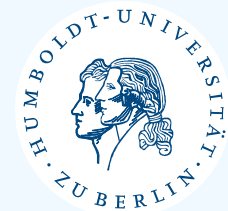

Is excessive internet use an unhealthy coping strategy?

Matthias Jerusalem & Sabine Meixner

Department of Educational Psychology and
Health Psychology
Humboldt University Berlin

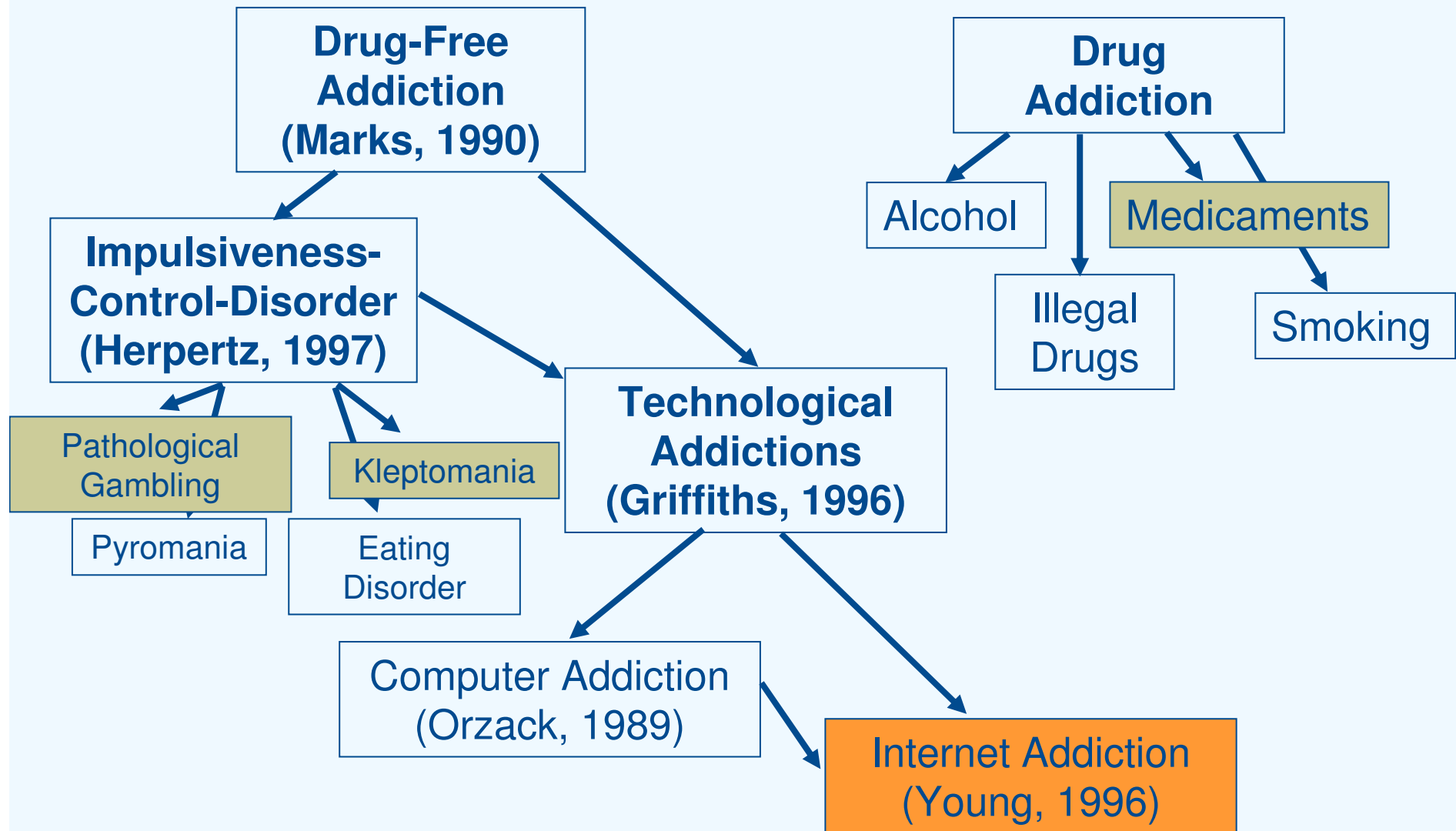


Is excessive internet use an unhealthy coping strategy?

1. Definition, assessment and prevalence rates of excessive internet use / internet addiction
2. Can risk factors of excessive internet use / internet addiction be identified?
3. Do possible risk factors indicate that excessive internet use may serve as a dysfunctional coping strategy?

1. Definition, Assessment, and Prevalence

Internet Addiction: Definition and Diagnostics



Excessive Internet Use / Addiction

Definition und Measurement

Internet Addiction Scale (ISS-20; Hahn & Jerusalem, 1999) ($\alpha = .93$)

1. Negative consequences for social relationships

e.g. „Some friends have retired from me since I've been using the internet.“

2. Negative consequences for performance

e.g. „My performance in school / at work is reduced because of my internet usage.“

3. Loss of control

e.g. „Quite often I've attempted to cut down on my online activities in vain.“

4. Withdrawal symptoms

e.g. „The internet is always on my mind, even when I'm not online.“

5. Tolerance development

e.g. „In comparison to the beginning my daily online time has continuously increased.“

Method

Online Questionnaire Study with internet users

4 subsequent studies over 2 years

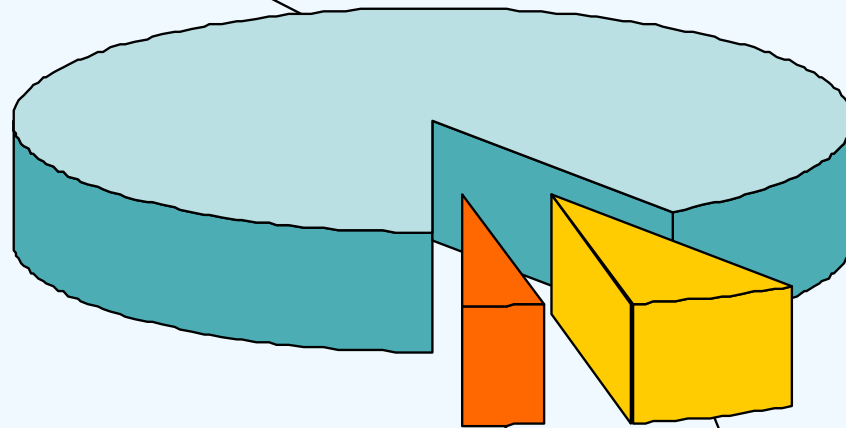
➤ sample sizes can be different

Prevalence of Excessive Internet Use *and Internet Use in Hours per Week*

Moderate Use

17.5 h weekly
90 %

N = 7.049



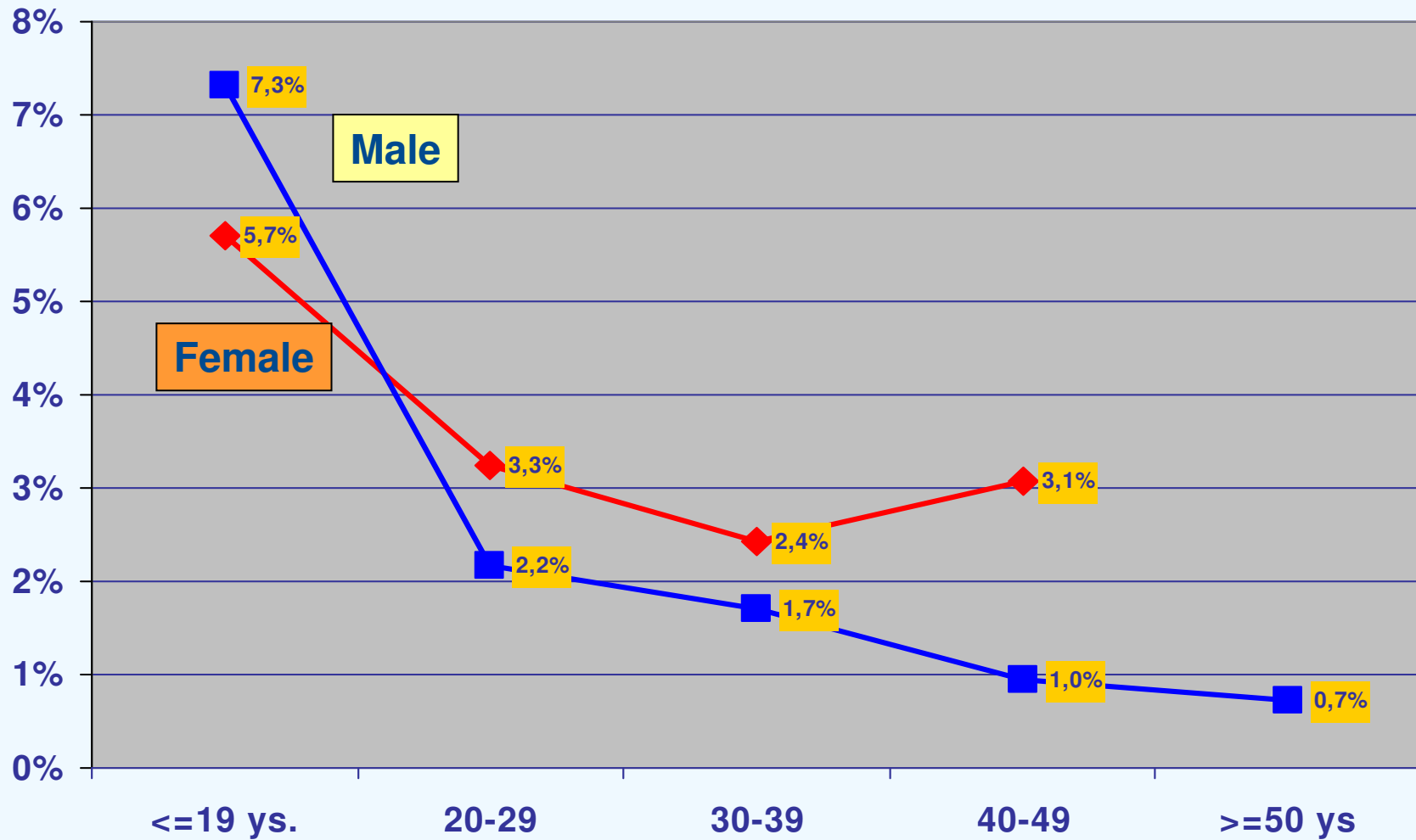
Excessive Use/Addiction

34.6 h weekly
3 %

Problematic Use

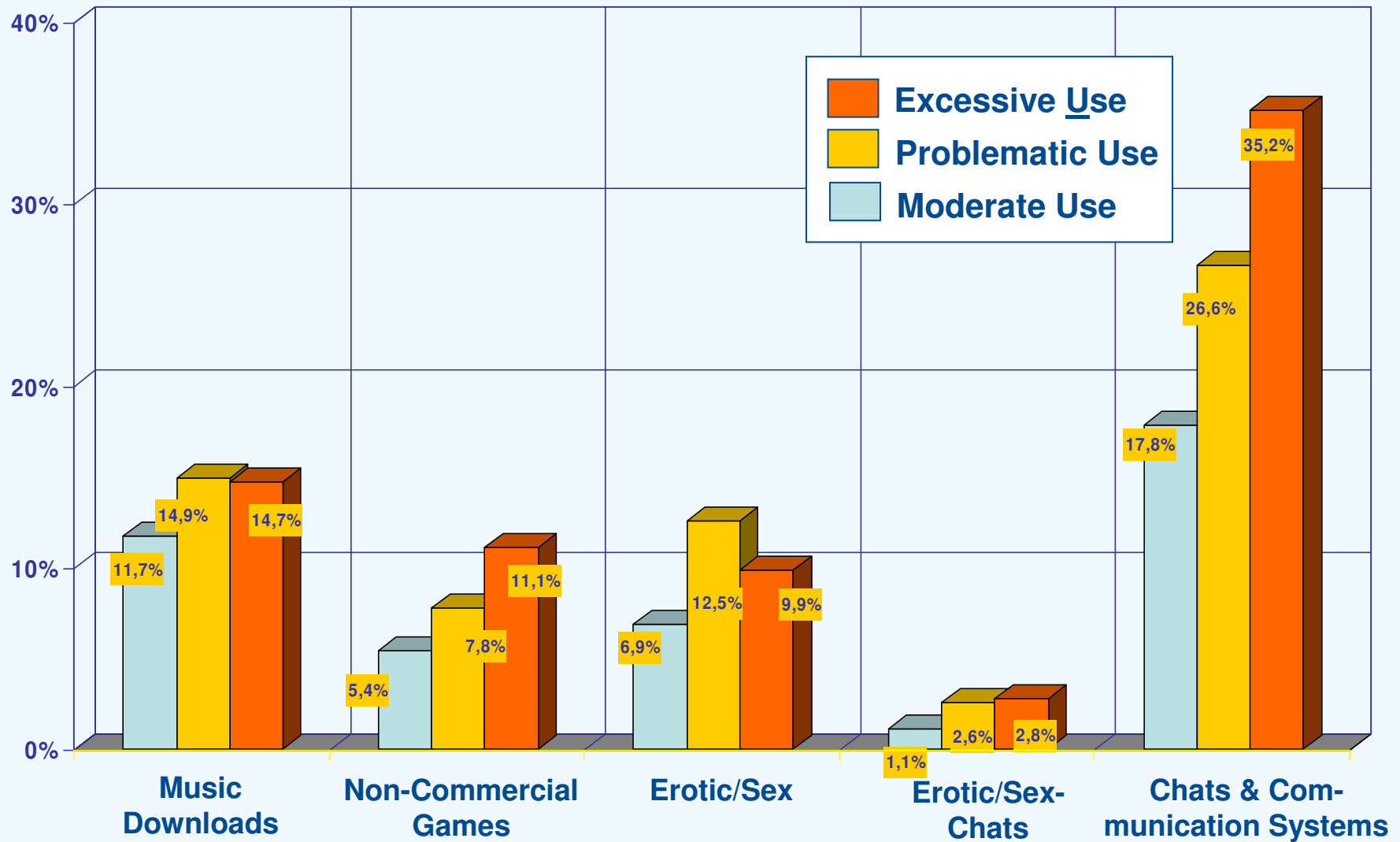
28.6 h weekly
7 %

Study 1: Internet Addiction by Age and Sex

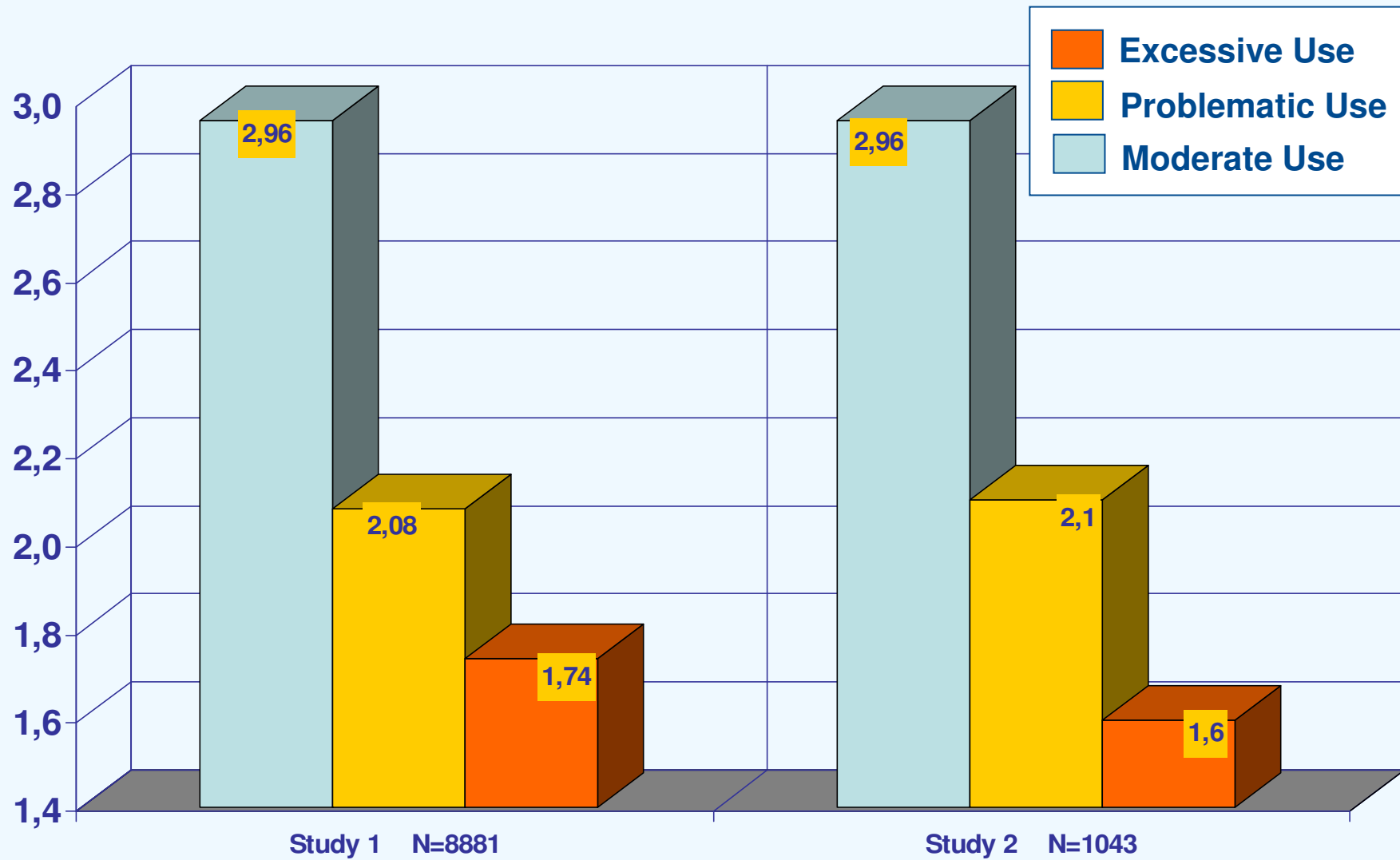


N = 7.089

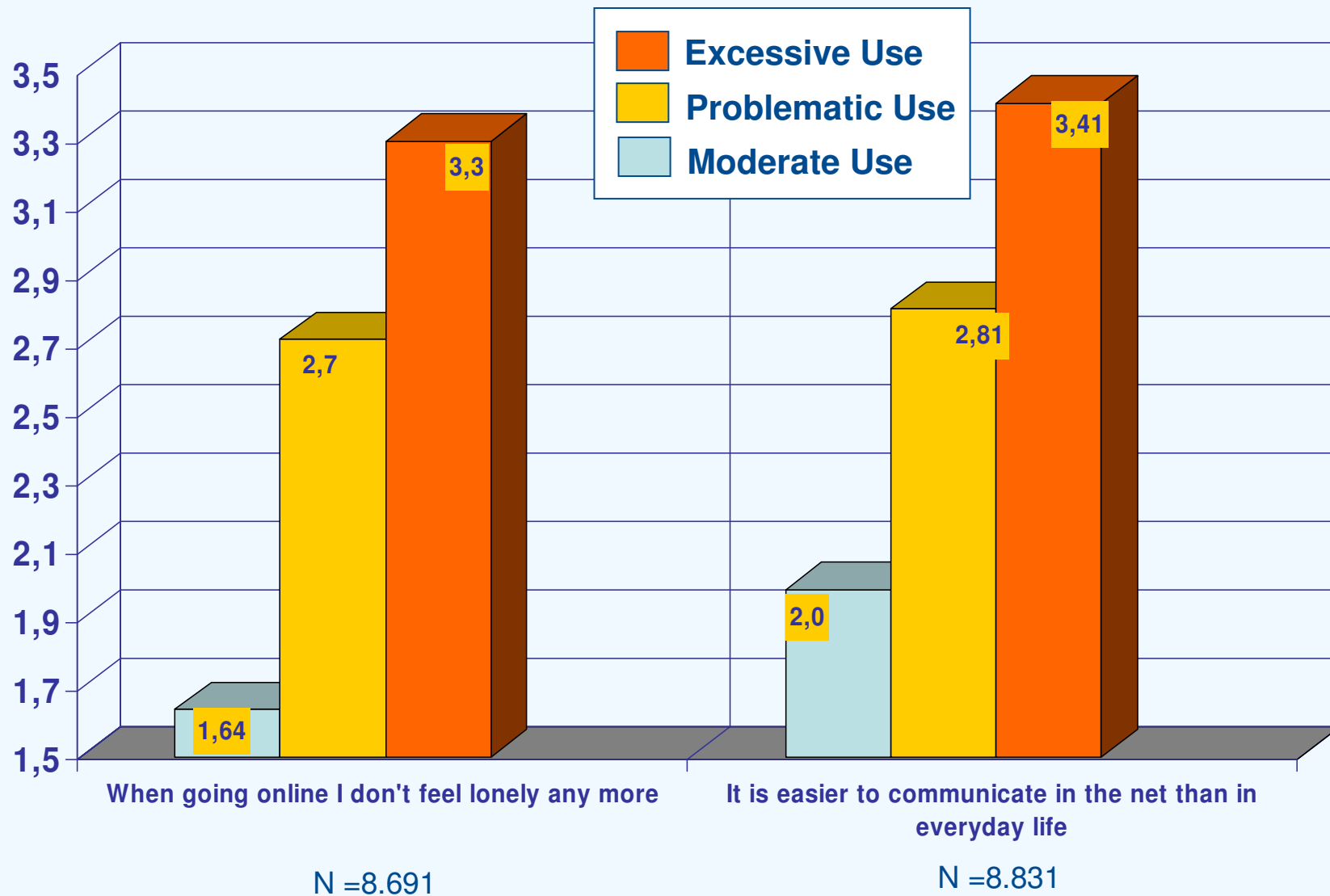
Study 1: Use of Internet Offers



Study 1, 2: Internet-Related Self-efficacy and Internet Use

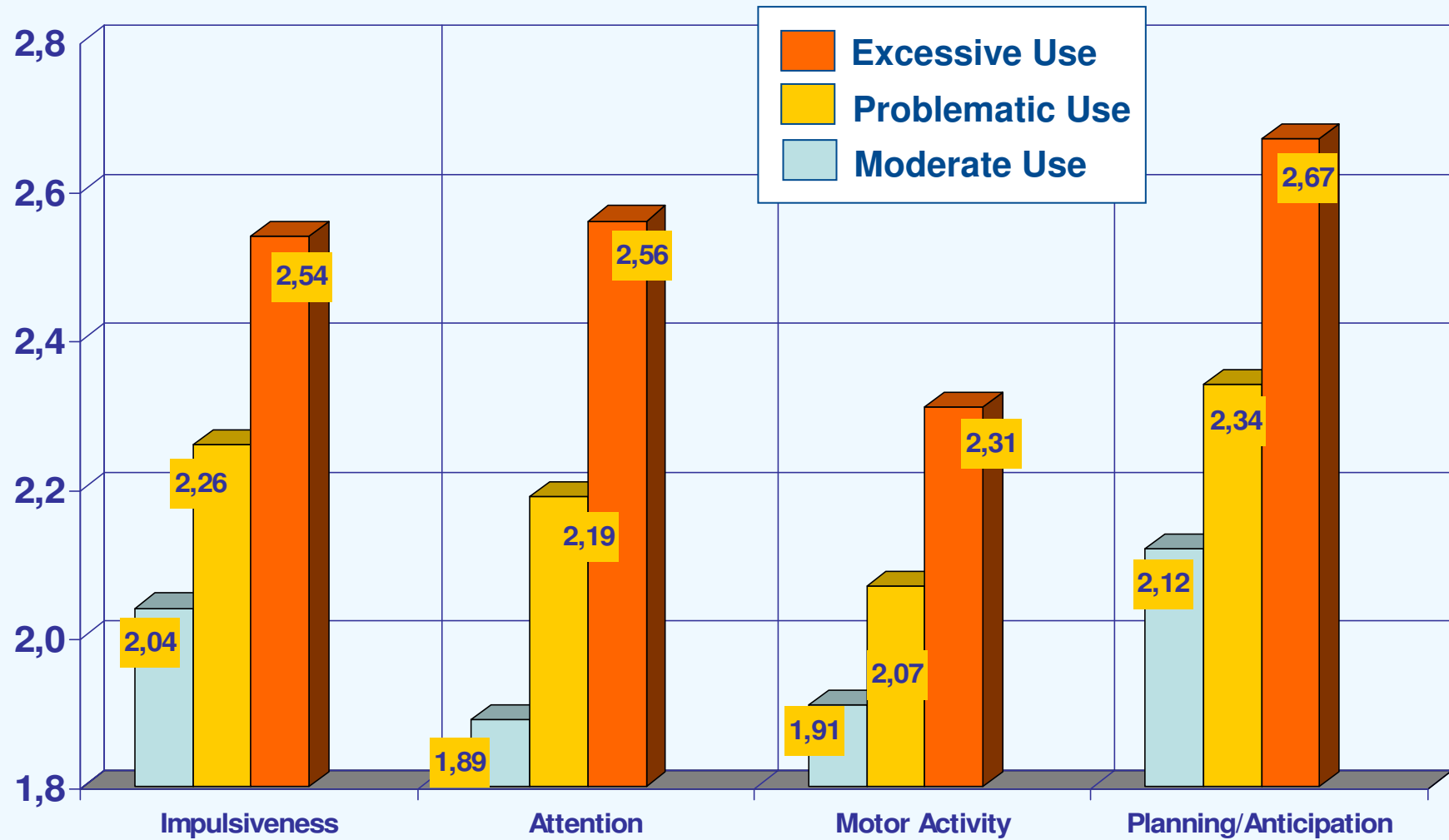


Study 2: Expected Positive Consequences of Internet Use (Items explaining highest amounts of variance)



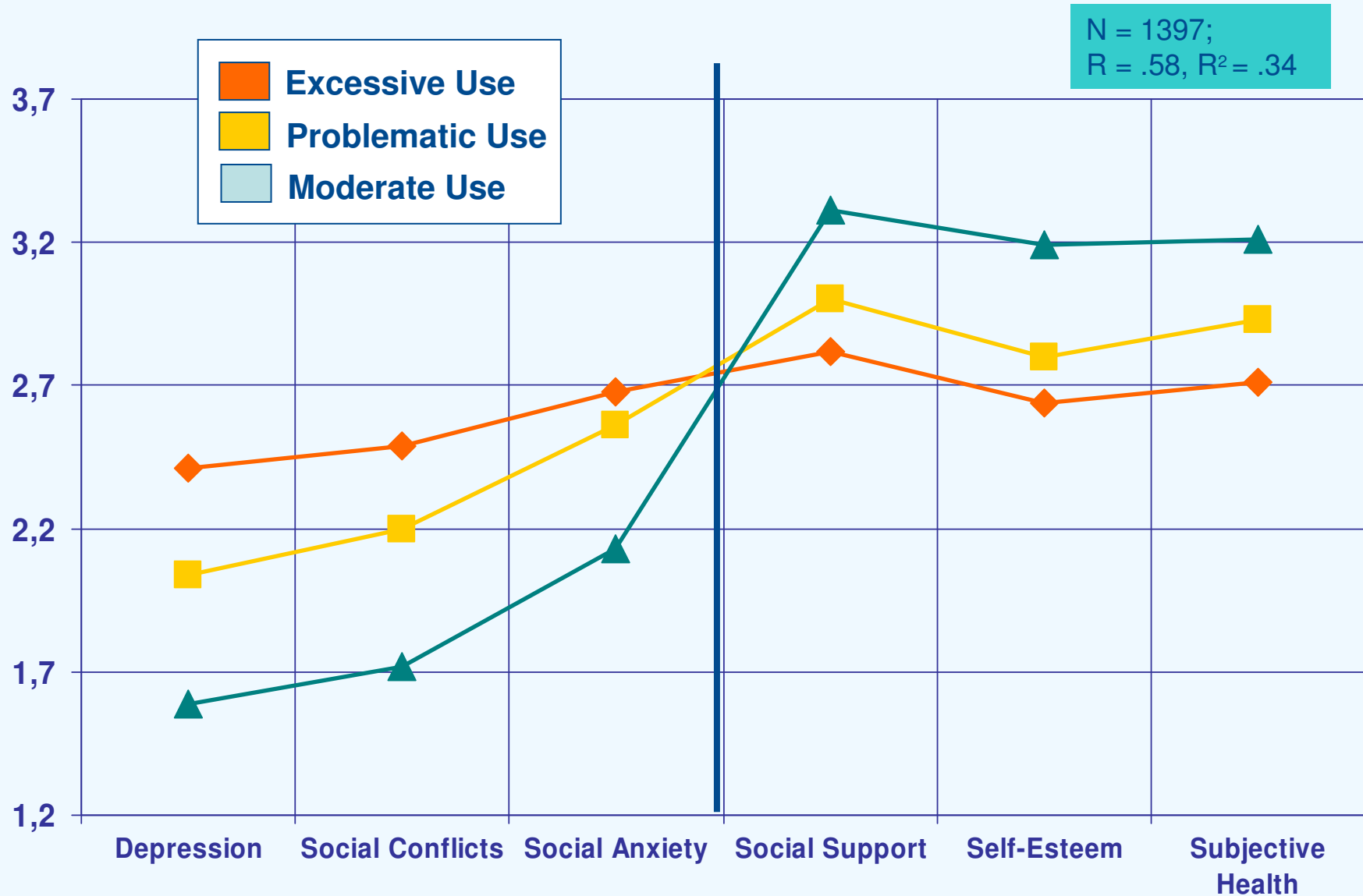
2. Personal and Social Risk Factors

Study 2: Impulsiveness / Lack of Impulse Control

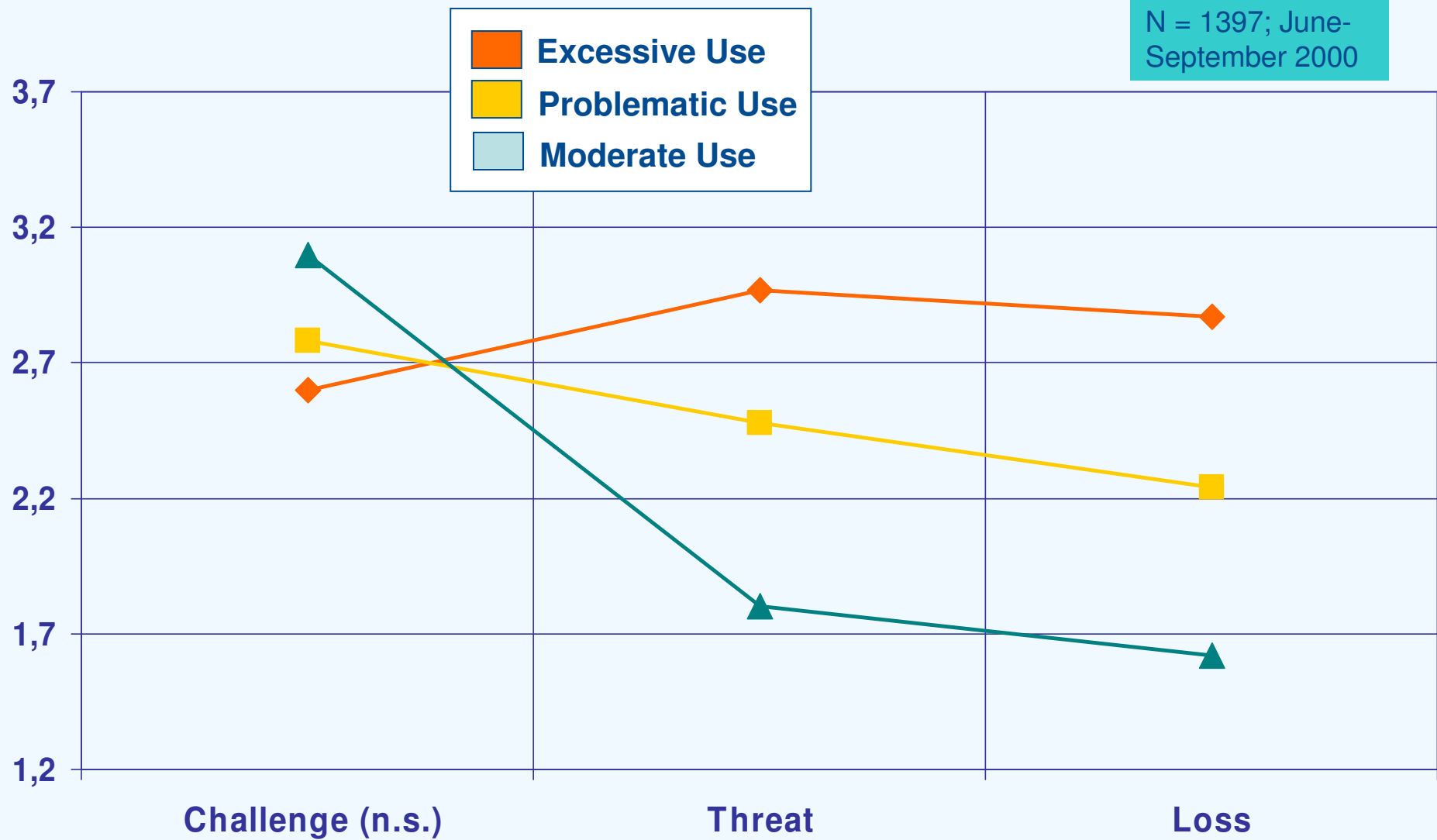


N = 1.041

Study 3: Risk Factors & Protective Factors

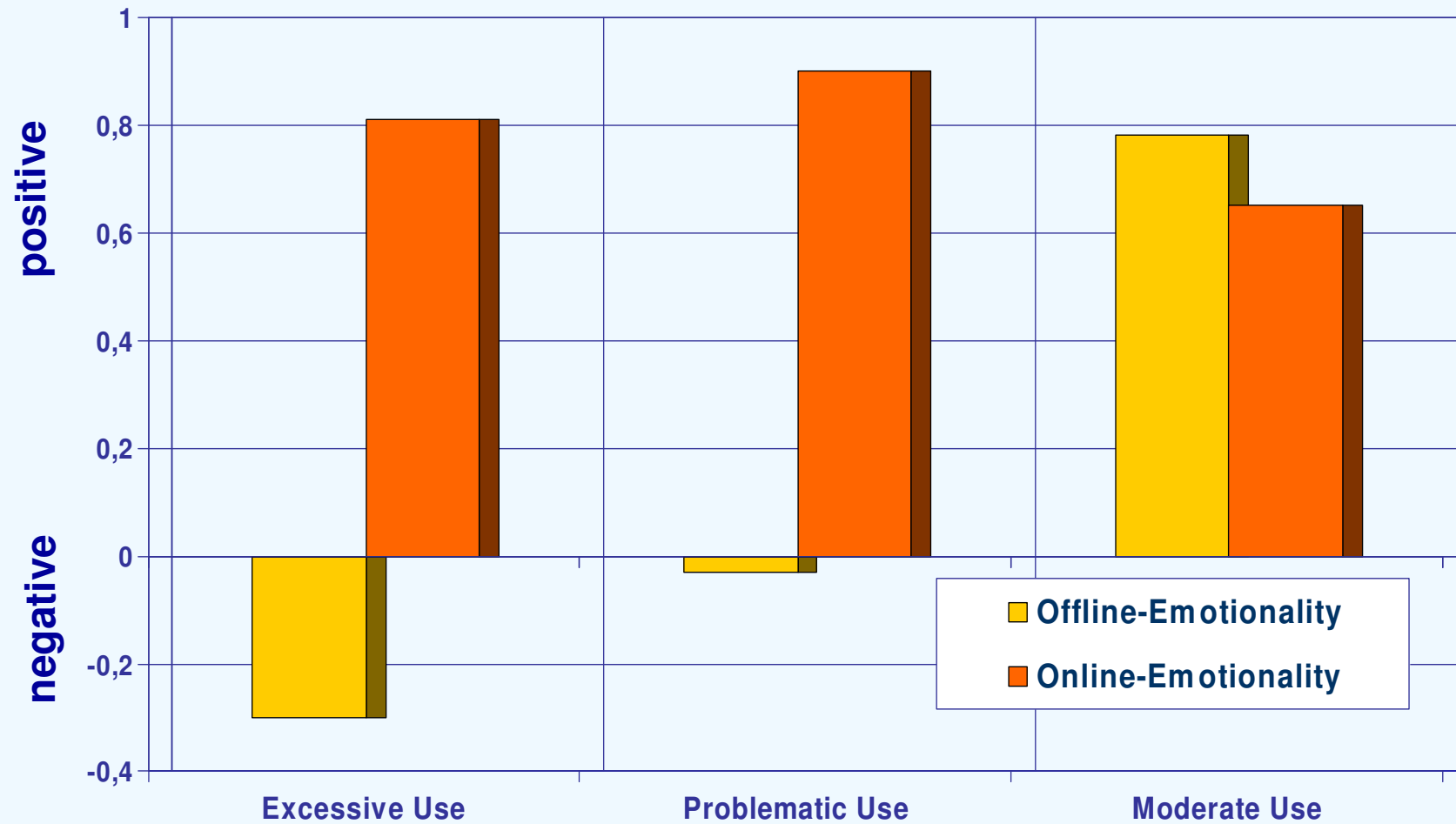


Study 3: Stress and Internet Use



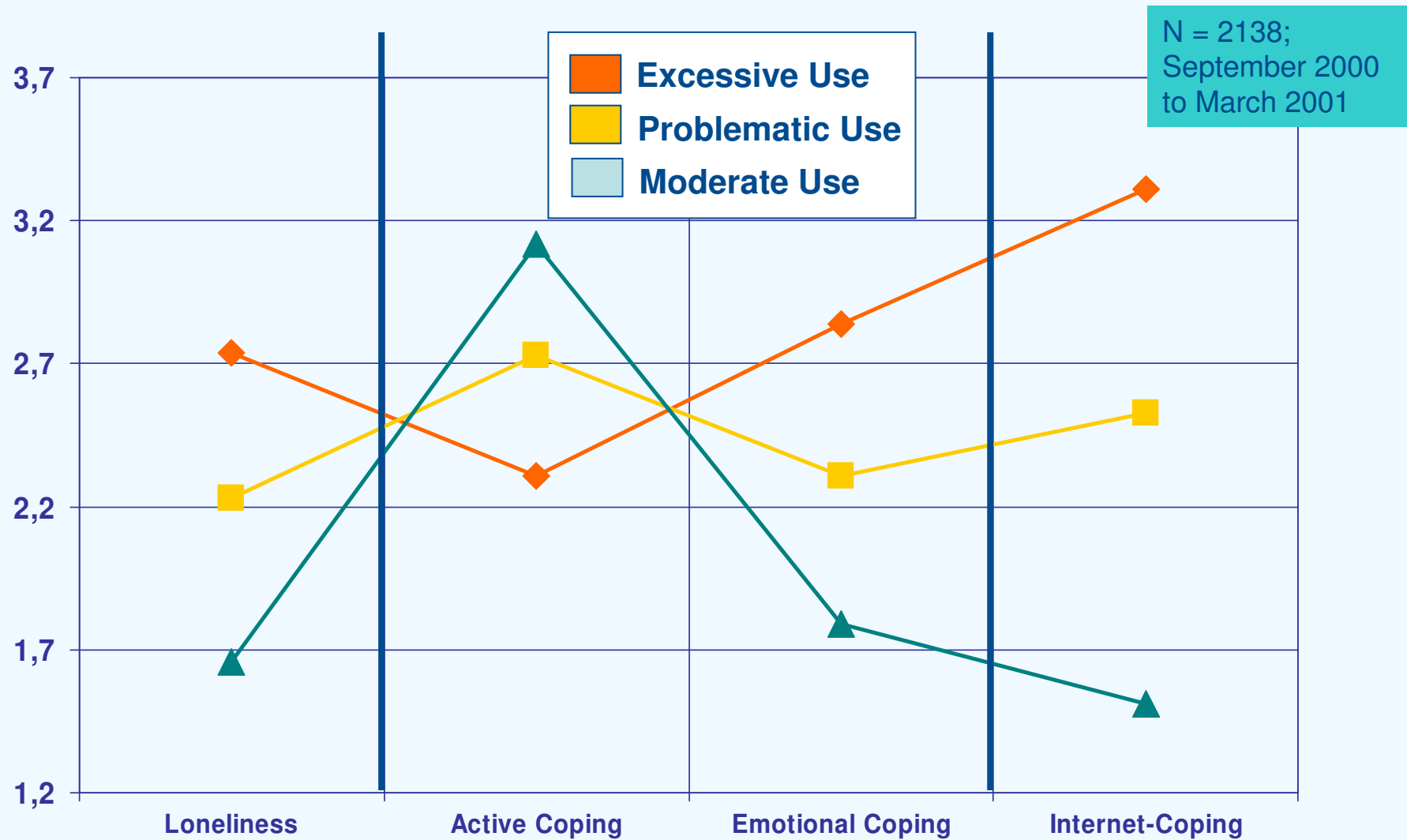
Study 3: Emotional Well-Being: Online versus Offline

(N = 1397)



3. Indicators of Dysfunctional Coping

Study 4: Coping Tendencies and Internet Use



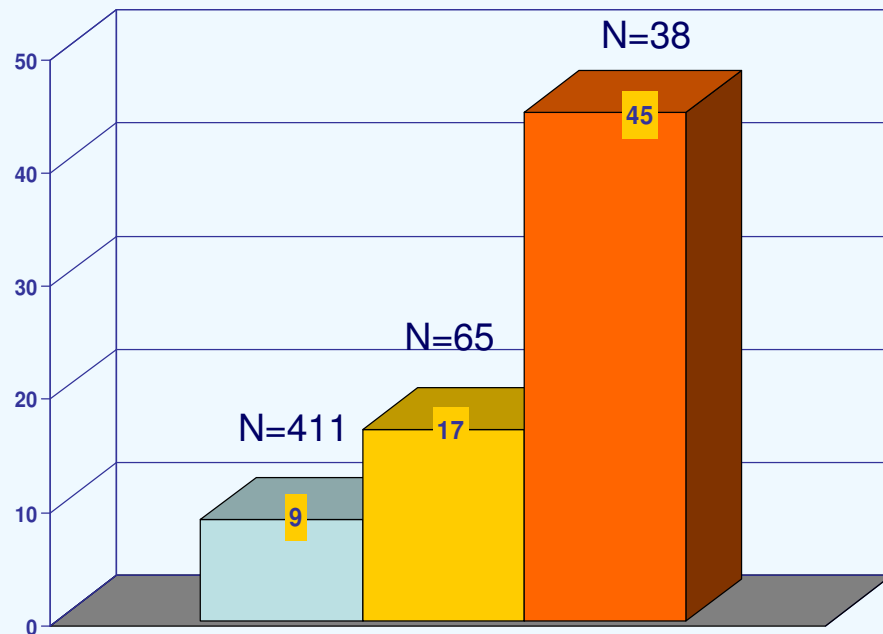
* "When difficulties or problems happen to me I go online and try to forget them."

Study 4: Comorbidity: Internet Use and....

Habitual Alcohol Consumption

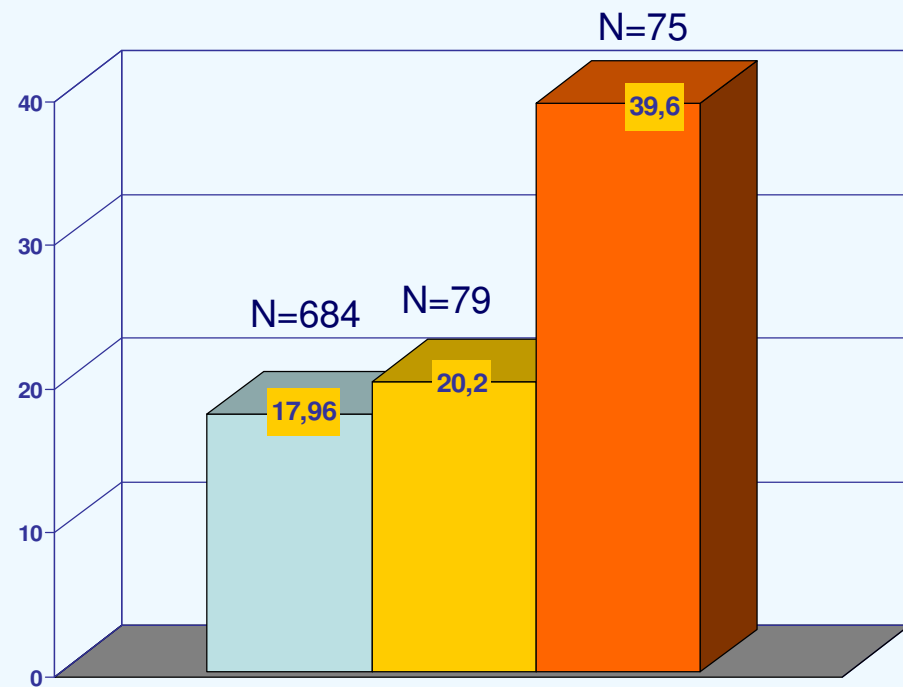
„I use to drink alcohol every day“

„Yes“-answers in %



Smoking

Number of Cigarettes per day (Smokers)



Excessive Use **Problematic Use** **Moderate Use**

Summary

- The prevalence rate of excessive internet use/addiction in Germany is about 2.5 - 3 %.
- In particular, adolescents and young adults seem to be affected by excessive internet use.
- Excessive users are especially more active users of chats and communication systems but also of non-commercial gambling and music downloadings.
- Regarding risk factors, in studies 1 and 2 we found interrelationships with self-efficacy, expected positive consequences of internet use and impulsiveness (lack of impulse control).

Summary

- According to study 3, further possible risk factors are: Depression, low self-esteem, social anxiety, social conflicts, lack of social support, loneliness and unfavorable stress appraisals.
- Study 4 points to possible dysfunctional coping tendencies and indicators of comorbidity with respect to excessive alcohol consumption and smoking.

What do you think?

**Is excessive internet use an
unhealthy coping strategy?**

Thank you for your attention!