

People with Internet addiction react the worst when WiFi fails

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Do you get frustrated and angry when your WiFi connection stops working? It could be because of your personality. When digital technology stops working, people with a fear of missing out

(FOMO)—the anxiety that you're missing a social experience others might be having while you're not online—or an internet addiction have more extreme reactions, according to a new study in *Heliyon*.

The researchers behind the study, psychologists Dr. Lee Hadlington and Dr. Mark Scase from De Montfort University in the UK, also show that certain personality traits directly influence people's responses to failures in digital technology: people who were seen as being more neurotic and extroverted had more [extreme reactions](#) to failures in digital technology.

"The 'frustration' [response](#) is one of the things we all experience on a daily basis, so it seemed to be a logical step in our research," said lead author Dr. Lee Hadlington. "Much of the existing research on this topic is from the 1940s—you could say that this research is the first of its kind to actually explore how individual react to failures with digital technology, and more importantly, places this in the context of the modern digital era."

If something goes wrong with digital technology that prevents us from being online, we will react in different ways. 'Maladaptive' responses include getting angry, panicking or feeling depressed; these responses are not only unhelpful, they have also been shown to have a detrimental impact on productivity and achieving goals, and can therefore lead to poor job performance. If the digital technology [failure](#) is due to a malicious cyberattack, this could affect many people and businesses, so it's important to understand the responses in order to limit the negative effects.

"If we can understand what leads individuals to react in certain ways, and why these differences occur, we can hopefully make sure that when digital technology does fail people are better supported and there are relevant signposts for them to follow to get help," said Dr. Hadlington.

In the study, 630 participants aged 18-68 completed an online questionnaire in which they self-reported their responses to failures in digital technology, fear of missing out, [internet addiction](#) and answered questions that scored them on the BIG-5 [personality traits](#): extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness and neuroticism

The results showed that the fear of missing out, internet addiction, extroversion and neuroticism all have a significantly positive influence on maladaptive responses, meaning the people most psychologically dependent on [digital technology](#) are most likely to have maladaptive responses when it goes wrong.

They also showed a link between age and response: as age increases, the level of frustration that a person experiences decreases.

"The more we use our devices, the more we get attached to them, so when they don't work, we tend to just go a little bit 'crazy' or just switch off and stop doing things altogether," said Dr. Hadlington. "But there are things people can do when [technology](#) fails to make their lives a lot easier—extreme reactions only make things worse!"

More information: "End-User Frustrations and failures in digital technology: Exploring the role of Fear of Missing out, Internet addiction and Personality" *Heliyon*, doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2018.e00872

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