Leeds University Business School (LUBS) Laidlaw Undergraduate Research Scholarship (LUGRLS)

Digital addiction and patterns of use

Ref. LUBS LUGRLS Project 2: App Digital Addiction

The Research Team and Lead Supervisors:

Supervision will be provided by:

- Professor Barbara Summers (Centre for Decision Research, LUBS) and
- Dr Bridgette Bewick (Leeds Institute for Health Sciences)

Together, they will be providing expertise in decision making, social norms and addiction research

Background:

Although digital addiction is a term used in the media and in popular culture there isn’t a consensus on its definition. Neither are the boundaries between digital addition, problematic digital use, and normal practice defined. Successful projects last year started to unpick digital addiction, beginning with an examination of what students thought was meant by the term.

- In Year 1, this project will examine patterns of use of digital devices and online applications.
- In Year 2, messages will be developed, deployed via a phone app, and evaluated to explore whether personalised messages can help people change their behaviour and control digital use that is problematic for them. The research team have access to an app developed by Bournemouth University that can collect information on use and generate messages based on this information.

Timelines: The work is split into two 6-week work-packages and across Year 1 and Year 2 with potential for some additional data collection across Years 1 and 2.

Year 1: Six-week Summer Research Period 2017: Patterns of Use

This project will involve recruiting a sample of people to use the app and analysing the data captured. One aim will be to see how people’s perception of their use matches recorded information (i.e. how well calibrated are people’s views of their own use). We will also use de-brief interviews with the participants to get an idea of how they found the app. The project will also explore the type of feedback that individuals would have found useful. The interviews will feed into part 2 of the project.

Outcomes:

- Contributing to setting a research direction in this largely unexplored area, gathering baseline data on digital use.
- Summary of findings for the two project phases (monitoring data and interviews)
- Circulation of findings to the Digital Addiction Network, which includes researchers, practitioners, and service users interested in this area
- Potential to contribute to a research paper in the longer term

In Year 1: The scholar will be expected to engage in a varied range of activities as detailed below.

| Week 1 | Identify a sampling strategy. This will involve using questionnaires to identify people who see themselves at different digital usage levels so we can use purposive sampling. |
| Weeks 2/3 | Develop a pre-app interview to get people’s views prior to monitoring. Help people in the chosen sample install the app and provide any support required. Develop a de-brief interview schedule using ideas from the literature. |
| Weeks 3/4/5 | Finalise de-brief interview schedule and start interviews. Develop analysis strategy for the data collected by the app and start data analysis. Analyze the interviews on an ongoing basis. |
| Weeks 4/5/6 | Finalise analysis and summarise findings. |

Notes: Interviews will be audio recorded and professionally transcribed. The student will transcribe part of an interview for experience. This allows the main focus for the student to be analysis and understanding of findings.
Year 2: Six-week Summer Research Period: ‘How can we help people manage digital use?’
(Title provisional – partly dependent on what we find in Year 1)

This part of the project will use data from the debrief interviews in Year 1 to develop and test intervention messages for output by the app. We will recruit participants to use the app with messaging and use de-brief interviews to see how they respond to the messages, supporting further message development so that the app can have an intervention option.

The outcomes in Year 2 will be broadly similar in nature to those in Year 1.