



Cultural constructs associated with internet use in Hispanic college students

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Introduction

Background

- Many digital applications and programs are designed to be addictive to ensure sustained participation (Salmela-Aro, Upadyaya, Hakkarainen, Lonka, & Alho, 2016).
- 50 percent of college students report problems consistent with excessive internet use (Kittinger, Correia, & Irons, 2012).
- Excessive socio-digital participation competes with school work and may disturb daily life in general for college students (Salmela-Aro et al., 2016).
- Microaggressions are experienced in online contexts such as gaming, fandom, news, sports threads, social media, and blogs (Williams, Oliver, Aumer, & Meyers, 2016).
- There is limited research on the effects of excessive internet use in Hispanic populations.

Aim: The aim of the study assesses the relationship between excessive internet use and microaggressions in a Hispanic college students.

Methods

Participants

The present sample ($n = 345$) represents a subset of Hispanic college students (72.2% Female; $M_{age} = 20.13$ years; $SD = 3.92$). The data were collected via online questionnaire.

Measures

Compulsive Internet Use Scale (CIUS). This questionnaire consisted of 14-items ($\alpha = 0.93$) measuring the intensity of compulsive internet use (Meerkerk, 2009).

Racial Ethnic and Microaggressions Scale (REMS). This 45-item questionnaire measures feelings of inferiority ($\alpha = 0.79$), second class citizen and assumption of criminality ($\alpha = 0.88$), microinvalidations ($\alpha = 0.79$), exoticization ($\alpha = 0.84$), workplace and environmental microaggressions ($\alpha = 0.83$) (Nadal, 2011; Forest, Jenson, & Trecartin, 2015). Overall, Cronbach's alpha for the REMS-45 was $\alpha = 0.97$.

Internet Addiction Test (IAT). This 20-item questionnaire ($\alpha = 0.93$) measures the presence and severity of internet dependency among young adults. (Chang & Law, 2008).

Procedures

After IRB approval was granted, participants were recruited through an online web-based recruitment site. After participants signed the consent forms, they were instructed to answer the subsequent questionnaires.

Approach to analyses

Two linear regression models were performed assessing the relationship between high internet dependency (IAT) and microaggressions as well as the relationship between compulsive internet use (CIUS) and microaggressions.

Results

Participants reported high internet use both on the IAT ($n = 298$, $M = 49.31$, $SD = 16.11$) and CIUS ($n = 295$, $M = 17.661$, $SD = 10.96$). In a multiple linear regression model, the Assumptions of inferiority subscale ($\beta = 0.176$, $p = 0.049$) was statistically significantly associated with higher weekly internet use on the IAT, and the Microinvalidations ($\beta = 0.134$, $p = 0.077$) was marginally related. In a separate linear regression of the CIUS, the Microinvalidations subscale ($\beta = 0.177$, $p = 0.026$) was statistically significantly associated with compulsive internet use.

Tables

	Percent
Female	72.2
Ethnicity	
Mexican National	7.2
Other Hispanic/Latin ethnic group	12.5
Mexican American	80.3

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range
Age	20.13	3.922	17 - 53
Assumptions of Criminality	1.45	0.90	1-6
Assumptions of Inferiority	1.54	0.95	1-6
Assumptions of Similarity	2.45	1.34	1-6
Microinvalidations	1.66	1.01	1-6
Media Microaggressions	2.15	1.46	1-6
Internet Use (hours per week)	16.51	19.4	0-100
Internet Addiction Test	49.31	16.11	20-105
Compulsive Internet Use Scale	17.66	10.97	0-56

	SE	β	p
Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Subscales:			
Assumptions of Criminality	1.55	0.96	0.269
Assumptions of Inferiority	1.51	0.176	0.049
Assumptions of Similarity	0.78	0.018	0.78
Microinvalidations	1.20	0.134	0.077
Media Microaggressions	0.70	0.063	0.321

Notes. Bold indicates $p < .05$. Nagelkerke $R^2 = .158$.

	SE	β	p
Revised Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Subscales:			
Assumption of Criminality	1.10	0.070	0.442
Assumption of Inferiority	1.06	0.109	0.237
Assumptions of Similarity	0.55	0.018	0.788
Microinvalidations	0.86	0.177	0.026
Media Microaggressions	0.50	0.007	0.910

Notes. Bold indicates $p < .05$. Nagelkerke $R^2 = .106$.

Discussion

There is a lack of research about the association between internet use and perceived discrimination. That exposure to negative portrayal in the media and assumptions of inferiority were associated with increased internet use could suggest, as in other studies, that using the internet is a form of coping with perceived discrimination (Ye, 2005). Moreover, because of the anonymous nature of the internet, users may feel more free to withhold information (e.g., ethnicity) which may reduce perceived discrimination in an online setting (Glaser & Kahn, 2005). Given that the directionality of our findings is unclear, it also may be that what is being viewed on the internet is seen as microaggressive. Thus, prospective studies with more nuanced measures of motives for internet use are suggested.

Strengths and Limitations

The findings in this correlational, cross sectional study warrant confirmation in a prospective study to better assess these relationships temporally. Also, since all students were Hispanic, results cannot be generalized across college students in the U.S.. However, this is a study strength, as these relationships warrant exploration in the fastest growing U.S. ethnocultural minority group.

Future Directions

Future studies should assess if there is a potential association with perceived microaggressions and internet use in other minorities such African and Asian Americans. In addition, studies should expand sample population to include Hispanic young adults outside of a university setting.

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