

## **Abstract**

The study has examined the impact of internet usage on social interaction among the blind and visually impaired. It has also sought to explore why the blind and visually impaired use the internet. This study has mainly examined three aspects of internet usage: (a) how individual differences – more specifically, social anxiety and loneliness – are related to internet motivations, (b) how the need for affiliation motivation is related to internet behaviors in terms of self-presentation (c) how self-presentation is related to social interaction. The impact of the demographic characteristics on the participants' internet usage has been further examined.

The study was conducted on a sample of 150 blind and visually impaired persons using the survey method. The results suggested that the amount of internet usage was positively correlated with the respondents' social interaction. While seeking information and surveillance appeared to be the most salient motive for using the internet, the social interaction motive came next. In line with the Uses and Gratifications theory, the findings have proved that respondents with high levels of social anxiety were more likely to use the internet for inclusion/companionship in comparison to those with low levels of social anxiety. On the other hand, those with low levels of loneliness were more likely to use the internet for social interaction in comparison to participants with high levels of loneliness. In line with social information processing, participants' need for affiliation motivation was positively correlated with their selective self-presentation behaviors. The demographic characteristics of the respondents were found to have no relationship with their internet usage.

