
Between Boredom and Frustration: Predictor of Compulsive Internet Use

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Abstract

Internet users have various purposes or motives for using internet service. Furthermore, internet usage proliferated by 40 percent amidst the COVID-19 pandemic social confinements. Interestingly, there is a tendency to do activities with the internet when under load or overload circumstance. This study aims to look at these two contradictory conditions and determine whether when someone is in a state of the tendency to be bored or depressed due to stressful conditions becomes a predictor for using the internet maladaptively. This study uses a quantitative approach with an accidental sampling technique. We recruited 235 internet users from adolescents to middle adulthood. The result showed boredom proneness and frustration intolerance predicted 34.4% of internet users' compulsive internet use. This study also showed a more significant impact of boredom to compulsive internet use rather than frustration intolerance. These findings indicate that people tend to use the internet more frequently in under load than overload conditions.

Keywords: Boredom Proneness, Frustration Intolerance, Compulsive Internet Use

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Introduction

The internet and all digital media connected to the internet are attached to today's life. Simultaneously, the use of media connected to the internet also plays a significant role in shaping experiences about the world around them, such as how individuals express themselves and relate to one another (Harley et al., 2018). The expansion of internet connections impacts several domains of users' lives, such as changes in time usage, the emergence of various new activities, more accessible information, and various communication media that can increase social interactions' scope and intensity. Internet users' various online activities reflect their different needs, motivations, and psychological processes (Attrill, 2015).

The Communication and Informatics Ministry data in April 2020 showed that the intensity of internet use soars high exponentially by 40 percent during pandemic COVID-19 social restriction (Wahyudi, 2020). This data is in line with data released by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) until mid-2020, which states that internet users reach 73.7% of Indonesia's total population (APJII, 2020). It is also predicted even higher because internet usage supports people's daily activities from remote working, online learning, or other activities connecting to the internet. Internet usage reflected that Individuals have various motives for using the internet, particularly for interpersonal efficiency. The motives such as aiming for social contact and online interaction, passing time (using the internet to avoid boredom), information seeking (using the internet to search for information online), ease (ease of accessing the internet) to communicate with each other, and entertainment (Kuss & Pontes, 2019).

The covid pandemic period makes individuals encounter several transitions in their activities to be online or employ internet technology. It is common for us to find that most people will be connected to internet-connected digital media wherever they are, whether on the go, such in class, and theaters, at work, parties, family

gatherings, or others (Panova & Lleras, 2016). However, this condition is not without risks and negative impacts. For example, one study showed the unanticipated concern induced by the pandemic compelled universities to do online learning, and the students' opinions reveal that distance learning during the pandemics is a frustrating and stressful experience. It is because of lack of face-to-face communication and socialization, lack of interaction with the lecturer, interaction with colleagues, and lack of hands-on experience. This condition leads to boredom, problems with concentration, and learning difficulties (Manea et al., 2020) A similar study also explains how social distancing during a pandemic can affect psychological conditions in the developmental age of adolescents and young adults. The pandemic has led to moderate-to-high levels of frustration among adolescents. Some confinement makes day-to-day activities, online interactions with mates, and optimism play in the degree of frustration experienced by young individuals. Academic concern was the most pertinent variable because of the magnitude of the relationship with adolescents' frustration and led to some mental health symptoms (Chaturvedi et al., 2021; Muñoz-Fernández & Rodríguez-Meirinhos, 2021; Tasso et al., 2021)

The study of the last two years on the psychological consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies that the pandemic situations that have provoked crucial changes in daily activities and social impediments have an unfavorable result. Several conditions such as disabling loneliness, specific and uncontrolled fear, pervasive anxiety, and frustration and boredom contribute to declined subjective well-being and have a more significant impact at a young age (Serafini et al., 2020). Different studies have concluded that although psychological well-being is not significantly different by gender, women lean to be more apprehensive and experience psychological distress than men (Lingelbach et al., 2021). In this issue, the focus examined is the situation of boredom and frustration. As investigated before, when a person feels bored with work or a low workload, he will do unproductive activities such as cyberloafing and risky behavior such as riggers individuals to play online games on social media and using gadgets on male riders (Pindek et al., 2018; Zhou & Leung, 2012). Moreover, people who are more easily bored (prone to boredom) will sense adherence to COVID containment as more complex (Martarelli & Wolff, 2020)

Boredom Proneness is a tendency to experience boredom in a variety of situations. Boredom as a trait or termed boredom proneness is an individual's tendency to feel bored due to internal factors such as the inability to entertain oneself and failure to get sufficient external stimulation under normal conditions, which turns into a chronic tendency of boredom (Farmer and Sundberg, 1968 (Elpidorou, 2014)) Boredom correlates with several negative consequences such as anxiety, depression, and substance abuse (LePera, 2011). Several studies explain similar results; for example, the research results found that boredom proneness is positively correlated with fear of missing out (FoMO)(Wolniewicz et al., 2020), and bored adolescents tend to be more at risk of experiencing internet addiction than adolescents who are not bored (Biolcati et al., 2018)

Opposed from being bored, which is similar to under load or low workload situations, some people use the internet to avoid stressful situations in the real world (Perdew, 2015) One of them is when someone delays completing a task (procrastination) because of the difficulty in controlling their desire to do more enjoyable activities, mainly using the internet. Frustration intolerance is a central concept of rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) theory. In the REBT concept, tolerance is about conditions not surrendering or accepting conditions passively and increasing the ability to solve problems at hand (Harrington, 2011) Frustration intolerance is one of the dysfunctional beliefs that is the source of individual psychological problems(Harrington, 2005). As a study conducted on adolescents explained, when teens experiencing stressful situations in the real world, beliefs about frustration intolerance make it difficult for teens to tolerate negative emotional experiences and tend to "run" and avoid task situations (Ko et al., 2008) In this case, the internet may be used as an alteration or avoidance when an individual experiences an aversive task (Geng et al., 2018).

Both boredom and frustration situation are contradictory, but the activities carried out could lead to inefficient internet use. Meanwhile, during a pandemic, the internet is used to carry out various daily activities online, which substitute activities outside the home. In other words, whether in this case, the use of the internet leads to productive behaviors or vice versa. Therefore, this study aims to determine whether boredom proneness and frustration intolerance predict compulsive internet use in internet users. Both of these conditions can be experienced by individuals in a state of low workload or high workload, allowing individuals to be trapped in counterproductive activities.

Method

This study conducted try out for the Indonesian version of measurement tools with 189 participants. The result showed three of the measurement tools, i.e., Short Boredom Proneness Scale (Struk et al., 2017)(Cronbach's alpha = .845), Frustration Discomfort Scale (Harrington, 2005)(Cronbach's alpha = .900), and Short-Compulsive Internet Use Scale (Gmel et al., 2019) (Cronbach's alpha = .819) have good internal consistency.

This research used quantitative approach with accidental sampling technique. An online survey conducted on 235 internet users ranges from adolescents to middle-aged adults with different gender, education levels, and occupations. We recruited 76 male and 159 female participants who completed the survey until the last part. The participants clicked the link to the online survey and doing a self-administered questionnaire after agreed with the term and condition in informed consent.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 1 and 2 presented descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and correlation between the study variables.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Variables	M	SD
Boredom Proneness	22.8	7.09207
Frustration Intolerance	62.8255	16.66613
Compulsive Internet Use	16.3106	6.18805

As shown in Table 2 below, both boredom proneness and frustration intolerance were significantly and positively correlated with compulsive internet use. Furthermore, as predictor variables, boredom proneness was significantly correlated with frustration intolerance.

Table 2 Correlation between the study variables

	Boredom Proneness	Frustration Intolerance	Compulsive Internet Use
Boredom Proneness	1.00		
Frustration Intolerance	.567*	1.00	
Compulsive Internet Use	.524*	.514*	1.00

Note : * $p < .01$

Predicting Compulsive Internet Use

The data was computed with multiple regression analysis to determine how proneness to boredom and frustration intolerance predicted compulsive internet use. Based on the ANOVA calculation, it is apprehended that the value of $F = 60,788$ ($p = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$) which means the regression model is significant, indicating that the variables of boredom proneness and frustration intolerance contribute significantly to compulsive internet use.

Table 3. Predicting Compulsive Internet Use

	β	R ²	Sig.
Boredom Proneness	.343	.274	.000
Frustration Intolerance	.320	.069	.000
Both		.344	.000

As seen in table 3. Boredom proneness and frustration intolerance contributed 34.4% to compulsive internet use. Independently, boredom correlates by 0.524 and contributes 27.4% to compulsive internet use. When Frustration Intolerance is combined with boredom, the contribution increases by 6.9% to compulsive internet use. This shows that Boredom Proneness contributes more than Frustration Intolerance to Compulsive Internet Use. Separately, Frustration Intolerance has a value of a correlation of .514 with Compulsive Internet Use.

In this study, we also recruited 76 and 159 male and female internet users. As an additional analysis, we wanted to determine whether there was a difference in the score of compulsive internet use between men and women using the internet. The table below is the result of the t-test mean score of compulsive internet use.

Table 3. Compulsive Internet Use by gender differences

	Gender	Mean	SD
Compulsive Internet Use	Male	16.4211	5.92005
	Female	16.2579	6.32977

The mean value of compulsive internet use score in male subjects was 16.4211 and in female subjects was 16.2579. The independent sample t-test showed that the value of $t = 0.189$ ($p = 0.850$, $p > 0.05$), which means that there is no difference within compulsive internet use score based on gender difference.

The purpose of this study was to determine the contribution of two contradictory conditions, namely boredom proneness and frustration intolerance to compulsive internet use. We initially expected to find: (1) Boredom proneness contributed significantly to compulsive internet use; (2) Frustration intolerance contributes significantly to compulsive internet use; (3) These two variables contribute significantly to compulsive internet use.

The results showed that these two variables made a positive and significant contribution to compulsive internet use. Compulsive internet use is described as a pattern of internet use designated by the failure of control, preoccupation, conflict, withdrawal symptoms, and adopting the internet as a coping strategy (Meerkerk et al., 2008). In that sense, the use of the internet on today's users leads to internet usage's maladaptive behavior. As a maladaptive type of internet use, the user conduces to have persistent engagement with any activity using the internet and sustaining contact by checking out online.

The regression analysis results show that the contribution of boredom proneness has a more significant contribution to compulsive internet use. This result in line with the study about boredom proneness and mobile phone usage suggested that boredom proneness related to the daily frequency of opening the notification center, social networks on the phone, the number of launched apps, charging time, and the transmitted amount of data (Matic et al., 2015). These results also support previous studies that people who perceived free-time boredom favor seeking enjoyment for using the smartphone to actively engage in media content or activities to satisfy their social and psychological needs. (Leung, 2020). Boredom makes individuals fail to achieve optimal performance and are more motivated to find alternatives on the internet to meet their psychological needs, such as sensation-seeking and pleasure-seeking, and lose control over their situation.

Although statistically lower than Boredom's, Frustration Intolerance was also a significant predictor of compulsive internet use. In line with the results of previous research regarding the association between the belief of frustration intolerance and internet addiction in adolescents, describe that frustration intolerance is associated with behavior avoidance leads to an unwillingness to endure adverse emotional events, and they may be more likely to emerge from the unaccepted difficulties of everyday life and attempt immediate regalement from the internet.

Both Boredom Proneness and Frustration Intolerance predict compulsive internet use, but proneness to boredom more significantly positively contributed to compulsive internet use. he results of this study imply that someone who tends to be bored can predict how he will cope with situations that make him bored by misusing the internet. Likewise, individuals who are in the circumstances prone to distress also overlook diverting themselves by using the internet. However, this study is limited to the population of late adolescents and young and middle adults who, during the COVID-19 pandemic, experienced an impact as a consequence of changes in online activity.

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