Internet Addiction and Depression among Students at Residential College: Readiness to Seek Counselling Services

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Abstract: In contemporary society, the ubiquitous use of the Internet has become an unavoidable aspect of daily life. However, unregulated usage carries the potential for addiction, leading to a heightened sense of disconnection from the tangible world of technology. This empirical investigation conducted a quantitative exploration to establish the connection between Internet addiction, depression, and the willingness to utilise counselling services among the student body affiliated with one of Universiti Putra Malaysia's residential colleges. The sample, consisting of 283 students, was meticulously selected through random sampling and represented a spectrum from first-year to final-year students. Data collection was executed through a structured questionnaire comprising three distinct instruments: the Internet Addiction Test (IAT), the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), and the Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form (ATSPPH-SF) inventory. A preliminary analysis of the data, conducted descriptively, revealed prevailing trends. The majority of respondents demonstrated a moderate inclination toward seeking counselling assistance. Simultaneously, they exhibited varying degrees of Internet addiction, ranging from moderate to high levels, and experienced depression at minimal to low levels. Subsequent correlation analysis has contributed noteworthy findings. It discerned pronounced negative correlations between the severity of Internet addiction, the presence of depression, and the readiness to pursue psychological counselling among the surveyed students. In light of these revelations, it is imperative for all stakeholders within the university ecosystem, including counsellors and the management of residential colleges, to foster synergistic collaboration. This collective effort assumes paramount importance in its mission to enhance the mental well-being and psychological health of the university's student population.

Keywords: Counselling readiness, Counselling seeking, Depression, Internet addiction, Residential college

1.0   Introduction

Internet addiction among adolescents is a widely discussed global concern (Ab Majid et al., 2021). The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) report in 2020 underscores the susceptibility of teenagers and students to Internet addiction. The increasing popularity of the Internet, especially among students who rely on it for supplementary academic materials, has led to frequent and prolonged Internet use (Adenan, 2020). Additionally, the ubiquity of smartphones has further contributed to this phenomenon, as they serve as essential tools for communication and staying updated. However, excessive Internet use has adversely affected mental health, leading to reduced face-to-face social interactions and potential negative consequences (Abdul Aziz et al., 2021).

Empirical evidence suggests that Internet use peaks between the ages of 16 and 24, rendering high school and university students, who are at crucial stages of social and emotional development, particularly susceptible to Internet dependency (Berte, Mahamid, & Affouneh, 2021; Pesigan & Shu, 2016). University students rely heavily on the Internet for their academic pursuits due to its accessibility (Che Tom & Tohalib, 2018). Nevertheless, it is imperative for them to exercise caution and manage their Internet usage responsibly to avoid the potential pitfalls of addiction. Although the Internet has initially been intended for leisure, social connections, and information seeking, excessive reliance on entertainment platforms can lead to addiction. The increasing prevalence of Internet use among children and teenagers is a concerning trend, with only a small minority remaining disconnected from the digital realm (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2020). The diminishing parental control over Internet use, exacerbated by the prevalence of smartphones, contributes significantly to this issue.

Persistent research findings consistently establish a strong correlation between Internet addiction and mental health issues, including conditions such as depression, anxiety, heightened stress levels, and a decline in overall well-being (Seki et al., 2019; Lebni et al., 2020). Excessive Internet use or overindulgence in technology has been identified as potential triggers for depressive states (Stanković & Nešić, 2022; Kim et al., 2018). Furthermore, prolonged Internet engagement can lead to reduced physical activity or, conversely, a decline in physical activity, indirectly impacting one's mood. A recent comprehensive analysis conducted by Stubbs et al. (2018), encompassing various studies, corroborates that physical activity plays a pivotal role in enhancing cardiorespiratory fitness and overall life satisfaction among individuals with major depressive disorder. This underscores the importance of physical activity in regulating emotions, a facet that, unfortunately, diminishes when Internet use becomes obsessive.

Internet addiction disorder, pathological Internet use, or problematic Internet use refers to the questionable or compulsive utilisation of the Internet, leading to significant impairments in various aspects of life over an extended duration. The connection between internet addiction, digital media consumption, and mental health is a crucial point of research, garnering considerable interest from experts and scholars across diverse disciplines (Guillot et al., 2016). Particularly in the post-pandemic era, there is a growing association between mental health and internet addiction, as individuals increasingly spend time online compulsively seeking health information (Khait et al., 2022).

Internet addiction is a complex issue encompassing biological, psychological, social, economic, and cultural dimensions, demanding a holistic approach to its comprehension (Lebni et al., 2020). The psychological state induced by Internet addiction disrupts users' behaviour and cognitive functioning (Wu et al., 2016). Considering that university students play a pivotal role in shaping the future of societies, safeguarding their mental health is paramount for fostering their learning and scientific awareness. Previous research has demonstrated that individuals grappling with Internet addiction are more susceptible to depression and anxiety, underscoring the significance of addressing mental health concerns within the context of Internet addiction (Xu & Liu, 2020). In this regard, the readiness of university students to seek counselling services becomes of utmost importance.

Counselling services, readily available in educational institutions, play a pivotal role in offering support to individuals contending with personal challenges, both within and beyond their academic environments (Manaf et al., 2018; Omoyemiju & Popoola, 2021). Previous studies have delved into the

attitudes and acceptance of counselling services among diverse groups, including teachers, students in rural schools, cancer patients, and at-risk teenagers (Habibie et al., 2017; Mat Tob & Abd Razak, 2017; Willie & Abu Bakar, 2019; Yahya et al., 2020). Seeking professional assistance from counsellors, psychiatrists, or clinical psychologists is essential for individuals grappling with Internet addiction, given its potential to exacerbate pre-existing mental health concerns. Therefore, addressing Internet addiction takes on paramount importance.

Hence, the present study endeavours to explore the variables linked to the readiness to seek counselling services, with a specific emphasis on Internet addiction and depression among university students. Given the well-established link between Internet addiction and mental health, counselling services hold particular significance in addressing the emotional and mental well-being of students. The study is set to accomplish the following research objectives: (1) assess the levels of Internet addiction, depression, and readiness to seek counselling services among university students, and (2) examine the relationship between Internet addiction, depression, and the willingness to seek counselling services among university students.

2.0   Literature Review

Internet addiction is defined as the inability of an individual to exercise control over their Internet usage (Davis, 2001). This addiction can lead to a magnitude of psychological and behavioural complications, often occurring alongside other psychological manifestations and psychiatric disorders (Otsuka et al., 2020). In recent times, depression has emerged as a prevalent and serious psychological issue, especially among adolescents. The connection between Internet addiction and adolescent depression holds profound significance due to its detrimental effects, with compelling evidence demonstrating a strong correlation between the two (Lau et al., 2018). Furthermore, a recent investigation by Xie et al. (2023) has established that depression, anxiety, and Internet addiction are interrelated, with anxiety serving as a predictor of Internet addiction and vice versa. College students currently exhibit a high prevalence of Internet addiction (Al Shawi et al., 2021), and they are particularly susceptible to the ramifications of Internet addiction as they undergo crucial stages of psychosocial development (Shen et al., 2020).

Emotional issues, with depression taking a prominent role (Tsai et al., 2020), often co-occur with other psychological and behavioural problems (Zeng et al., 2019), while difficulties in regulating emotions can serve as predictors of subsequent Internet addiction (Effatpanah et al., 2020). Among college students, emotional concerns, particularly depression and anxiety, are more prevalent (Ramón-Arbués et al., 2020). Additionally, research by Evren et al. (2019) has revealed a positive relationship between the severity of Internet addiction and the levels of depression, with depression being more widespread among individuals classified as Internet addicts and excessive users (Tan et al., 2016). Notably, depressive symptoms exhibit the highest predictive power for Internet addiction (Diotaiuti et al., 2022; Przepiorka et al., 2019).

The act of seeking help for mental health concerns involves the communication of one's need for personal and psychological assistance to access guidance and support (Aguirre Velasco et al., 2020). Rickwood and Thomas (2012) have defined help-seeking for mental health problems as an adaptive coping mechanism that entails making an effort to obtain external assistance for addressing mental health concerns. Paradoxically, adolescents who often require psychological assistance are frequently the least inclined to seek it (Divin et al., 2018; Kowalenko & Culjak, 2018; Oksanen et al., 2017). In the realm of adolescent mental health, one of the most significant challenges is ensuring that individuals at risk are connected with the appropriate support systems (Hellström & Beckman, 2021). A comprehensive understanding of the obstacles and facilitators to help-seeking is essential for the development of interventions and programs aimed at assisting adolescents with mental health issues, including counselling interventions.

The Cramer Model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding various factors that influence an individual's willingness to seek counselling services. For instance, Mahfar et al. (2018) conducted a study involving 118 students to explore their perspectives on counselling services and their willingness to seek professional assistance. The study findings revealed that factors such as social

support, self-concealment, stress, and attitudes toward counselling were generally low among the students. Notably, self-concealment emerged as the most influential factor affecting students' willingness to engage in counselling sessions. Additionally, the study did not identify significant gender disparities in factors such as social support, self-concealment, stress, or attitudes toward counselling among the students.

Cramer (1999) identifies four primary factors that can influence a person's decision to seek counselling services: social support, stress factors, self-concealment factors, and attitudes towards counselling. These factors strongly correlate with a student's inclination to seek counselling help. Students are generally willing and prepared to seek counselling assistance because it helps them make informed choices, cope with emotional difficulties, and address existing problems. The following is a concise overview of the four main factors:

    i. Social support entails physical, emotional, or psychological assistance from others. Low social support can elevate an individual's stress levels, encouraging them to seek counselling services (Mahfar et al., 2018).

    ii. Stress factor - The higher the stress level, the greater the individual's desire for counselling services (Cramer, 1999).

    iii. Self-concealment factor pertains to an individual's tendency to keep inner pressures hidden due to a sense of shame about revealing them to others. Individuals with relatively high levels of self-concealment are more prone to experiencing distress and, consequently, are inclined to seek counselling services (Cramer, 1999).

    iv. Attitude towards counselling - Individuals' inclination to seek counselling services is influenced by their attitude towards counselling. A positive attitude towards counselling fosters a willingness to seek such services, while negative perceptions about counselling can deter individuals from seeking help (Cramer, 1999).

The Cramer Model (1999) highlights the significance of all four factors in relation to their readiness to seek counselling services. Therefore, the researchers selected this model as it aligns with the dependent variable and provides valuable insights to fulfil the objectives of the current study.

3.0 Methodology

This study has employed a quantitative approach to achieve its research objectives. The subsequent subsections provide an in-depth discussion of this approach.

3.1 Research Design

The researcher employed a descriptive and correlational study design to explore the intricate relationship between internet addiction, depression, and the inclination to seek counselling services among university students. The deliberate selection of a quantitative approach was made to emphasise the accurate measurement and rigorous analysis of statistical and numerical data collected through the chosen methodology. Moreover, the use of statistical data helps mitigate potential bias within the sample study, as the items employed have undergone thorough validation and reliability assessments.

3.3 Population and sample study

Using the G-Power software by Bucher et al. (1996), the study determined that a minimum of 283 respondents out of the total population of 1070 students was required. Following Cohen's (1992) parameters, which considered an effect size of $r = .30$, a significant alpha level of $\alpha = .05$, and a statistical power of .80, a total sample of 283 was deemed adequate for the statistical analysis. The sampling process involved a multistage approach. Initially, Universiti Putra Malaysia was randomly selected from a list of public universities in the Klang Valley region. Subsequently, TDI College was chosen, and students from various academic programs within the college were included in this study. Respondents were recruited through a simple random sampling method from the first year until final year students,

ensuring that each member of the population had an equal chance of being selected as a survey participant (Cohen et al., 2007). The process of simple random sampling was executed using the data acquired from the college management, encompassing university students from the first year -to the final year at TDI College of UPM. Additionally, students were assured of anonymity and provided their written informed consent to participate in the study. Data collection took place in December 2022.

3.2   Instruments

The study utilised a comprehensive instrument comprising four sections: Part A gathered respondents' demographic information; Part B measured Internet addiction using the Internet Addiction Test (IAT); Part C assessed depression using the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI); and finally, Part D gauged the readiness to seek counselling services through the Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form (ATSPPH-SF) inventory.

The Internet Addiction Test (IAT), developed by Young (1998), consists of 20 items aimed at assessing the extent of Internet addiction. These items explore various aspects, such as compulsive Internet use, the impact of online activities on offline life, and responsibilities related to academic performance, overall productivity, and interpersonal relationships. Respondents provided their answers on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("rarely") to 5 ("always"). A higher score on this scale indicates a higher degree of Internet addiction. The IAT demonstrates good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of .94. Examples of the items include "How often do you find that you stay online longer than you intended?", "How often do your grades or schoolwork suffer because of the amount of time you spend online?", and "How often do you snap, yell, or act annoyed if someone bothers you while you are online?".

The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), developed by Beck (1961), consists of 21 items designed to assess the level of depression. These items encompass various aspects of depression, including mood, pessimism, feelings of failure, loss of enjoyment, guilt, self-dislike, suicidal thoughts, and changes in sleep and appetite, among others. Respondents provided their responses using a Likert scale, ranging from 0 ("never") to 3 ("always"). Higher scores on this scale indicate a higher severity of depressive symptoms. The BDI demonstrates high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87. Sample items from the inventory include "I am so sad and unhappy that I can't stand it", "I feel the future is hopeless and that things cannot improve", and "I feel I am a complete failure as a person".

The readiness to seek counselling services was assessed using Fischer and Farina's (1995) Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help-Short Form. This scale comprises five positively worded items (items 1, 3, 5, 6, 7) and five negatively worded items (items 2, 4, 8, 9, 10). Prior to scoring, the negative items were reverse-coded. Respondents expressed their views on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("disagree") to 4 ("agree"). Higher scores on this scale indicate a greater willingness to seek counselling services. The ATSPPH-SF demonstrates high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of .84. Sample items from this scale include "I would willingly confide intimate matters to a psychologist or counsellor if I thought it might help me or a member of my family", "I believe that emotional problems, like many things, tend to work out by themselves", and "I would rather be advised by a close friend than by a psychologist/counsellor, even for an emotional problem".

4.0   Findings and Discussions

4.1   Demographic of respondents

The descriptive analysis of the respondents reveals that the majority of the students were female (69.6%). In terms of racial ethnicity, the largest group was Malay (71.4%), followed by Chinese (12.8%), Indians (12.0%) and other races (3.9%). Among the total participating university students, 98 (34.6%) were first-year students, followed closely by 69 (24.4%) who were fourth-year or final-year students, and 59 (20.8%) second-year students, as well as 57 (20.1%) third-year students. Lastly, the majority (66.6%) had never attended a counselling session. The distribution of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to gender, race, education year and experience attending counselling sessions (N=283)

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	86	30.4
	Female	197	69.6
Race	Malay	202	71.4
	Chinese	36	12.8
	India	34	12.0
	Others	11	3.9
Education year	First	98	34.6
	Second	59	20.8
	Third	57	20.1
	Fourth	69	24.4
Experience attending counselling sessions	Yes	95	33.4
	No	188	66.6

4.1 Level of Internet Addiction, Depression, and Readiness to Seek Counselling Services

In terms of Internet addiction levels among the students, the data indicates that the majority fell into the categories of mild (48.4%) and moderate (34.6%). A smaller percentage of students demonstrated high (14.5%) and low (2.5%) levels of Internet addiction. The majority of university students reported minimum levels of depression (69.30%), followed by equal proportions of high and low levels of depression (11.30% each). Finally, concerning the readiness to seek counselling services, the majority of the university students demonstrated moderate levels (65.02%), followed by high (24.03%) and low levels (10.95%) (Table 2).

Table 2. Level of Internet addiction, depression, and readiness to seek counselling services (N=283)

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percentage
Internet Addiction	Low	7	2.5
	Mild	137	48.4
	Moderate	98	34.6
	High	41	14.5
	Total	283	100.0
Depression	Minimum	196	69.0
	Low	32	11.30
	Moderate	24	8.5
	High	31	11.0
	Total	283	100.0
Readiness to Seek Counselling Services	Low	31	10.95
	Moderate	184	65.02
	High	68	24.03
	Total	283	100.0

4.2 Correlation between Internet Addiction and Depression with Readiness to Seek Counselling Services

The researchers initially examined the relationship between Internet addiction and readiness to seek counselling services. Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a significant negative relationship

between Internet addiction and readiness to seek counselling services among university students at TDI College, UPM (r=-.186, p<0.05). This finding provides evidence that higher levels of Internet addiction are associated with a reduced readiness to seek counselling services among university students at TDI College, UPM. Furthermore, the analysis also uncovered a significant negative relationship between depression and readiness to seek counselling services (r=.-.485, p<0.05). This suggests that higher levels of depression experienced by university students are linked to a decreased readiness to seek counselling services. The correlation matrix illustrating these results is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation between Internet addiction and depression with readiness to seek counselling services (N=283)

Variable	Readiness to Seek Counselling Service	
	r-value	***p***
Internet addiction	-.186**	.002
Depression	-.485**	.000

** p<0.05

5.0   Discussion

The findings of this study significantly contribute to the Cramer Model (1999) by providing valuable insights into the intricate relationship between Internet addiction, depression, and the readiness to seek counselling services among university students at TDI College, UPM. The study reveals a range of Internet addiction levels among the students, with the majority exhibiting normal (low) levels, followed by moderate, high, and mild levels of addiction. This variation in internet addiction aligns with Arifin and Wan Jaafar's (2019) study, which also reported normal levels of Internet addiction among their respondents. However, it contradicted the findings of Che Tom and Tohalib (2018), who observed high levels of Internet addiction among university students at Universiti Malaysia Terengganu. Govindarajoo et al.'s (2022) post-pandemic study concurred, emphasising that despite students' digital literacy, they often become distracted by technology, leading to academic setbacks.

While the Internet offers numerous benefits, including convenience for academic work, communication, information seeking and entertainment, it can also have negative consequences when misused. The current study's findings indicate that the majority of the respondents reported a normal level of Internet addiction. However, since this study relied on a self-report survey, it is challenging to ascertain the accuracy of the students' reports regarding their Internet usage habits, which could potentially influence their responses.

Furthermore, the study highlights a concerning trend, with approximately half of the sample reporting medium to high levels of Internet addiction. This raises concerns about the potential exacerbation of addiction over time, particularly among those with medium levels of addiction who may become increasingly frequent users. These insights underscore the need for proactive interventions to address Internet addiction among university students.

Regarding the severity of depression, the majority of respondents in this study experienced only mild depression, which differs from Mat Saad's (2017) study, where moderate depression levels were reported among students at the Faculty of Educational Studies, UPM. This variation may be attributed to diverse demographic factors, with the current sample group potentially being more exposed to mental health awareness programs at the college level, particularly when compared to the pre-COVID-19 pandemic era. Additionally, the significant presence of first-year students in the sample could contribute to the lower depression levels observed in this study. First-year students might not have encountered as many academic or career-related stressors compared to their more senior counterparts. The Ministry of Health Malaysia's (2021) emphasis on recognising the signs of depression highlights its profound impact on students' psychological well-being and cognitive functioning.

The findings of this study further corroborate Abdullah and Hamidi's (2019) research, which also reported minimal depression rates among Institute of Higher Education (IPT) students, including those from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah. These results support Abd Shukor et al.'s (2019) assertion that students with normal mental health tend to perform well

academically. Additionally, Ferlis Bullare @ Bahari et al.'s (2015) study, which highlighted minimal depression levels in students who engage in various activities to distract themselves from negative emotions, aligns with the current study's observation of low depression levels among university students. This suggests that the students in this study exhibit a high level of awareness and possess effective coping mechanisms for managing life challenges, which in turn contributes to their lower depression levels.

The study's observation that most university students exhibit moderate readiness to seek counselling services contributes significantly to the understanding of Cramer's (1999) Model. This finding suggested that the students are willing to engage in counselling sessions when necessary, signifying their openness to seeking professional guidance when facing significant challenges or in need of support. The variability in the readiness to seek professional help across different populations and demographics underscores the nuanced nature of counselling needs, in line with the findings of Habibie et al. (2017).

Furthermore, the same study highlighted that students voluntarily seek counselling guidance for issues related to family conflicts, relationships, careers, and personal development. This finding supports Willie and Abu Bakar's (2019) report on the counselling needs of rural students in the domains of career and academics. Particularly in the post-COVID-19 period, academic-related concerns have become increasingly relevant among students who experience stress and loneliness while adapting to the transition from face-to-face to online learning (Sim et al., 2021). This underscores the essential role of counselling services in providing support for university students during critical times.

The discovery of a negative association between Internet addiction and the readiness to seek counselling services provides valuable insights into the Cramer Model. This corroborates Arifin's (2014) previous findings, which suggested that higher levels of Internet addiction may result in a decreased willingness to seek counselling support. The researchers speculate that students may be in denial about their Internet addiction due to feelings of shame, as highlighted by Mahfar et al. (2018). These insights further contribute to our understanding of the relationship between Internet addiction and counselling readiness. Recognising the potential detrimental effects of excessive and unnecessary Internet usage on students' psychological and physical well-being is crucial. This underscores the importance of raising awareness about this issue and the need for interventions that address Internet addiction within the university context.

The study's identification of a noteworthy relationship between depression and the inclination to seek counselling services aligns with Cramer's (1999) Model. Students exhibiting higher levels of depression and lower readiness to seek counselling support resonate with Marsh and Wilcoxon's (2015) findings concerning the association between college students' mental distress levels and their help-seeking behaviours. Additionally, the study's recognition of the stigma surrounding mental health and counselling as potential barriers to seeking support contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence students' willingness to utilise counselling services within the framework of the model.

Despite the contradiction with Kamarul Izwan's (2022) study, which did not identify a significant relationship between depressive personality types and the willingness to seek counselling services among first-year undergraduate students, the current study's observation of students' neutral attitudes towards counselling services contributes to the model. The neutrality in attitudes could be attributed to the increased mental health awareness efforts among university students and the emphasis on the importance of good mental health through counselling sessions and professional support. These efforts shape the students' attitudes and behaviours regarding counselling services. In conclusion, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the Cramer Model, particularly regarding the relationship between Internet addiction, depression, and the readiness to seek counselling services among university students.

5.0 Implications on counsellors and college management in TDI College, UPM

The findings of this study hold significant implications for multiple stakeholders within the university community, encompassing both counsellors and the college management at UPM. These

findings underscore the vital need for collaboration, heightened awareness regarding mental health issues, and the accessibility of counselling support. Enhancing the availability of counselling services within the university premises will facilitate students in seeking professional guidance as required (Yeng & Chin, 2022).

Counsellors should actively work to enhance the quality of services provided within the counselling unit, aiming to foster student interest and encourage their engagement, whether it pertains to specific concerns or general guidance. One effective approach may involve organising awareness programs addressing topics such as Internet addiction, depression, and other mental health conditions. These programmes should also emphasise the significance of seeking professional support.

Additionally, the notion of upskilling and reskilling among counsellors is of paramount importance in a rapidly evolving field characterised by the continuous emergence of new challenges and therapeutic approaches. Leveraging the potential of social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp provides an efficient way to connect with university students and promote counselling services. In fact, Alias et al. (2022) have highlighted the advantages and feasibility of utilising counselling blogs to reach out to students. These platforms not only disseminate relevant information on mental health issues but also provide students with a medium to access professional counselling assistance. Considering the younger generation's inclination toward internet-based communication and information retrieval, promoting online counselling services is a prudent and strategic approach for the university counselling unit.

The college management has an opportunity to collaborate closely with the College Representative Council to develop impactful programs aimed at identifying students who may require guidance and support from counsellors. Additionally, ensuring that counselling rooms are well-equipped and providing the necessary resources to facilitate counselling sessions within the college can significantly enhance accessibility and convenience for students. Furthermore, the university can establish a partnership with the Counselling Division of Universiti Putra Malaysia (BKUPM) to promote awareness of good mental health practices among students. BKUPM can actively engage through open booths, offer free psychological testing, and conduct webinars or workshops. BKUPM can identify common issues faced by students, whether related to academics, career, family, or finances and subsequently assess the student's needs and readiness to seek counselling assistance. This collaboration can contribute to a more supportive and mentally healthy campus environment.

From a macro perspective, the university has the potential to establish partnerships with the MOHE and MOH to develop comprehensive programs that cater to students from diverse backgrounds. These programs can effectively address a broader spectrum of mental health needs. On a micro level, the student organisation or club can collaborate with faculty members to promote awareness about mental health through workshops, campaigns, and the establishment of peer support groups. Faculty members, in turn, can foster a learning environment characterised by empathy and a willingness to guide students towards counselling when necessary. In conclusion, collaborative endeavours at both the institutional and interpersonal levels can cultivate a campus culture that prioritises mental well-being, reducing the stigma surrounding it and enhancing access to counselling services. This, in turn, will significantly bolster the psychological welfare of students.

6.0   Conclusion

This correlational study aimed to explore the relationship between Internet addiction, depression, and the inclination to seek counselling services among university students enrolled at TDI College, UPM. The findings revealed that approximately half of the respondents exhibited moderate to high levels of Internet addiction, low levels of depression, and a moderate readiness to seek counselling assistance. The study identified significant negative correlations between both Internet addiction and depression and the likelihood of seeking counselling services. Additionally, the demographic profiles of the respondents were thoroughly examined. In summary, the researchers concluded that, on the whole, the students displayed positive psychological health and demonstrated an awareness of the importance of seeking counselling support when necessary. However, the study's results raised concerns, as higher levels of depression and Internet addiction were associated with reduced willingness

to seek counselling assistance. To address this issue, the researchers engaged in extensive discussions and provided recommendations aimed at enhancing counselling services within the university. The ultimate goal is to improve the overall well-being and mental health of the students.

7.0   Limitations

The findings of this study are context-specific to the population of university students at TDI College, UPM. Therefore, it is important to exercise caution when attempting to generalise these results to other universities or student populations with differing characteristics, demographics, or cultural backgrounds. It is essential to recognise that the data collection relied on self-reporting by the respondents, which introduces the possibility of response bias and social desirability bias. As a result, some participants may provide socially acceptable responses, potentially leading to underreporting of sensitive issues such as Internet addiction or depression.

The research employed a cross-sectional design, which offers a snapshot of data at a specific moment. However, this design has limitations when it comes to establishing causality and fails to capture changes or developments over time. Furthermore, conducting the study within a single institution restricted the diversity and variation within the sample. Future research could consider a multi-institutional study involving a broader range of participants from various academic settings to obtain more robust and generalisable findings. Regarding potential future research, conducting longitudinal studies would be invaluable. Such studies enable tracking changes in Internet addiction, depression levels, and the propensity to seek counselling services over an extended period. This longitudinal approach would offer valuable insights into the developmental trajectories of these variables and their reciprocal influences.

Furthermore, conducting comparative studies encompassing various universities and colleges could offer insights into the variations in Internet addiction, depression levels, and the readiness to seek counselling services among students with diverse backgrounds and educational environments. Such comparative analyses could illuminate the contextual factors that influence mental health outcomes and enable the customisation of support services to specific needs. To obtain a more profound understanding of the students' perspectives, attitudes, and experiences related to Internet addiction, depression, and counselling services, qualitative studies utilising interviews or focus groups would be particularly relevant. This qualitative approach would complement the quantitative findings and provide richer insights into the underlying motivations and factors driving certain observed trends.

Additionally, research is needed to address the effectiveness of counselling interventions and support programs designed to address Internet addiction and depression among university students. By systematically evaluating the outcomes of these interventions, evidence-based approaches for promoting mental well-being can be developed and put into practice. Given the widespread use of the Internet, it is worth exploring the potential of online counselling services to reach and assist university students dealing with Internet addiction and depression. Leveraging online platforms could offer several advantages, including reaching a broader audience and providing easily accessible mental health support.

Addressing these limitations and pursuing additional research in these areas would enhance our comprehension of the complex interplay between Internet addiction, depression, and the readiness to seek counselling services among university students. Consequently, such research has the potential to substantially contribute to improving mental health support within academic settings.

8.0   Co-Author Contribution

The authors affirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article. The authors affirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article. Nur Fatihah A. carried out the fieldwork, completed data entry and analysis, prepared the literature review, and wrote the research methodology. Engku Mardiah E. K. overlooked the whole research process and improved the writeup of the article. Mohd Izwan M.,

Afdal, and Amelia M. N. assist in the research conceptualization, provide suggestions for improvement, and confirm the final writeup. Nur Atiqah Puteri M. A. carried out the statistical analysis and interpretation of the results.

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