Workshop E
Support Networks of Cyber Youth:
Virtual Versus Real
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Abstract:
By a systems approach, this study explored the support networks of Cyber Youth. The Cyber Youth of this study were subjects who used the Internet and were aged from 12 to 25. Self-administered questionnaires were sent to 1500 subjects with a return rate of about 80%. The questionnaire probed about subjects’ experiences and activities in using the Internet and Wap phones. It also asked subjects about their perceptions and satisfactions in relation to the supports they obtained from their families, peers and friends in the Net. It was discovered that the most frequently used activities were email, downloading songs and music, playing electronic games, followed by ICQ or chat room. The least popular activities were e banking and trading stocks and shares.

About 6.7% of the subjects were considered Internet Addicted who used the Internet for more than three hours per day. 74% of them were secondary school students. The Internet Addicted subjects’ favorite activities in the Internet were playing electronic games, downloading songs and music, using ICQ or emailing.

Most subjects regarded the support provided by peers were the most substantial, followed by their families’ and friends’ in the Net, the least. However, by means of Canonical Analysis, it was discovered that subjects who felt positive towards the supports provided by the friends in the Net would enter into risky behavior of sharing their real feelings to finally disclosing personal information to friends in the Net. These were triggered by subjects’ positive perceptions about their friends in the Net that they could help their real lives. On the contrary, they felt their family members were not accepting of them and their peers were unable to help when needed.

The researchers concluded that the disruption of the support from the real world networks would lure subjects into using the supports from the Internet networks. In doing so, some subjects may render disclosing their personal information at risk.

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