**IADliber – Raising competencies of adult educators as a means for adults liberation from Internet Addiction Disorder**

2022-1-RO01-KA220-ADU-000087209

# FOCUS GROUP ON PUBLIC AWARENESS ON INTERNET ADDICTION DISORDER (IAD):

# CYPRUS COUNTRY REPORT

# Table of Contents

# 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

## 1.1. Participant Selection

**Kindly describe the process of selecting participants for your focus group. Briefly describe which criteria were used to identify target participants and any actions take in order to elicit their participation:**

*First, we arranged a promotional meeting where we discussed the objectives of the IADliber project and the purpose of the focus group with the representatives of each organisation (see the last row in table 2.2). When we were choosing which organisations to approach, we followed the focus group guidelines provided to us ("educators of disadvantaged groups' members and people with fewer opportunities (low qualified persons, unemployed, adults at poverty risk, migrants, seniors etc."). After the promotional meeting, the representatives of each organization appointed the educators they deemed to be appropriate for the purposes of the focus group.*

## 1.2. Focus Group Event

**Kindly provide some general information for the following items related to the focus group event:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Partner Organising the Event: | *Dekaplus* |
| Contact Person Responsible for the Event: | *Anastasios Kondo ([anastasios.kondo@dekaplus.eu](mailto:anastasios.kondo@dekaplus.eu))* |
| Date of the Focus Group Event: | *19/04/2023* |
| Approximate Length of the Discussion | *60 minutes* |
| Brief description of the setting (face-to-face/online/hybrid): | *Online meeting* |

## 1.3.  Participant Profile

| | |
|---|---|
| **Summarise important details from the participant profile in this section by providing the following demographic information:** | |
| Number of Participants: | *9* |
| Age (Mean): | *38.5* |
| Gender: | *6 Female, 3 Male* |
| Participants' Levels of Education: | *All of the participants have a Bachelor's degree.* *Some of the participants have Masters and PhDs.* |
| Occupations of Participants: | *Adult educators, Leaders of social NGOs, University professors* |
| Years of Experience of Participants (Mean): | *19.3* |
| Size of Participants' Class (Mean): | *8* |
| Types of Learners Participants are responsible for: | *Young adults* |
| List of Organisations represented by Participants: | *Cyprus Autism Association, Cyprus Red Cross Society, Mental Health Services, Department of Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus International Institute of Management, Frederick University, Caritas Cyprus, KISA -Action for Equality, Support, Antiracism* |

## 1.4.  Desk Research

**Please include any material encountered when conducting desk research that was particularly relied on to inform participants, utilised to elicit responses during the focus group, or which can help provide additional insight to the results and the development of the survival kit:**

*Internet addiction disorder, also known as problematic internet use or compulsive internet use, is a behavioural addiction characterized by excessive or compulsive use of the internet that interferes with daily life and causes negative consequences. While there is limited research on the prevalence of internet addiction disorder in Cyprus, it is recognized as a growing concern, especially among young people.*

*Several studies have found that internet addiction disorder is associated with depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues in Cyprus. A study published in the Journal of Substance Use and Misuse in 2020 found that 5.5% of Cypriot university students had symptoms of internet addiction disorder. Another study published in the Journal of Child and Adolescent Mental Health in 2017 found that 6.8% of Cypriot adolescents had symptoms of internet addiction disorder. Finally, as per the results of a survey conducted by the Municipal Youth Council of Latsia in collaboration with the Hellenic Society for the Study of Internet Addiction Disorder, it was found that the addiction rate of adolescents aged between 12 to 18 who participated in the study is 16%. This implies that roughly, one out of every six teenagers suffer from Internet addiction. The survey had a total of 884 student participants.*

*To address this growing concern, various initiatives have been undertaken in Cyprus to raise awareness and provide support for individuals with internet addiction disorder. For example, the Cyprus Safer Internet Center, which is part of the European Safer Internet Network, provides resources and support for safe and responsible internet use. Additionally, mental health professionals in Cyprus are increasingly recognizing internet addiction disorder as a legitimate mental health concern and are providing counseling and treatment services to those affected.*

# 2. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

## 2.1. Topic 1: Mindfulness

| **Please provide below a detailed but concise analysis of the topics discussed, providing insight on the responses received and overall attitudes collected.** | |
|---|---|
| Summarised responses for Reaction | *The level of knowledge and awareness about mindfulness varies among the public, with some individuals being more informed and engaged than others.* |
| | *The level of engagement and involvement in learning about mindfulness also varies, with some individuals seeking information and training while others may not be aware of its benefits or may not have access to resources.* |
| | *The relevance and usefulness of the information provided to the public about mindfulness concerning the subject of Internet addiction disorder (IAD) can vary depending on the accuracy and quality of the information, as well as the individual's level of understanding of IAD and how mindfulness can help in its treatment.* |
| | *In general, the participants agree that their current level of satisfaction with the public's level of knowledge on mindfulness is low. Although we now have the internet, where information about mindfulness is widely available, the quality of that information is questionable and therefore not trustworthy.* |
| Summarised Responses for Learning | *In terms of the public's level of knowledge and grasp of skills concerning mindfulness, the amount of material covered on this topic can vary widely. While some individuals may have extensive knowledge, others may have limited exposure to the subject. In addition, The participants agree that most* |

| | |
|---|---|
| | *people, except those specialized in the field of IAD, will find limited practical use from the available material about mindfulness concerning IAD.* |
| | *The balance between understanding theoretical concepts and practical skills can also vary, with some individuals having a stronger theoretical foundation and others having more experience with practical applications. Moreover, mindfulness is a focus method that is used sporadically, depending on how much effort each individual is exerting. Therefore, its effectiveness as a method may vary.* |
| | *The relevance of the knowledge and skills when applied to Internet addiction disorder (IAD) can depend on the individual's understanding of IAD and how mindfulness can be applied as a treatment method. It is important to note that more empirical research is needed to fully understand the effectiveness of mindfulness in treating IAD. Moreover, adult educators play a vital role in helping the public understand IAD and how mindfulness can be applied as a treatment method.* |
| Summarised responses for Behaviour | *In the participant's view, mindfulness can help address the underlying psychological and emotional factors that contribute to IAD, helping individuals to develop greater awareness, self-control, and self-compassion in managing their internet use.* |
| Summarised Responses for Results | *The level of public knowledge about mindfulness varies depending on factors such as education, culture, age, and exposure to technology. The availability of online resources, apps, and programs has made it easier for individuals to access information and training on mindfulness, but the* |

| | |
|---|---|
| | *quality and accuracy of this information can vary. Environmental and cultural factors, such as social norms, influence the promotion and acceptance of mindfulness as a mainstream approach to mental health. Contextual elements, including personal experience, exposure to media, and social support, also play a significant role in the public's learning and knowledge of mindfulness. Thus, achieving increased public knowledge of mindfulness requires a multifaceted approach that considers these factors.* |
| Generalized overall viewpoint | *In conclusion, although information on mindfulness is widely available, certain limitations hinder its effective implementation and utilization by the public, particularly about dealing with internet addiction disorder (IAD). The participants express a low level of satisfaction with the public's knowledge of mindfulness and highlight the need for more structured approaches and empirical work to understand how mindfulness can help overcome IAD. The practice of mindfulness is perceived to be sporadic and lacks a clear framework for addressing IAD. Despite the availability of information on mindfulness, the practical use of it for the public about IAD is limited.* |

## 2.2. Topic 2: Other Methods of Focus

| | |
|---|---|
| **Please provide below a detailed but concise analysis of the topics discussed, providing insight into the responses received and overall attitudes collected.** | |
| Summarised responses for Reaction | *Regarding other methods of focus, the participants are dissatisfied with the public's level of knowledge. Currently, there is extensive information about these other methods of focus online. However, as the participants explained, anyone who sets out to reduce the amount of time they spend on the* |

| | *internet inevitably ends up practicing at least one of the 'other methods of focus' (i.e. practicing the opposite, goal setting, or using external stoppers). This highlights a key feature of these other methods of focus: they are typically practiced subconsciously rather than consciously. As such, the usefulness of information about these methods in relation to IAD is questionable because someone may be practicing one of the methods without even being aware of the fact that they are doing so. In addition, such methods are practiced sporadically depending on each individual's initiative.* |
|---|---|
| Summarised Responses for Learning | *The participants agree there is a lot of material covering the theoretical aspects of these other methods of focus, much of which is easily accessible. Nevertheless, when it comes to practicing these theories there seems to be a knowledge gap. The participants feel there should be formal training materials available that intersect the theory and practice of these other methods in a way that is specific to overcoming IAD.* |
| Summarised responses for Behaviour | *In the participants' view, someone who practices the other methods of focus seeks to live a more productive and socially engaged life. This may constitute gaining control over impulsive behaviour or being more conscious of how internet use affects one's self and relationships with other people. However, the participants believe that the public is not utilizing these techniques properly, or at all, due to a lack of proper training in their implementation.* |
| Summarised responses for Results | *The participants estimate the majority of the public has achieved an increased knowledge of these other methods.* |

| | |
|---|---|
| | *Nevertheless, a number of people may already be practicing these methods without necessarily being aware of it. This makes it difficult to accurately tell how much of an increase has occurred.* |
| | *One potential hindrance to an increase in the public's knowledge of these other methods is culture. In Cyprus, there are negative associations with the word "therapy" and so this environment hinders potential attempts of raising awareness.* |
| Generalised overall viewpoint | *The participants feel that the public has a low level of knowledge regarding other methods of focus to overcome internet addiction, despite the extensive information available online. These methods are often practiced subconsciously, and there is a knowledge gap in their practical implementation. The participants suggest formal training materials specific to overcoming internet addiction should be available. The lack of proper training may be hindering the public's utilization of these techniques. Additionally, negative cultural associations with therapy in Cyprus may further impede awareness-raising efforts.* |

## 2.3. Topic 3: Self-Awareness & Reliable Assessment of the Situation

| | |
|---|---|
| **Please provide below a detailed but concise analysis of the topics discussed, providing insight into the responses received and overall attitudes collected.** | |
| Summarised responses for Reaction | *The participants unanimously believe that the public has a limited understanding of the technique in question. They attribute this to the difficulty of explaining the abstract* |

| | |
|---|---|
| | *nature of the technique and making it relatable to people who are experiencing difficulties related to internet addiction. They also agree that the public may not be very motivated to learn or use this technique due to the perception that it requires significant effort and dedication to master.* |
| Summarised responses for Learning | *The participants claim there is limited availability of training materials and an overall insufficient amount of activities aimed at raising awareness of the technique discussed in relation to IAD. This is also evident from the low market demand for such training courses.* |
| Summarised responses for Behaviour | *The participants believe that self-awareness is practiced to achieve personal growth. In terms of how it relates to IAD, a self-aware individual will likely recognize when they are using the internet in a way that does not align with their values and hence be able to self-moderate their use.* |
| Summarised responses for Results | *It was impossible to discuss the outcomes of this approach due to insufficient information on its usage among the public. Perhaps this may be explained by the limited availability of training materials regarding this particular focus method.* |
| Generalised overall viewpoint | *The participants unanimously agree that the public has limited knowledge about the technique, which makes it difficult to explain and relate to those struggling with internet addiction. Additionally, they attribute the lack of motivation to learn the technique to the perceived level of effort and dedication required to master it. The lack of training materials and awareness-raising activities for the technique in relation to internet addiction contributes to its low demand in the market. However, the participants believe* |

| | that practicing self-awareness can help individuals recognize when their internet use does not align with their values, enabling them to self-regulate. Unfortunately, due to the lack of information on the technique's usage among the public, discussing its outcomes is impossible |
|---|---|

## 2.4. Topic 4: IAD Prevention Among Adults

**Please provide below a detailed but concise analysis of the topics discussed, providing insight into the responses received and overall attitudes collected.**

| Summarised responses for Reaction | The participants are dissatisfied with the public's level of knowledge on IAD prevention among adults. Moreover, they believe that the public is not quite involved in the learning of this method. They claim that IAD is widespread nowadays yet not enough people are willing to discuss this issue. This suggests that there are cultural elements to the taboo of IAD. In Cyprus, people tend to form negative stereotypes in response to the words "addiction" and "disorder". Therefore, those who are vulnerable most likely choose not to talk about it for fear of being marginalised. As such, for the information provided to the Cypriot public about this method to be relevant and useful in relation to the subject of IAD, it is best to avoid using the aforementioned terms. This would ensure people are more receptive to any information about this subject in general.<br><br>Furthermore, it is important to ensure that the information provided is evidence-based and accessible to all, regardless of socio-economic status or educational background. Additionally, effective communication strategies are |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| | *necessary to increase awareness and promote behaviour change among adults to prevent IAD.* |
| Summarised responses for Learning | *In the participants' view, the public's level of knowledge and grasp of skills in relation to IAD prevention among adults is low for several reasons. Firstly, there is an insufficient amount of material covering this topic. Secondly, assuming there was enough material covering this topic, the public would still struggle with applying the information. Finally yet importantly, as explained in the section above, the terminology used plays an important role in terms of how receptive the Cypriot public is to information.* |
| Summarised responses for Behaviour | *The participants estimate that by mastering the skills associated with IAD prevention among adults, individuals can gain more control over themselves, their actions, and their time. Nevertheless, the participants argue it is difficult to tell the extent to which the public's behaviour changes because of acquiring such a skill set.* |
| Summarised responses for Results | *During the discussion on achieving increased public knowledge on Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD), several factors were identified as potential facilitators or hindrances. To promote awareness, public education campaigns could be implemented to educate people on the risks and consequences of IAD, as well as how to prevent it. Increased media coverage on the topic of IAD could also aid in raising public awareness and understanding of the issue.* |

| | Additionally, schools and universities could play a significant role by incorporating IAD prevention programs into their curriculums. However, several barriers could hinder public understanding and awareness. The main barriers are the stigma associated with IAD that prevents people from seeking information or help, the lack of available resources or information to the public on IAD, and the prevalence of misinformation or myths about IAD. |
|---|---|
| Generalised overall viewpoint | The participants feel that the public's knowledge and skills in preventing IAD among adults are insufficient, partly due to a lack of material on the topic and partly because of negative stereotypes associated with addiction and disorder. They suggest avoiding these terms to increase receptiveness to information on IAD prevention. The public's struggle with applying the information is also identified as a hindrance to prevention efforts. |

## 2.5.  Conclusion

**Summarise the findings of your focus group by providing a brief overview of the collected responses, together with the overall attitude or viewpoints of the group taken in response to the topics discussed:**

*Of all the methods of focus discussed during the focus group, the participants unanimously agree that self-awareness is the most effective method for dealing with internet addiction disorders. As one of the participants explained: "Self-awareness is the foundation. Solving a problem requires one to first be aware of its existence." As such, self-awareness is a prerequisite for improvement. Moreover, by mastering the skill of self-awareness an individual can achieve growth in many areas of their life whether it is their relationships or career. Arguably, the more fulfilling one's life is offline, the less one may be inclined to spend*

*their time online. For this purpose, in the participants' view, self-awareness can prove to have more impact relative to other methods of focus. Nevertheless, the practice of self-awareness tends to be sporadic and its effectiveness is solely dependent on each individual's efforts. Thus, its effectiveness in relation to IAD may vary from individual to individual.*

**Draw conclusions based on the insight produced by the focus group. Conclusions should reflect the overall consensus of the participant group's opinions:**

*The main conclusion that emerged from the focus group is that methods of focus are, in the participants' view, effective in overcoming internet addiction disorders. Information on focus methods is widely available nowadays. The problem, however, is that although in theory, these techniques can be effective there must exist a structured approach or framework, which an individual can use to put the theories to the test. For instance, the participants raised their concerns about the sporadic and often arbitrary nature of focus methods because their effectiveness depends on the amount of effort each individual is exerting to apply them.*

*Another conclusion reached during the focus group is that cultural backgrounds can determine one's attitude toward using focus methods in dealing with IAD. In the case of Cyprus, there are certain stigmas associated with addictions/disorders and so several people may not be quite receptive to training material. Thus, the terminology used to disseminate training material should be tailored toward the target group's cultural background.*

## 2.6. Recommendations

**Within this section, offer any recommendations that derive from the findings and conclusions drawn within the previous section. Recommendations should be derived solely from the findings of the focus group, not from the desk research referenced in section 2.4:**

*The focus group found that there is inadequate education on preventing and overcoming internet addiction disorder. The participants recommend the establishment of guidelines for addiction levels and control methods, as well as practical resources/tools for overcoming addiction. An example of such a tool could be a browser extension tracking the amount of time spent browsing or even an extension that temporarily (and intentionally) blocks access to pre-specified websites.*

*Although the participants acknowledge that theoretical knowledge on focus methods is widely available online, they also agree that there is a lack of practical implementation. To combat this, they recommend that training material is designed to be interactive such that the target group can apply the principles they are learning and also receive real-time feedback from the educator. Moreover, it is important to ensure that the information provided is evidence-based and accessible to all, regardless of socio-economic status or educational background. Additionally, effective communication strategies are necessary to increase awareness and promote behaviour change among adults to prevent IAD.*

*Finally, as mentioned in the previous sections, the use of focus techniques tends to be sporadic and depends on individuals' initiative. Considering this, the educator has to be able to keep the trainees accountable by somehow tracking their progress. Thus, it would be useful*

# IADliber – Raising competencies of adult educators as a means for adults liberation from Internet Addiction Disorder

Author's Contact Information:

Name: Anastasios Kondo (Dekaplus)

Email: anastasios.kondo@dekaplus.eu