PROBLEMATIC INTERNET USE AND LONELINESS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTACT

The study investigated the relationship between Problematic Internet Use (PIU) and loneliness among college students. The sample consisted of 242 participants, in the age group 17 to 24 years from Arts and Science colleges from Cuddalore district, Tamilnadu, South India. Survey method was adopted for investigation. Sample was selected through random sampling technique. Problematic and Risky Internet Use Screening Scale (PRIUSS) was used for the problems related to Internet use and the UCLA-R loneliness scale by Russell (1982) to measure loneliness among the college students. Analysis of data was done using Mean, t-test and Pearson's moment correlation. Findings demonstrated that there is significant positive relationship between Problematic Internet Use (PIU) and loneliness.

Key words: problematic internet use, loneliness.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays internet has become a ubiquitous device in human life. It establishes social interactions, collects, stores and shares information, delights with multiple entertainments and facilitates shopping. The uses of internet are multifarious and benefits are plenteous, yet these enhance addiction to internet. The internet addiction has been identified as excessive internet use, internet addiction, unhealthy internet use and pathologic internet use (Block, 2008; Cooney & Morris, 2009).

Some researchers have stated that problematic internet use is a multi-faceted syndrome with cognitive and behavioral symptoms and creates difficulties in the psychological, social and school and/or work life of the individual (Kim et al., 2006; Ostovar et al., 2016; Salmela-Aro et al., 2017; Tekinarslan, 2017; Zhang et al., 2016). Negative effects of problematic internet use are always on the increase.

Recently many studies have proved that problematic internet use is related to a variety of problems. For example, Morahan-Martin and Schumacher (2000) proved that problematic internet users formed virtual relationship with new people on the internet, gained emotional support and played social interactive games more than users without problematic internet use. Kim et al. (2010) reported that users with high levels of risky internet use displayed incompatible behavior and this unqualified feedback negatively affects development and growth. Kraut et al. (1998) reported that children and youngsters spending more time in the internet felt more alone with each passing day and had difficulties forming face-to-face relationships.

Problematic Internet use is accepted as a serious reality that should not be neglected. Excessive Internet use can be seen in nearly all age groups (Üneri and Tanıdır, 2011). Pioneering studies have stated that excessive Internet use may negatively affect psychological arousal levels, sleep patterns, nutritional habits, and physical activity (Young, 1998). Odacı and Kalkan (2010) have established positive association between problematic internet use and loneliness,

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the problematic internet use and loneliness among the college students in relation to their age and gender.
2. To study the relationship between problematic internet use and loneliness among the college students.

HYPOTHESES

1. College students do not differ in Problematic internet use on the basis of their age.
2. College students do not differ in Problematic internet use on the basis of gender.
3. College students do not differ in loneliness on the basis of their age.
4. College students do not differ in loneliness on the basis of their gender.
5. There is no significant relationship between problematic internet use and loneliness among the college students.

4. METHODS:

Sample:

The sample for the study was comprised of 242 students selected from Arts and Science colleges from Cuddalore district, Tamilnadu, South India. The selection of sample was made through random sampling technique.

Tools

1. **Problematic and Risky Internet Use Screening Scale (PRIUSS)**

The Problematic and Risky Internet Use Screening Scale (PRIUSS) was developed by Jelenchick et al (2014) for use in adolescents, and reflects a data-driven, conceptual framework of the nature of Problematic Internet Use (PIU) as a component of adolescent and young adult health. The PRIUSS has 18 items and three subscales: (1) Social Impairment (2) Emotional Impairment and (3) Risky/Impulsive Internet Use. A cut-off of 25 for the overall scale score is proposed for identifying those at risk for PIU.

2. UCLA-R loneliness scale

The tool used to measure loneliness among the students was the UCLA-R loneliness scale by Russell (1982). It is a 20 item scale with a four point rating scale ranging from Never to Always. The scores ranged from 20 to 80 showing that higher the score higher the loneliness. High internal consistency has been reported with a coefficient alpha 94.

Procedure :

This study adopted survey method and self-reported questionnaires were used for collection of data for two variables of the study along with the personal data sheet. The standardized questionnaires were administered to 250 students (N=250). At the end of the procedure, only 246 questionnaires were found to be commensurate with the requirements and considered for analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Showing the mean, SD and t-value for problematic internet use of the college students on the basis of age

	Age	N	Mean	SD	SE	't' value
Problematic internet use	17 - 20	152	16.42	11.58	0.939	3.416*
	20 - 24	90	22.11	13.99	1.474	

* Significant at the 0.05 level.

Hy: 1 College students do not differ in Problematic internet use on the basis of their age.

The Mean, SD and 't'– value computed for different age groups of college students for the scores of problematic internet use are furnished in Table 1.

It is observed from the above table that the college students who belong to the age group 20 to 24 years show high problematic internet use (22.11) than the age group 17-19 years (16.42). As there difference in mean scores is observed, the difference in the problematic internet use was established by the obtained 't' value (3.416) which is significant at 0.05 level. Hence, it may be concluded that college students significantly differ in problematic internet use on the basis of their age.

The hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2 Showing the mean, SD and t-value for problematic internet use of the college students on the basis of gender

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE	't' value
Problematic internet use	Male	101	20.56	12.09	1.203	2.100*
	Female	141	17.09	13.13	1.106	

* Significant at the 0.05 level.

Hy: 2 College students do not differ in Problematic internet use on the basis of gender.

The Mean, SD and t-value of college students on problematic internet use on the basis of gender are furnished in Table 2.

It is observed from the above table that the male students show higher problematic internet use (20.56) than the female (17.09) students. As there is difference in mean scores, the difference in the problematic internet use was established by the obtained 't' value (2.100) which is significant at 0.05 level. Hence, it may be concluded that college students significantly differ in problematic internet use on the basis of their gender.

The hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3 Showing the mean, SD and t-value for Loneliness of the college students on the basis of Age

	Group	N	Mean	SD	SE	't' value
Loneliness	17 - 19	152	42.84	7.131	0.578	1.437 NS
	20 - 24	90	41.32	9.174	0.967	

NS-Not Significant

Hy: 3 College students do not differ in loneliness on the basis of their age.

The Mean, SD and 't'– value computed for different age groups of college students for the scores of loneliness are furnished in Table 3.

It is observed from the above table that the college students who belong to the age group 17 to 19 years show more loneliness (42.84) than the age group 20-24 years (41.32). Though there is a small difference

between the Age group differences in the loneliness, it was not established by the obtained 't' value (1.437) which is not significant at 0.05 level. Hence, it may be concluded that college students do not differ in loneliness on the basis of their age.

The hypothesis is accepted.

Table 4 Showing the mean, SD and t-value for Loneliness of the college students on the basis of gender

	Group	N	Mean	SD	SE	't' value
Loneliness	Male	101	40.84	8.550	0.851	2.395*
	Female	141	43.30	7.383	0.622	

* Significant at the 0.05 level.

Hy: 4 College students do not differ in loneliness on the basis of their gender.

The Mean, SD and t-value of college students on loneliness on the basis of gender are furnished in Table 4.

It is observed from the above table that the female college students show higher level of loneliness (43.30) than the Male (40.84) students. As difference is observed in mean score, the difference in the loneliness was established by the obtained 't' value (2.395) which is significant at 0.05 level. Hence, it may be concluded that college students significantly differ in loneliness on the basis of their gender.

The hypothesis is rejected.

Table 5 Showing the correlation between Problematic internet use and loneliness of the college students.

	Problematic internet use	
Loneliness	0.155*	—

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Hy: 5 There is no significant relationship between problematic internet use and loneliness among the college students.

Table 5 shows the correlations between the variables problematic internet use and loneliness of the college students. Problematic internet use is positively correlated with loneliness (r = 0.155; 0.05 significance).

The hypothesis is rejected.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to explore the relationship between problematic internet use and loneliness among the college students. The findings of this study reveal that college students significantly differ in the problematic internet use on the basis of age and gender. College students differ in loneliness on the basis of gender but their age has no influence on their loneliness. Further, it was observed that the problematic internet use and loneliness were positively correlated.

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