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

PORTUGAL COUNTRY REPORT

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1. DATA REPORTING: 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:
The main criteria for selecting participants for the focus group were their knowledge of the subject. It was also taking into consideration the age, education level, experience, and occupation of the participants.   *To elicit their participation, I made it easy for participants to attend (online meeting) and I provide clear instructions and expectations to the focus group.*   *To ensure the highest veracity of the Focus Group report, participants were allowed to review and give feedback on it before it was finalised.*

1.2. Focus Group Event

Kindly provide some general information for the following items related to the focus group event:	
Partner Organising the Event:	*RightChallenge Association*
Contact Person Responsible for the Event:	*Diana Borges (Project Manager)*
Date of the Focus Group Event:	*3 April 2023*
Approximate Length of the Discussion	*2 hours*

Brief description of the setting (face-to-face/online/hybrid):	*Was held an Online focus group due to their potential to provide a cost-effective and efficient way of collecting data from participants who are geographically dispersed. It offers several advantages over traditional face-to-face focus*
	groups such as reduced costs, increased convenience, and greater anonymity for participants.

1.3. Participant Profile

Summarise important details from the participant profile in this section by providing the following demographic information:	
Number of Participants:	*8 participants*
Age (Mean):	*20-45 years old*
Gender:	*Male and Female*
Participants' Levels of Education:	*Bachelor's, Master's and PhD degrees*
Occupations of Participants:	*Adult Trainers, Psychologists, Biologists, Sociologists and Victim Support Technicians*
Years of Experience of Participants (Mean):	*5 years*
Size of Participants' Class (Mean):	*10 participants*
Types of Learners Participants are responsible for:	*Adult Learners*
List of Organisations represented by Participants:	*APAV - Portuguese Association for Victim Support* *IEFP - Institute of Employment and Professional Training* *Casa Psi – Psychology Clinic* *EPES - Professional School of Social Economy* *Farmaconde - Professional Training*

1.4. Desk Research

In Portugal, there is a growing awareness of IAD as a significant public health concern. There have been several studies conducted on IAD among Portuguese adults, which have highlighted the prevalence and negative impact of this disorder. For instance, a study conducted in 2017 found that approximately 2.5% of Portuguese adults met the diagnostic criteria for IAD.

In response to the growing concern about IAD in Portugal, various initiatives have been launched to raise awareness of this issue. For instance, the Portuguese government has developed a national strategy for the prevention and treatment of IAD, which includes a range of measures, such as developing educational materials, conducting research, and providing treatment services for individuals with IAD.

During the focus group, participants suggest some other initiatives, concepts and projects that could be useful to de development of the survival Kit, such as:

- *The **Accelerated Thinking Syndrome** is an alteration, identified by Augusto Cury, where the mind is filled with thoughts, being completely full during the whole time the person is awake, which makes concentration difficult, increases anxiety and wears down physical and mental health.*

- *The **SUPERTABi Project's** main goal is to transform the pedagogical practices of Primary School teachers using student-centred pedagogical models mediated by mobile technologies, enhancing new learning spaces. (Link: https://www.supertabi.com/supertabi)*

- ***Me and Others** is a programme for the universal prevention of problems linked to the consumption of psychoactive substances. In it, substances are approached in an integrated way with other themes linked to the daily life of adolescents. It was created in 2006 by a technical team from the Institute of Drugs and Drug Addiction with the support of partners from different areas and sectors and is coordinated nationally by SICAD with the support/regional partnership of the Regional Health Administrations. (Link: https://www.sicad.pt/pt/Paginas/default.aspx)*

- *It was also mentioned The Mindfulness Portuguese Association (link: http://apmindfulness.com/) where we can find information and formation in this method and as a good practice.*

2. DATA REPORTING: 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	All the participants have knowledge about mindfulness practices and its effect on improving psychological function and have the awareness that the public knows the method and every day is more common the search for mindfulness sessions. Also, it was mentioned that mindfulness practice in schools has been useful in reducing anxiety and stress, improving emotional regulation, attention levels, cognitive flexibility, empathy, and compassion. Regarding the relation to the IAD subject, this method could be used to improve self-concept clarity and mindfulness level.
Summarised responses for Learning	There are still a lack of knowledge and a general kind of demonization of the method because of the absence of information. Nevertheless, the curiosity has become dominant and the seek for the method has enlarged.
Summarised responses for Behaviour	Mindfulness can lead to transformative health behaviour change. It can help initiate and maintain behaviour change, which is key to the prevention and treatment of most preventable chronic medical and psychiatric illnesses. Mindfulness can also improve decision-making.

Summarised Responses for Results	*The cultivation of mindfulness, involving acceptance and nonjudgment of present-moment experience, often results in transformative health behaviour change.*
	The public's knowledge of mindfulness has been facilitated by its increasing popularity in recent years and its use in various settings such as schools, hospitals, and workplaces. Mindfulness has been shown to reduce anxiety and depression, boost your immune system, help you manage pain, allow you to unhook from unhealthy habits and addictions, appease insomnia, reduce high blood pressure, and even change the structure and function of our brain in positive ways.
Generalised overall viewpoint	*Mindfulness is the practice of becoming more fully aware of the present moment—non-judgmentally and completely— rather than dwelling in the past or projecting into the future. It generally involves a heightened awareness of sensory stimuli (noticing your breathing, feeling the sensations of your body, etc.) and being "in the now."*

2.2. Topic 2: Other Methods of Focus

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	*There are several methods that can help improve focus, for example managing our eating habits, avoiding multitasking, taking short breaks, and exercising.*
	Some participants also find it helpful to make use of healthy distractions such as fidget gadgets or stress balls to keep their mind from wandering.

	These methods are being used more and more, because there is more information, but also an increase in the general public's desire for better mental health. Regarding the application with the IAD subject, it was mentioned also that cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a popular treatment for internet addiction disorder that includes components of behavioural modification, cognitive therapy, and harm reduction therapy.
Summarised responses for Learning	This method is not yet well known to the public, but in more specific issues of treatment in situations of addiction, it is one of the methods that is suggested by specialists. CBT often involves practicing new skills and strategies outside of therapy sessions, such as keeping thought records or engaging in activities that improve mood.
Summarised responses for Behaviour	The CBT method challenges dysfunctional cognition and attempts to promote behaviour changes by identification of false automatic thoughts, cognitive preconception, and coaching alternate coping strategies. CBT can be an effective treatment for a variety of mental health conditions and can lead to significant improvements in mood, anxiety levels, and overall quality of life for many individuals.
Summarised Responses for Results	The benefits of CBT include improved mood, reduced anxiety and stress levels, improved coping skills, and increased self-esteem. CBT also helps individuals to develop more adaptive ways of thinking and behaving, leading to improved relationships and overall quality of life. Some factors that could facilitate an increased public knowledge of CBT are increased awareness and understanding of mental health issues, greater availability of information about CBT and its effectiveness through various

	media channels, and increased access to mental health services that offer CBT. On the other hand, some factors that hindered achieving an increased public knowledge of CBT include stigma surrounding mental health issues and seeking treatment, lack of access to mental health services in some areas, and misconceptions about CBT and its effectiveness.
Generalised overall viewpoint	*Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a type of psychotherapy that helps individuals identify and change negative thought patterns and behaviours. CBT is based on the idea that our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are interconnected, and that changing one can led to changes in the others. During CBT, individuals work with a therapist to identify negative or distorted thought patterns and learn how to replace them with more balanced and realistic thoughts.*

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 on the responses received and overall attitudes collected.	
Summarised responses for Reaction	*Among the participants, there is a consensus that self-awareness is our ability to perceive and understand the things that make us who we are as an individual, including our personality, actions, values, beliefs, emotions, and thoughts. Essentially, it is a psychological state in which the self becomes the focus of attention.* *Although, there is still not much information about this method among the general public, so there is no involvement in learning it.*

Summarised responses for Learning	*Since there is still a lack of knowledge about this method among the public, is it not possible to assess the level of knowledge and aptitude of the public regarding this method.*
Summarised responses for Behaviour	*Self-awareness can drive behaviour change and reprogram the brain's reward system. Developing self-awareness allows us to respond to our thoughts and feelings instead objectively and thoughtfully of being swept away by them*
Summarised responses for Results	*That was not possible to discuss the results of this method because there's a lack of information about the use of this method within the public.*
Generalised overall viewpoint	*There are many benefits to self-awareness, when we see ourselves clearly, we are more confident and more creative. We make sounder decisions, build stronger relationships, and communicate more effectively. We're less likely to lie, cheat, and steal. We are better workers who get more promotions. And we're more-effective leaders with more-satisfied employees and more-profitable companies*

2.4. Topic 4: IAD Prevention Among Adults

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 harms inflicted by Internet addiction are mainly mediated by harmful content, excessive/maladaptive use, and financial costs.* *Preventive strategies that reduce the potential negative effects of these facilitators may be useful against IAD. Prevention and intervention efforts against IAD should not only target individual vulnerabilities but also media-related risks and environmental risks to better address complexities*

	in the phenomena. The current mainstream therapeutic modality is psychosocial intervention. *Regarding the engaging of the public, there are public awareness campaigns where the government and organizations launched public awareness campaigns to educate people about the risks and consequences of IAD and how to prevent it. Also, the parental involvement where parents play a crucial role in preventing IAD by monitoring their children's internet use and setting healthy boundaries.*
Summarised responses for Learning	*There is a growing recognition of internet addition as a problem, both on a personal and institutional level. In this sense, there is also an increase in the search for answers to deal with these issues, the search for professional help and tools to overcome the problem in a healthy way.* *Some tools and methods are already used daily, but there is not yet a complete understanding of the subject and its harmful effects.*
Summarised responses for Behaviour	*Understanding Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) can help individuals develop several desired behavioural changes or skills, like improving self-control, because Individuals can learn to control their internet use and set healthy boundaries for themselves.* *Also, Individuals can learn to manage their time more effectively and prioritize important commitments over excessive Internet use and they can improve their social skills by reducing their dependence on the Internet and engaging in more face-to-face interactions. Furthermore, individuals can become more self-aware of their internet use patterns and trigger for excessive use.*

Summarised responses for Results	*There were discussed several factors that can facilitate or hinder achieving an increased public knowledge on Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD). Some of these includes the public awareness campaigns to educate people about the risks and consequences of IAD and how to prevent it, the increased media coverage on the topic of IAD that can help raise public awareness and understanding of the issue and very important is that schools and universities should incorporate educational programs on IAD prevention into their curriculums.* *But there are some barriers too, like the stigma associated with IAD that prevents people from seeking information or help and the lack of resources or information available to the public on the topic of IAD, also the misinformation or myths about IAD can hinder public understanding of the issue.*
Generalised overall viewpoint	*Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) is a growing concern among mental health professionals and the public. While it is not yet officially recognized as a mental disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), there is a growing body of research on the topic and increasing recognition of the negative consequences associated with excessive and compulsive internet use.* *Furthermore, some may view it as a serious issue that requires intervention and treatment, while others may see it as a less severe problem or simply a matter of personal responsibility.*

2.5. Conclusion

During the focus group, it was mentioned that one of the first approaches to tackle internet addiction would undoubtedly be to teach about the dangers and benefits of the internet. It is important that people know how to protect themselves while navigating the internet and understand the risks they run while doing so.

One of the focus group participants is a victim support technician at the Portuguese Victim Support Association, one responsible for the Internet Segura (Safer Internet) department. According to her, and in accordance with the other participants, more and more tools allow both safe browsing and control of time online.

Tools like parental control allow the prevention of this kind of internet addiction, whatever it may be, by controlling both browsing time and the pages that are visited. It is important that there is recognition of these tools and that they are used.

It was also discussed that the pandemic worsened the cases of internet addiction because people found themselves confined in that the only connection with the outside world was through the internet. It is important that there are alternatives, and that there were also initiatives that promote face-to-face interaction to the detriment of online life.

IAD is a behavioural addiction characterized by compulsive, uncontrollable Internet use that interferes with daily life.

Young people are at particular risk of developing IAD.

Excessive and compulsive internet use can cause significant psychological stress over time, and this can contribute to symptoms associated with anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.

There are some factors that can contribute to the development of IAD, like using the Internet to cope with daily life can lead to addiction, and a person's thinking patterns and emotions play pivotal roles in driving addiction behaviours.

Moreover, someone with an internet addiction experiences physiological changes when online as well as when offline.

According to the experts, there are some common approaches to treating IAD like talk therapy that is almost always incorporated into this kind of treatment. Likewise, Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) and group therapy are common.

Medication can be used to help manage symptoms of underlying mental illness and control intrusive thoughts about going online, and exercise may be incorporated into Internet addiction treatment to ease the effects of reduced dopamine in the brain resulting from restricted Internet use.

Additionally, internet addiction treatment aims to create boundaries and balance around Internet use rather than eliminating it entirely. Nevertheless, if there is a certain app, game, or site that seems to be the focus of the addiction, stopping its use may be part of the treatment

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 participants shared some recommendations regarding the prevention of IAD. For example, the first step to solve any sort of problem is to step out of the denial phase and accept that you have a problem. This is your first victory towards becoming better.

Talk therapy is almost always incorporated into the treatment of Internet addiction. Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) and group therapy are common.

It's very important to set boundaries for ourselves, stick to them, and spend time with friends and family in person rather than online.

Moreover, we should try to communicate with others in person or over the phone rather than through text or social media and make sure we are taking care of our basic needs such as eating, sleeping, and exercising before spending time online.

*Finally, we should keep our devices out of reach when we are not using them to avoid temptation. There was suggested to experiment using **Data Detox Kit** - Daily steps to take*

control over your privacy, security, and well-being in ways that feel right to you. (Link:
https://datadetoxkit.org/pt/home/)

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

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