

# **Health Information Seeking Behavior and Internet Usage in Pakistan: Measuring Cyberchondria Severity**



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**Session 2015-2017**

**DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES  
UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT AND  
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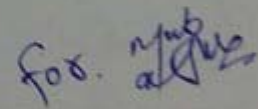
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**IQRA TEHLEEL ID: 15006167007**

**MPhil Media and Communication**

**Session 2015-2017**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree  
of MPhil Media and Communication (Research Track)**

**DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES  
UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT AND  
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## CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

It is certified that the research work contained in the thesis titled "Health Information Seeking Behavior and Internet Usage in Pakistan: Measuring Cyberchondria Severity" has been carried out by Iqra Tehleel RollNo. 15006167007 under my supervision during her Phil in Media and Communication

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_



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## DECLARATION

I, Iqra Tehleel ID #: 15006167007 , Session: 2015-2017, hereby certify that this thesis is being submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirement for the degree of MPhil Media and Communication.

This thesis is my original work, and the data presented herein has not been used for the acquisition of any degree from any institution.

Researcher Name: Iqra Tehleel

Signature: Iqra

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to **my beloved parents** whose support made the completion of this research work possible, my advisor **Dr. Mian Hannan** Ahmed who was always there for me whenever I needed his guidance. Dedication extends to those members of my family, friend circle and my teachers whose support made the completion of this thesis possible. At the end I would like to dedicate this thesis to the Department of Media and Communication (UMT) and to the upcoming students with the hope that this research work will be a light of guidance for them in their research work.

**IQRA TEHLEEL**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

No matter how much I thank it wouldn't be enough as His everlasting care and support gave me the real strength to complete this thesis of mine. I am immensely thankful to **Almighty Allah** the Lord of the Universe, and source of wisdom for being my mentor. All respects to His Holy Prophet HAZRAT MUHAMMAD (Peace be upon him).

My gratitude extends to more people than can be identified in this space. I am very thankful to my supervisor **Dr Mian Hannan Ahmed** who cleared my ambiguities, guided and supervised me with her uttermost love and care.

I am also grateful to my parents who very generously provided me every facility at every stage of my life and made it possible for me to finish this thesis. I am indebted to my dear friends and family members who helped and supported me in my research work, to my seniors for their fruitful advices and to all the respondents who took out their time and provided me with their feedback. Once again THANK YOU ALL!

**Iqra Tehleel**

## Abstract

The study focused on investigating the predictive relationship between online health information seeking behavior and cyberchondria severity along with unearthing the relation of factors such as perceived health risk on the former. Also, the gender differences in cyberchondria severity as well as primary caretaking and health status relation with online health information seeking behavior was explored. The results from the survey responses of 214 adults ranging from 19 to 45 years of age in Lahore city selected via convenience sampling from three educational institutes of Lahore, revealed that online health information seeking behavior significantly predicts cyberchondria severity equally in internet users belonging to both of the genders who use internet in this respect. Absence of significant difference was found in the online health information seeking behavior of internet users who are and aren't into primary caretaking. Similarly, when it comes to the health information seeking behavior of respondents with different levels of health statuses, significant difference was found in comparison to the good ones with the ones having fair health status. Perceived health risk is positively related to online health information seeking behavior.

**Keywords:** Online health information seeking behavior, Cyberchondria, Perceived severity, Perceived susceptibility.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

This study focuses on unearthing the association between internet utilization for health information and cyberchondria severity. It throws light on the linkage of factors such as perceived health risk on this particular new media usage with respect to the web users in Pakistan who use internet for the purpose of seeking health related information.

The technological advancement has changed the world we live in. This is evident especially from the advent of internet technology which has gained immense significance in the last decade and has become a crucial part of our lives, not just revolutionizing every aspect of it but having its impact crossing geographical boundaries and revolutionizing innumerable domains including health. Internet has been understood as a significant way for the revolutionizing of health care domain and was in focus due to its potential of bettering the relevant processes such as health care delivery and health in general.

This fact can't be ignored that internet is a rich means of information with its amount increasing at an exponential rate of 5 exabytes ( $10^{18}$ ) content per day in 2013, which was basically the amount of content that was produced since the inception of this world till 2003, as shown by Newstex team. Health which is a crucial part of human life also has its digital presence within the new media sphere particularly on the web and this remarkable rate of information generation points out towards the probability that along with contents belonging to other domains, a great amount has the share of health as well (Sherif, 2016). A recent survey by Pew