



ASSESSMENT OF INTERNET ADDICTION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ABUJA MUNICIPAL AREA COUNCIL

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ABSTRACT

Ample research evidence indicates that addiction to the internet correlates with behavioural difficulties. This study assesses internet addiction and psychological distress among secondary school students. An ex post facto, cross-sectional research design using stratified sampling technique was adopted to recruit 200 students (120 males and 80 females between 14 and 19 years of age) drawn from three secondary schools in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). Instruments administered included Young's Internet Addiction Test to measure internet addiction and the Kessler's Psychological Distress Scale (K10) to measure psychological distress. Five hypotheses were tested using Pearson product-moment correlation and Independent Samples t-test. Results showed a significant relationship between internet addiction and psychological distress [$r(192) = 0.40$, $P < .05$] among secondary school students. However, gender does not significantly influence internet addiction [$t(192) = 0.04$; $p > .05$]. The student's age has a significant influence on the level of internet addiction [$t(192) = -2.38$; $p < .05$]. There is no significant gender difference in psychological distress among the students [$t(192) = -0.209$; $p > .05$] while age does influence psychological distress among them [$t(192) = -0.254$; $p < .05$]. It was concluded that the continuous use of the internet, despite its benefits, can lead to addiction; internet addiction is a social problem which negatively impacts on the lives of all, especially adolescents and secondary school students. It is recommended that students tread with caution on how they use the internet in order not to develop addiction, students should seek help regarding their internet use and psychological distress as well as age control measure be put in place to limit and prevent access to the internet hence psychological distress.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent Internet addiction is arguably, one of the most challenging and serious social problems in contemporary times and understanding its dynamics in early adolescents has become particularly important for early detection and intervention (Chi, Hong & Chen, 2020). The United Nations (2012) reported an increased growth of internet usage globally in 2012 and this trend is expected to continue since internet has come to be an integral part of everyday life and has become more accessible and affordable in most homes, schools and organisations. In 2019, the number of internet users worldwide stood at 4.13 billion, a little over the 3.92 billion users recorded in 2018 (Clement, 2020). According to an article published by Clement (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/183849/internet-users-nigeria/>) on 14 July 2020, Nigeria had over 99.05 million internet users with this figure projected to grow to 131.7 million in 2023. Nigeria ranked at the top with an estimated 85 million mobile internet users, and mobile phone internet usage is particularly popular (Statista, 2020). In Nigeria, the use of social networking sites (SNS) is burgeoning among adolescents, especially those still in senior secondary school (Oluwafemi, Bibire, Mebu, Dung & Aderibigbe, 2020).

The internet comes with so much benefits and usefulness no doubts, but it also comes with some visible problems. Starcevic (2013) is of the view that the obvious and troubling negative effect of the internet on people especially the young is internet addiction. There is a growing concern regarding the negative consequences as a result of excessive and pathological use of the internet (Frangos, 2009). It is thus believed that the internet, if not utilised in a controlled manner, is capable of affecting youths and adolescents negatively. Wallace (2001) observed that as a result of the increased use of the internet, researchers have raised concern and pointed out the dangers and consequences of this phenomenon.

Internet addiction is a term used synonymously with problematic internet use, online addiction as well as pathological internet use; which is characterised by an over dependence on the internet (Widyanto and Griffiths, 2006). Griffiths (2000) defines internet addiction as an individual's inability to control or moderate his/her use of the internet despite negative

consequences over a given period. Shaw and Black (2008) on their part define internet addiction as an excessive or poorly controlled preoccupations, Surges or behaviours regarding access to and use of the internet which may lead to impairment or distress. Young (1999) identified and outlined some of the signs of internet addiction which include preoccupation with the internet, increased amount of time spent on the internet, repeated unsuccessful attempt to control, reduce or stop use of the internet, as well as feelings of restlessness, depression or irritability when not assessing the internet. With the increase in the availability and easy access to the internet, its use is not limited to adults alone but there is an increase access and use among youths and adolescents. Christakis, Moreno, Jelenchick, Myaing and Zhou (2011) are of the view that young people are the most common and active users of the internet. The National Centre of Education Statistics (2006) reported that a large number of children and adolescents in America aged between 5 and 17 years are exposed to and have access to the internet at an early age. In Nigeria, no available data exist on the number of children/adolescents who use the internet however, 9 out of every 10 adolescents have access to the internet (Livingstone, 2018). Research hence explained that internet addiction and its negative behavioural consequences are mostly common among young people aged between 17-27 years compared to other age population.

Internet addiction has been linked with psychological distress in youths. Shaw and Black (2008) reported an association and co morbidity between problematic internet use (addiction) and psychological distress such as mood and anxiety disorders in young people. Study.com (2019) describes psychological distress as an unpleasant feelings or emotions that impact an individual's level of functioning. In other words, it is a psychological discomfort that interferes with someone's activities of daily living. An individual going through psychological distress most often holds a negative view of the environment, others, and the self. Internet addiction is also associated with other problems other than psychological distress. Burnay, Billieux, Blairy and Larøi (2015) reported internet addiction to be associated with poor academic performance in school, sleep deprivation, obesity, depression, attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), introversion, isolation, neuroticism personality and anxiety. Social vices among young people and adolescents have also been associated with internet addiction. For instance, Ko, Yen and Chen (2009) reported that even though internet use may reduce distress by providing immediate rewards and opportunities to engage in different activities, its excessive use (addiction) is an important risk factor for aggression among young people.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Generally, internet addiction is considered a mental health problem which can affect an individual's physical, psychological, social, educational and occupational wellbeing. This has generated a lot of interest and attracted increasing attention among researchers. For instance, Asibong, Okafor, Asibong, Ayi, Omoronyia and Owoidoho (2020), conducted a study on psychological distress and social media usage among undergraduates of a university in Calabar, Nigeria and found out that about one-fifth (20.1%) of them had moderate-to-severe forms of Internet addiction, whereas one-third (33.1%) were psychologically distressed. Psychological distress was found to be significantly more common among respondents with mild/none, compared with those with moderate-to-severe forms of Internet addiction ($P = 0.00$). Respondents with moderate-to-severe forms of Internet addiction had significantly lower mean depression and anxiety scores compared with those with mild or no form of addiction ($P = 0.00$). Akpunne and Akinnawo (2019) also found that 48.6% of their research respondents were addicted to the Internet, 47.4% had Problematic Smartphone Use (PSU), 50.6% had anxiety disorder, 49.8% had depression while 47.6% had psychological distress. The study established that internet addiction independently and significantly predicted severities of anxiety disorder and psychological distress. Furthermore, Nduanya, Okwaraji, Onyebueke & Obiechina (2018) assessed internet addiction, locus of control and psychological distress among 835

undergraduates and found that 27.4%, 12.9% and 9.8% had mild, moderate and severe internet addiction respectively. Similarly, 69.3% had internal locus of control as against 30.7% with external locus of control and 24.2% had psychological distress.

In a study on addictive behaviours and psychological distress among adolescents and emerging adults in Finland Savolainen, Kaakinen, Sirola and Oksanen (2018), also found different forms of addictive behaviours such as excessive drug use, gambling and internet use as having a significant direct relationship with higher psychological distress. Excessive drug use, gambling and Internet use were associated with a weaker identification with a peer group, which predicted higher psychological distress. Furthermore, Al-Gamal, Alzayyat and Ahmad (2016) investigated the prevalence of internet addiction and its association with psychological distress and coping among a random sample of 587 university students in Jordan. Their findings revealed that prevalence of Internet Addiction was 40% among participants and was associated with high mental distress among the students. In a related study conducted by Okwaraji, Aguwa, Onyebueke, Arinze-Onyia and Shiweobi-Eze (2015) revealed that many adolescents showed presence of internet addiction and psychological distress. There was difference in internet addiction and psychological difference among the age groups, gender and class in school. This study also revealed that older adolescents (those aged 16-19 years) were more addicted to the internet and also had more psychological distress than the younger adolescents (those aged 13-15 years). This may imply that age is a contributory factor in becoming addicted to the internet with the associated psychological distress.

Gender is said to be associated with internet addiction and its relationship with psychological outcomes among young people. For instance, Kawa and Shafi (2015) carried out a study to assess internet addiction and psychological distress among university students. Results showed that male university students experienced more internet addiction and psychological distress as compared to their female university counterparts. Similarly, Okwaraji et al. (2015) in a study on assessing internet addiction and depression among Nigerian university undergraduates also found gender to be significantly influencing internet addiction and depression as males who were addicted to the internet were more depressed than the female students. Lastly, Beranuy, Oberst and Chamarro (2009) confirmed in their research on Problematic internet and mobile phone use and clinical symptoms in college students: The role of emotional intelligence, that there was no significant difference in gender on internet addiction and psychological distress among students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The use of the internet is rapidly on the increase every year and internet addiction has become a huge problem. It could lead to accidents on the road as some people are fond of using their mobile phones for internet-related activities while driving. Internet addiction could also distract students and negatively impact on their academic performance. Many people cannot do without their phones or without accessing the internet just because they are addicted to it. A number of studies have examined the prevalence internet addiction has on users. For instance, Nduanya, Okwaraji, Onyebueke and Obiechina (2018) conducted a cross sectional study on internet addiction, locus of control and psychological distress in a sample of Nigerian undergraduates. The study found that 27.4%, 12.9% and 9.8% of the participants had mild, moderate and severe internet addiction respectively. Similarly, 69.3% had internal locus of control as against 30.7% with external locus of control and 24.2% had psychological distress. Furthermore, Akpunne and Akinnawo (2019), observed in their research that 48.6% of the respondents were addicted to the Internet, 47.4% had Problematic Smartphone Use (PSU), 50.6% had anxiety disorder, 49.8% had depression while 47.6% had psychological distress. The study established that internet addiction independently and significantly predicted severities of anxiety disorder and psychological distress. Another related study conducted by Okwaraji, Aguwa, Onyebueke, Arinze-Onyia and Shiweobi-Eze (2015) revealed the presence of internet

addiction and psychological distress among adolescents from a Nigerian urban city who took part in the study. The study found that 28.5% of the adolescents showed mild internet addiction, 23.5% showed moderate internet addiction while 11.0% exhibited severe internet addiction. The study further linked internet addiction to various forms of psychological problems including depression, loneliness, anxiety, social isolation, shyness and low self-esteem.

Kawa and Shafi (2015) also found that male university students experienced more internet addiction and psychological distress as compared to the female university students and a significant positive correlation was found between internet addiction and psychological distress among university students. Moreover, the results also indicated that rural university students experienced more internet addiction and psychological distress as compared to urban university students.

With the advent of broadband and mobile access to the internet, many secondary school students in AMAC and Nigeria as a whole have relatively easy and unlimited access to the internet using phones, tablets and laptops any place and at any time. It is common to see many of them with mobile phones all hooked up to the internet, spending many hours pursuing personal interests, playing games, finding information and communicating with friends on the internet both at homes and in schools. While internet use may come with some benefits, its prolonged and extreme use may be detrimental to their physical, academic or social wellbeing which may influence other psychological ill-health.

Generally, psychological distress and other problem behaviours such as anxiety, anger, impulsiveness, pornography, anxiousness, gambling, exam malpractices, substances abuse, etc. have been observed to be common among youths and adolescents; the relationship between internet addiction and these behaviours have not been adequately explored in Nigeria even though it has been widely studied in other countries. Studies on internet addiction in Nigeria (e.g., Yusuf, Mukhtar, Galadanci, & Muaz, 2020; Lawal & Idemudia, 2018; Babalola, Ekundayo, Agiobu-Kemmer and Ayenibiowo, 2017; Okwaraji, Aguwa, Onyebueke, Arinze-Onyia, and Shiweobi-Eze, 2015) have mostly been in the southern regions and scarcely among secondary school students. This study is therefore carried out with the aim of assessing internet addiction and its relationship with psychological distress among secondary school students in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), central Nigeria.

HYPOTHESES

1. There will be a significant relationship between internet addiction and psychological distress among secondary school students.
2. There will be a significant gender difference in internet addiction among secondary school students.
3. Age will significantly influence internet addiction among secondary school students.
4. There will be a significant gender difference in psychological distress among secondary school students.
5. Age will significantly influence psychological distress among secondary school students.

METHODS

Design

The study adopted an ex-post facto design since the independent variables used are already in existence and the researcher did not have control over the manipulation of the dependent variables (internet addiction and psychological distress) as well as the independent variables (age and gender).

Participants and Sampling Techniques

The population for this study was made up of Senior Secondary School Students in Abuja Municipal Area Council. There are 12 senior secondary schools in AMAC and 3 of these schools were randomly selected using lottery method. In this method, the names of the 12 schools were written in pieces of papers, rolled into balls and put in a bowl. Three random draws were made and the corresponding schools picked were:

- i. Government Secondary School Area 10 Garki,
- ii. Government Secondary School Apo; and
- iii. Government Secondary School Kabusa.

Simple random sampling using ballot method was used to select a convenient sample size of 200 participants for the study. Participation in this study was restricted to only students in senior secondary classes because the researchers viewed them as more likely to have mobile phones and thus, have access to the internet. Questionnaires were administered to the 200 participants but only 194 consisting of 117(60.3%) males and 77(39.7%) females adequately completed them. With regards to age, participants within the range of 17-19 years were fewer with a frequency of 61 representing 31.4% compared to those within the age range of 14-16 years who are 133 (68.6%) and happened to be the majority. Also, participants within the class of SS1 are 62 representing 32% of the total population while those in SS2 were the majority with a frequency of 126 and a percentage of 64.9%; whereas, 6 participants (3.1%) represent those in other classes. Regarding the distribution of participants according to religion, a total of 149 participants (80.5%) were Christians, 33 representing 17.0% of participants were Muslims, 3 (1.5%) represent other religion and 9 representing 4.6% of the participants did not state their religion.

Procedure

An official letter written by the researchers was presented to the school authorities seeking their consent for the study to be carried out in their schools and all of them provided consent. In each of the school, the principal assigned a teacher with the task of accompanying the researchers to administer the research instruments. In each of the schools, all the students within SS1 and SSS3 were asked to assemble in the general assembly hall from where the researchers addressed them on the purpose of the research. The simple balloting random sampling technique was employed in data collection. Folded pieces of paper with notes written 'Yes' and 'No' were passed round in a basket for each student to pick. Only those who picked "Yes" were selected to participate in the study whereas, those who picked 'No' were asked to leave the hall. This gives a fair chance of participating to all the students. The selected students were given the opportunity to ask questions for clarifications before copies of the questionnaire were administered to them. Also, the student participants were informed of their right to withdraw from participating at any point during the study. To encourage candid responses, the participants were assured that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained at all stages of the study; also, identifying personal details were not requested in the questionnaire. No particular time limit was given for them to respond to the items; overall, the session ended between 30-50 minutes. Following the completion of the items, the questionnaires were retrieved from all the participants.

Research Instruments

A battery of three instruments was adapted and used as tools for data collection. The questionnaires were divided into three sections.

Section A was made up of participants' demographic data. This section consisted of age, gender, class and religion.

Section B consisted of Young's Internet Addiction Test developed by Kimberly Young in 1998 which assess symptoms of Internet addiction and compulsive behaviour (Sharma, 2016).

The scale contained a 20-item, self-administered questionnaire which was standardised for assessing internet addiction. The IAT has a six-point scale with the following response options: 0-Does not apply; 1-Rarely; 2-Occasionally; 3-Frequently; 4-Often and 5-Always. Obtainable scores ranged from 0-100. Scores ranging from 0-30 indicate normal internet use; 31-49 indicate mild internet addiction; 50-79 indicate moderate internet addiction and scores ranging from 80- 100 indicate severe internet addiction (Laconi, Rodgers and Charbol, 2014). Several researchers have reported good internal consistency and validity index for the IAT among different populations (Lee et al., 2013; Osada, 2013). The IAT has been validated for use in Nigeria among a sample of University Students by Ofole and Babatunde (2015) and like other previous studies the IAT is reported to be a highly valid and reliable measure of internet addiction as indicated by a test-retest reliability index of $r=0.89$.

Section C was made up of Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10). The Kessler psychological distress scale (K10) is a 10-item, self-report questionnaire developed by Kessler (1996) popularly used for assessing psychological distress in an individual. Scoring on the K10 was on the five-point Likert scale with the following responses: 5-All of the time; 4-Most of the time; 3-Some of the time; 2-A little of the time; and 1-None of the time. The total score ranges from 10 to 50 and the maximum score of 50 indicates severe distress while the minimum score of 10 indicates no distress. The brief questionnaire has shown to have good construct and criterion validity (Kessler et al., 2002). The Kessler Psychological distress scale has been used and tested among University undergraduate students in Nigeria found yielded a Cronbach α value of 0.753 (Victor & Godwin, 2018).

Data Analysis

Data collected for the study were analysed using the Statistical package for social science, SPSS version 21.0. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used for the descriptive analyses of data while Pearson correlation and independent sample t-test were employed for the statistical test of the research hypotheses. The level of significance chosen for this study was $p \leq .05$.

RESULTS

A total of 200 participants responded to the questionnaires and 194 of these were included in the final analyses while 6 were discarded due to incomplete responses. Table 1 shows the level of internet addiction among the participants.

Table 1: Levels of Internet Addiction among Participants

Level of Internet Addiction	Frequency	Percentage
No internet addiction	40	20.6
Mild internet addiction	65	33.5
Moderate internet addiction	86	44.3
Severe internet addiction	3	1.5
Total	194	100.0

Table 1 shows the levels of internet addiction found in the participants. From the table, 20.6% representing 40 participants showed normal level of internet usage; hence, no addiction; 33.5% representing 65 of the participants showed mild internet addiction, 44.3% representing 86 participants had moderate internet addiction while 1.5% representing 3 of the participants had severe internet addiction.

Table 2: Levels of Psychological Distress among Participants

Level of Psychological Distress	Frequency	Percentage
No distress	64	33.0
Low/Mild distress	62	32.0
Moderate distress	38	19.6
High/severe distress	30	15.5
Total	194	100.0

Table 2 shows the frequency distribution in the levels of psychological distress found in participants. As observed in the table, 33.0% representing 64 participants showed no sign of psychological distress; however, 32% representing 62 participants and 19.6% representing 38 participants showed low/mild and moderate levels of distress respectively; whereas 15.5% representing 30 participants had high/severe level of psychological distress.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant relationship between internet addiction and psychological distress among secondary school students.

Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the hypothesis. Results of the analysis is presented Table 3.

Table 3: Summary results of the relationship between Internet Addiction and Psychological Distress

Variable	N	r	Sig.	Remark
Internet addiction	194	0.40	0.00	Significant
Psychological distress				

Table 3 shows the relationship (correlation coefficient) between internet addiction and psychological distress among secondary school students. In specific terms, the results indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between internet addiction and psychological distress among secondary school students [$r(192) = 0.40, p < .05$]. Based on this finding, the stated hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant gender difference in internet addiction among secondary school students.

To test this hypothesis, independent sample t-test was adopted. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary Independent Sample t-test on Gender and Internet Addiction

Gender	N	\bar{X}	Df	t	Sig.
Male	117	45.57	17.60		
Female	77	45.48	19.08	0.04	0.97

Table 4 shows the results of independent sample t-test on gender difference as it relates to internet addiction among secondary school students. Male students scored marginally higher ($\bar{x}=45.57$) on measure of internet addiction compared to their female counterparts ($\bar{x}=45.48$). The difference in the level of internet addiction between the two gender is marginally different hence the result is statistically not-significant [$t(192)=0.04$; $p>.05$]. Therefore, the stated hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 3: Age will significantly influence internet addiction among secondary school students.

Independent Sample t-test was used to test the hypothesis with the summary results presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Summary Independent Sample t-test on Age and Internet Addiction

Age	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	T	Sig.
14-16 years	133	43.46	18.01	192	-2.38	.02
17- 19 years	61	50.01	17.76			

Table 5 shows summary results of Independent sample t-test analysis pertaining to the influence of age on internet addiction among secondary school students. The results indicate that age has a statistically significant influence on internet addiction among secondary school students [$t(192) = -2.38$; $p <.05$]. In specific terms, comparison of the mean scores indicate that, older adolescents ($\bar{x}=50.01$) exhibited significantly higher level of internet addiction compared to younger adolescent students ($\bar{x}=43.46$).

Hypothesis 4: There will be a significant gender difference in psychological distress among secondary school students.

Independent sample t-test was used to test the hypothesis and the result is presented in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Summary Independent Sample t-test on Gender and Psychological Distress

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t	Sig.
Male	117	22.64	6.47	192	-0.209	0.46
Female	77	22.84	6.82			

Table 6 shows the result summary of independent sample t-test used to ascertain the gender difference in psychological distress among secondary school students. As shown in the table, male students scored less ($\bar{x}=22.64$) on the psychological distress scale compared to their female counterparts who scored higher ($\bar{x}=23.84$). However, the difference in their mean score was not statistically significant [$t(192)=-0.82$; $p>.05$]; hence, there is no significant gender difference in psychological distress among secondary school students.

Hypothesis 5: Age will significantly influence psychological distress among secondary school students.

Independent sample t-test was used to test the hypothesis. The summary result of the analysis is presented in a Table 7 below.

Table 7: Summary Independent Sample t-test on Age and Psychological Distress

Age	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t	Sig.
14-16 years	133	21.59	6.06	192	-3.63	.00
17-19 years	61	25.18	7.08			

Table 7 shows the summary results of Independent sample t-test performed in order to determine the influence of age on psychological distress among secondary school students. Specifically, it showed that older adolescents aged 17-19 years scored higher on measure of psychological distress compared to younger adolescents. At less than 0.05, the significant value obtained (0.00) indicates that age has a statistically significant influence on psychological distress among secondary school students.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study focused on the assessment of internet addiction and psychological distress among secondary school students. Based on the findings of the study, 20.6% representing 40 participants showed normal level of internet usage indicating that they had no addiction; 33.5% representing 65 of the participants showed mild internet addiction; 44.3% representing 86 participants have moderate internet addiction while 1.5% representing 3 of the participants had severe internet addiction. This clearly establishes the prevalence of internet addiction among secondary school students in AMAC, central Nigeria. The supports findings from previous studies Asibong et al. (2020), Akpunne and Akinnawo (2019), Nduanyaet al. (2018), Al-Ganal et al. (2016) and Okwaraji et al. (2015) which identified the prevalence of internet addiction among university students and adolescents respectively.

Furthermore, the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between internet addiction and psychological distress among secondary school students. This result is in line with Akpunne and Akinnawo's (2019) study, which established that internet addiction significantly and independently predicted severities of anxiety disorder and psychological distress. The study further revealed a significant difference between internet addiction and psychological distress. This implies that the more addicted the adolescents are to the internet the more they develop psychological distress

The study did not find a significant gender difference in internet addiction among secondary school students. The difference in mean scores on the level of internet addiction between males and females was marginal; hence the result is not statistically significant [$t(192)=0.04$; $p>0.05$]. This result differs from previous findings (Kawa and Shafi, 2015; Okwaraji et al., 2015) which showed that male university students experienced more internet addiction as compared to the female university students. This disparity may be as a result of differences in participants used in the two studies and also may be both male and female have equal access to the internet now on like before.

From the result, age was found to have a significant influence on internet addiction among the students; [$t(192) = -2.38$; $p < 0.05$]. Older adolescents aged 14-16 years) had a comparatively higher level of internet addiction than younger adolescents. This result is supported by Okwaraji et al. (2015), whose study revealed that older adolescents (those aged 16-19 years) were more addicted to the internet than the younger adolescents (those aged 13-15 years). Furthermore, similar work in Croatia, Finland, and Poland by Karacic, and Oreskovic (2017) corroborating this finding reported that, older adolescents exhibit the highest degree of internet addiction, possibly because they have a greater level of independence and their parents have lesser control over the older adolescents' use of the internet. Another possible explanation for this finding could be that, older adolescents are more likely to have access to internet

enabled smart phones and would therefore use the internet more frequently leading to addiction.

The result also showed that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female on the measure of psychological distress among secondary school students [$t(192)=-0.82$; $p>0.05$]. This differs from Okwaraji et al.'s (2015) findings, which showed that there were gender differences in internet addiction and psychological distress between male and female adolescents. However, this result is supported by the outcome of the study conducted by Beranuy, Oberst and Chamarro (2009), which indicated that there was no significant difference in gender on internet addiction and psychological distress among students.

Lastly, age has a statistically significant influence on psychological distress among secondary school students. From the result, older adolescents aged 16-19 years scored higher on measure of psychological distress compared to younger adolescents at 0.01 (less than 0.05) level of significant. This result is supported by the result of the study conducted by Okwaraji et al. (2015) which revealed that older adolescents have more psychological distress more than younger adolescents. This may mean that younger adolescents receive more care from their parents more than older adolescents.

CONCLUSION

Results from this study have established the relationship between internet addiction and psychological distress among secondary school student like earlier studies conducted. Findings reveal that secondary school students are faced with the problem of internet addiction ranging from mild, moderate and extreme severe addiction. This addiction is related to psychological distress as well as their general wellbeing. Findings showed a significant correlation/relationship between internet addiction and psychological distress. Other findings revealed that age and gender do not significantly influence internet addiction and psychological distress among secondary school students.

Internet addiction, like other addictions, is a social problem that negatively impacts on the lives of all especially adolescents and secondary school students. It also affects an individual's social functioning. Findings in this study provides support for previous ones which linked internet addiction to many personality and psychiatric disorders including low self-esteem, impulsivity, poor sleep quality, mood disorder, suicide as well as other neuropsychiatric and neurobiological implications, which may require multiple therapeutic approaches to treat (Tripathi, 2017). It therefore calls for urgent intervention and control both from the family front, the school and other regulatory bodies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study found a significant relationship between internet addiction and psychological distress among secondary school students. The following recommendations are made based on the findings:

- It is recommended that students should tread with caution on how they use the internet so as not develop addiction for it.
- Students should be counselled to moderate their level of internet use as well as seek help to prevent addiction which in turn may cause psychological distress.
- Age restrictions should be ensured regarding access to the internet to prevent psychological distress.

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