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Time perspective in Internet and Facebook addiction



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ABSTRACT

Time perspective is a predictor of addictive behaviors. As the number of Internet and Facebook users is increasing, it is worth investigating the role of time perspective in maladaptive types of usage. In this study, we examined the potential relationship of time perspective with Internet addiction and Facebook intrusion. The participants were 756 Internet users with Facebook accounts. We used the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory, the Facebook Intrusion Questionnaire, the Facebook Intensity Scale, and the Internet Addiction Test. We analyzed similar associations between time perspective and the two types of addiction. Age and daily time spent online were predictors of Internet addiction, Facebook intensity, and Facebook intrusion. Past Negative and Present Fatalistic orientations were positive predictors for both types of addiction, whereas Future time perspective was a negative predictor. Present Hedonistic orientation was a negative predictor only of Internet addiction. The findings of this study may contribute to the development of health promotion interventions and workshops aimed at preventing maladaptive online behaviors.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, the Internet has become an indispensable tool in many aspects of life. In 2014, the number of Internet users reached over 3 billion, which means 40% of the world population have access to the Internet (Internet Live Stats, 2015). The trends observable in contemporary society include an increasing amount of time spent online, the Internet being commonly used at work and at home (Eurostat, 2013), or the decreasing age of the first Internet use (Pew Research Center, 2012). According to Eurostat (2014), 78% households in Europe have Internet access, which means having access to the virtual world is no longer a luxury. This omnipresence of the Internet puts many users in danger of becoming addicted to it. According to some statistics, there may be between 6% and 13% of addicts among Internet users (Morahan-Martin, 2005). In addition, some authors outline different subtypes of Internet addiction, such as Facebook addiction (Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg, & Pallesen, 2012), online gaming addiction (Kuss, Louws, & Wiers, 2012), or Internet sex addiction (Young, 2008). As social networking sites enjoy an increasing popularity (especially

Facebook, with more than 1393 billion Facebook users at present; Facebook, 2014), people more and more often experience problems that stem from using them in maladaptive ways. The terms functioning in the literature – “Facebook addiction” (Andreassen et al., 2012) or “Facebook intrusion” (Elphinston & Noller, 2011) – are defined as excessive involvement in Facebook that disrupts everyday activities, leads to compulsive use of the site, and manifests itself in neglecting social life. Considering the increasingly strong influence of the Internet on human life, it seems of paramount importance to determine the factors that may contribute to dysfunctional Internet use. In addressing this problem, time perspective with its robust predictive power may suggest interesting answers.

Time Perspective (TP) may be defined as an individual's concentration on particular dimensions of time. Zimbardo, Keough and Boyd (1997) distinguish five of them: Past Positive, Past Negative, Present Hedonistic, Present Fatalistic, and Future (Zimbardo et al., 1997). People divide and classify life events according to these dimensions. TP is a sociocognitive variable that comprises ideas about oneself, about the world, and about others, as well as a person's goals, expectations, and memories. It is possible to identify certain characteristics associated with different types of TP. Those who are future-oriented set their goals more accurately; they are able to restrain themselves from succumbing to current temptations and more easily delay gratification (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008). At the same time, however, they tend not to concentrate sufficiently on

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present enjoyment and may neglect private aspects of their life. Those who are more past-oriented live by their memories; they cultivate traditions, and their mind often drifts back to the times that have gone by. Those who are present-oriented tend to be able to derive pleasure from current events and enjoy their life more fully. At the same time, they may have difficulties in setting goals for the future and be more willing to take risks.

The concept of time perspective has been examined in connection with many aspects of human activity and applied to a wide range of issues – for instance, to academic achievement (e.g., de Volder & Lens, 1982), delayed gratification (e.g., Wu & He, 2012), career decision-making (e.g., Walker & Tracey, 2012), health behavior (e.g., Crockett, Weinman, Hankins, & Marteau, 2009), or HIV risk (e.g., Rothspan & Read, 1996). There is a vast body of research that investigated the role of TP in several types of addiction. The TP theory has been widely used to explain addictive behaviors. Researchers have found a significant role of TP in gambling (e.g., Sharif-Razi, Kaya, Mihajlovic, Deamond, & Nussbaum, 2012). The study by MacKillop, Anderson, Castelda, Mattson, and Donovanick (2006) revealed that symptoms of pathological gambling correlated positively with present time orientation and negatively with the Future subscale. What is more, shorter time horizons were found in pathological gamblers (Hodgins & Engel, 2002). Those who were more present-oriented reported higher use of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco (Keough, Zimbardo, & Boyd, 1999), as well as higher cannabis use (Apostolidis, Fioulaine, Simonin, & Rolland, 2006). Future orientation was negatively related to substance use, and the pattern was the opposite in the case of present orientations (Wills, Sandy, & Yaeger, 2001). Tests revealed that coping and negative affectivity were mediators in the relationship between TP and substance use. Present orientation correlated with negative self-esteem, lack of control, maladaptive coping, and negative affectivity, whereas Future orientation correlated negatively with anger coping and positively with perceived control, behavioral coping, self-esteem, and positive affectivity (Wills et al., 2001).

Future perspective correlated negatively with cannabis consumption (Apostolidis et al., 2006). TP was associated with risk perception. Those who were high on the Future scale perceived greater risk in substance use in comparison with Present Hedonistic persons. Higher consideration for future consequences was associated with lower proneness to hazardous drinking (Beenstock, Adams, & White, 2011). Hall et al. (2012) showed that Future time perspective enhances attempts to quit smoking. Similarly, Merson and Perriot (2012) confirmed the role of Future time perspective in smoking cessation; additionally, the Past Negative and Present Fatalistic dimensions were associated with failure to quit smoking. In his longitudinal study, Adams (2009) investigated the link between TP and smoking cessation. He concluded that enhanced Future orientation may guarantee the effectiveness of quit smoking interventions.

Another area where TP makes a difference might be the use of the Internet and social networking sites; however, this is not reflected well in the literature. For instance, Chittaro and Vianello (2013) investigated this issue recently on an Italian sample. The authors found that Past Negative and Present Fatalistic orientations can be predictors of problematic Internet use. Lukavska (2012) examined the relationship between time perspective and massive multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) playing. To measure TP, she used the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI). Each time orientation was examined in terms of how it related to the frequency of MMORPG playing. Future perspective correlated negatively with time spent playing, while present perspective was positively associated with it. The author underlines that the TP theory can be successfully applied in therapy.

Taken together, the above findings support the conclusion that having a negative view of one's past and present may be related to Facebook and Internet activity. Negative attitude towards time indicated a higher probability of depression, anxiety (Linden, Lau-Barraco, & Hollis, 2014), and psychiatric problems (van Beek, Berghuis, Kerkhof, & Beekman, 2011). A review of the literature reveals a relationship between depressive symptoms and Internet addiction (e.g., Banjanin, Banjanin, Dimitrijevic, & Pantic, 2015) as well as Facebook addiction (e.g., Blachnio, Przepiorka, & Pantic, 2015). Given that personality traits are strongly related to Internet addiction (Amichai-Hamburger & Hayat, 2013) and that there is a strong correlation between TP and personality (e.g., Zhang & Howell, 2011), the relationship between online behavior and TP may be a fruitful direction for research. Future-oriented people – namely, those who consider the future consequences of their behavior and attach great importance to their goals – should be more resistant to harmful habits. Additionally, Future perspective is related to conscientiousness (Adams & Nettle, 2009), a personality trait negatively related to Internet addiction (Wang, Ho, Chan, & Tse, 2015).

The present study is aimed at filling the abovementioned gap in research on the association between TP and online addictions. The area where we have applied the time perspective theory also includes social networking sites, exemplified by Facebook. This is quite a novel approach to explaining addictive tendencies, which consists in exploring the role of TP in predicting Internet addiction, Facebook intrusion, and Facebook intensity. On the basis of previous findings, we assumed that Past Negative and Present Fatalistic perspectives would be positively related to Internet and Facebook addiction and Facebook intensity and that there would be a negative relationship between Future time perspective and these addictions.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedure

The sample consisted of 756 Polish participants; 59% of them were women. The mean age of the participants was $M = 21.38$ years ($SD = 5.42$ years; range: from 18 to 58 years). The participants had been Internet users for an average of 9.52 years ($SD = 5.73$). On average, they spent 4.45 h per day online ($SD = 3.30$). They were all Internet users and had Facebook profiles. They were informed that they were taking part in a study whose aim was to examine online activity. The snowball sampling procedure was used for recruiting participants: the link to the study was posted on Facebook, and visitors were asked to share it on their profiles. The participants received no remuneration for taking part in our research project.

2.2. Instruments

The participants completed the Polish adaptations of three questionnaires. When a Polish version was not available, it was created by means of the back translation procedure.

To measure TP, we used the 15-item *Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory* (ZTPI; e.g., Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) in a Polish adaptation by Cybis, Rowinski, and Przepiorka (2012). A short version of this measure was proposed by Zhang, Howell, and Bowerman (2013). They obtained the abbreviated 15-item ZTPI (SZTPI-15) with verified convergent and discriminant validity, external validity, test–retest reliability, and self-peer ratings. It consists of five scales, corresponding to five time orientations: Past Negative, which measures negative attitude to the past and frequently thinking back to negatively evaluated events (e.g., *I think about the bad things that have happened to me in the past*; 3 items; $\alpha = .74$); Present

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