights into the negative impact of problematic internet use on the psychological wellbeing of seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan. Participants noted that excessive internet use leads to a lack of concentration on academic responsibilities and decreased time for personal and religious activities such as prayers and meditations, which are crucial for spiritual growth and maintaining a connection with faith.

There was also concern that problematic internet use could lead to other addictive behaviors, such as pornography addiction, which further disrupts the lives of seminarians. There was also sleeping disturbances and physical health issues. Spending long hours online was indicated to lead to sleeping disturbances and may even affect eyesight, as noted by participants. Similarly, participants highlighted the potential for problematic internet use to contribute to anxiety,

depression, low self-esteem, and impaired concentration, all of which can affect seminarians' productivity and overall mental health. There was also the problem of social isolation and neglect of responsibilities. Seminarians were found to likely isolate themselves from others to concentrate on the internet, neglecting seminary activities and exposing themselves to harmful content due to the lack of regulation online. Excessive internet use could lead to low self-esteem and even expulsion from the seminary, as indicated by one participant.

Conclusion

The prevalence of problematic internet use among seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan is notably moderate, with 30% of seminarians exhibiting behaviors that negatively impact their daily lives and psychological well-being. This significant figure, supported by both quantitative data and qualitative insights from participant interviews, highlights the extensive use of the internet for activities such as academic research, social media, and entertainment. Furthermore, with 57% of respondents showing signs of mild to severe internet addiction, there is a clear need for targeted interventions to address this widespread issue. These findings underscore the necessity for strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of problematic internet use on seminarians' academic performance, social relationships, and overall mental health.

The level of psychological well-being among seminarians is varied, with 52.5% reporting high levels of psychological well-being. However, a significant portion of seminarians' experience challenges, with 38% reporting low levels and 16% reporting mild levels of psychological well-being. These results indicate that while many seminarians are coping well, there is a substantial number who are facing emotional distress and dissatisfaction. Addressing the psychological well-being of seminarians is crucial, as maintaining mental health is essential for their overall well-being and their ability to fulfill their academic and spiritual responsibilities effectively. Interventions such as counseling services, promoting self-care practices, and fostering social support networks are vital to support those with low or mild psychological well-being.

The study also revealed a moderate positive correlation (Pearson's r of 0.429) between problematic internet use and psychological well-being, indicating that as problematic internet use increases,

psychological well-being tends to decline. This relationship is supported by interview insights, which highlight the negative impacts of excessive internet use, such as decreased academic focus, disrupted sleep patterns, physical health issues, and increased anxiety and depression. Additionally, problematic internet use can lead to social isolation and neglect of responsibilities, further affecting seminarians' productivity and mental health. Addressing these issues is critical to ensuring the holistic well-being of seminarians and maintaining their connection to their faith and community.

To curb problematic internet use, respondents suggested several intervention strategies, including screening for internet addiction, creating awareness about the harmful effects of excessive internet use, and encouraging healthy lifestyles. Restricting access to harmful websites, introducing regulatory mechanisms to limit addictive online activities, and regulating the time spent online were also recommended. Providing mental health support for those with stress disorders was emphasized as a crucial intervention. Implementing these strategies, tailored to the specific needs of seminarians, can help mitigate the negative impact of problematic internet use and promote healthier internet habits, responsible online behavior, and overall psychological well-being among seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, various stakeholders have roles to play to address problematic internet use among seminarians in the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio in South Sudan.

The following recommendations are therefore suggested:

- i. Seminaries should implement screening measures to identify seminarians experiencing problematic internet use. This can involve regular assessments using validated screening tools to identify at-risk individuals.
- ii. Seminaries should organize awareness campaigns, workshops, and seminars to educate seminarians about the negative consequences of excessive internet use. These educational initiatives should emphasize the importance of maintaining a balanced approach to internet usage and promoting healthy internet habits.

- iii. Seminary administration should monitor internet usage among seminarians and enforce time limits on online activities. This can involve implementing policies to regulate internet usage hours and ensuring compliance through monitoring and supervision.
- iv. Seminary administration should establish and enforce regulations regarding internet usage within seminaries. This may include setting clear guidelines, policies, and disciplinary measures to regulate internet access and promote responsible online behavior among seminarians.
- v. Seminary administration should promote healthy lifestyles among seminarians by encouraging regular physical activity, balanced nutrition, and stress management techniques. Providing opportunities for recreational activities and social interactions can also help reduce reliance on excessive internet use.
- vi. Healthcare professionals and counselors should be available to provide counseling and support services to seminarians experiencing problematic internet use or related mental health issues. This can involve offering individual counseling sessions, group therapy, and mental health education programs to address underlying issues and promote psychological wellbeing.

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