INFLUENCE OF INTERNET ADDICTION ON INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Information technology has added a burden to the transition of college students from adolescence to adulthood along with the academic and peer pressure. Internet addiction with limited rational control of time and content has aggravated the stress level among college students. At the same time, it has created social/interpersonal distance in them and grossly affected their social support system. Internet use is turning out to be a way to cope with the effect of stressors arising from poor interpersonal relations. The objective of this study was to assess the influence of internet addiction on interpersonal relationships among college-going students. The research was organized on a sample of 200 college-going pupils (n=200) from various colleges within the age range of 17-25 years. The variables were studied using the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) by Young (1996) and interpersonal relationship inventory (Tilden, Nelson, and May 1990). The t-test and regression analysis were used to analyze the data. The outcomes of this study reveal that interpersonal relationships are negatively predicted by internet addiction. It was further revealed that there is a significant gender difference existing in the case of both internet addiction and interpersonal relationships. The findings of this study support the results of some previous studies stating that individuals with excessive internet use are prone to having weak interpersonal relations with family and peers.

Keywords: Internet addiction; interpersonal relationships; youth; students; problematic internet use

1. INTRODUCTION

The internet is increasingly having a significant impact on all parts of society, as it has become a vital part of people's everyday lives in the current circumstances. The global use of the internet has expanded considerably. A slew of issues arising from the misuse of the Internet, as well as the excessive usage of the Internet, have caught the interest of scholars across the globe (Kraut et al., 2002; Pratarelli & Browne, 2002; Young, 1996). Younger Internet users (those aged 18 to 24) are more vulnerable to becoming Internet addicts than older users (Soule, Shell & Kleen, 2002).

Internet addiction is described as a person's lack of ability to control his or her internet use, which ultimately leads to academic, mental, social, and professional complexities in an individual's life (Davis, 2001; Young & Rogers, 1998). Young (1998) characterized addictive internet use as "an impulse control disorder without the use of an intoxicant," which is akin to pathological gambling.

According to Bredehoft and Walcheski (2003), and interpersonal relationship is defined as a temporary or long-term association between two or more persons. This organization could be founded on affection, solidarity, regular business connections, or another sort of social commitment. Interpersonal relationships develop as a result of social, cultural, and other forces. Relationships with family or kin, friendship, marriages, relationships with acquaintances, jobs, clubs, neighborhoods, and places of worship are all instances of context. These relationships may be governed by law, tradition, or mutual consent. They serve as the foundation for societal groups and society as a whole.

Few previous studies have found a link between interpersonal ties and internet addiction. Punamaki and his colleagues (2009) discovered that adolescents who use the internet excessively are more likely to have poor relationships with both friends and parents. This suggested that friendship quality is a significant predictor of problematic internet use among adolescents. Liu and Peng (2009) discovered a negative relationship between offline social skills and a preference for living in a digital world among people who played hugely multiplayer online games. Liu and Kuo (2007) discovered that, among numerous interpersonal interactions, the connection between children and parents was reported to influence the degree of Internet obsession in youngsters. Similarly, Yen et al. (2007) discovered in their study that significant parent-adolescent disputes substantially increased the level of teenagers' Internet addiction.

Morahan-Martin and Schumacher (2000) discovered that troublesome cyberspace users accounted for 8% of the entire sample and were much more likely to be males (54%) than women in their research on problematic internet use in university students (46 percent). To come together with new people, to obtain emotional support, to communicate to other individuals with the same interest, to play online games like MUDs, gamble, and engage in online sex acts, they used the Internet, among other things (Morahan-Martin & Schumacher, 2000; Young, 1996). As a result of Morahan-Martin and Schumacher's 2003 study, they found that those who were lonely, dissatisfied, and frightened were more likely to use the Internet for emotional support. Using 396 case studies of controversial internet users, a study by Young and Rodgers (1998) revealed that 53% of troublesome internet users had serious concerns with their relationships and dating relationships, with cyber relationships and online sexual compulsivity being the main sources of contention. In another study, Young and Rodgers (1998) found that frequent Internet users spent an average of 38 hours per week using the Internet for non-academic or non-work activities. As a result, students' grades suffered, marriages broke down, and employees' productivity plummeted. For his 1997 study, Scherer interviewed 531 college students using a list of ten clinical signs that were similar to those found in substance abuse and dependency 13 percent of the sample reported interruptions in their academic, professional, or social life, according to the results of the study. For the rest, it was all about entering online chat groups and doing internet searches at the expense of sleep, family responsibilities, and showing up late for work.

Taiwanese Internet- non-dependent as well internet-dependent and youths were the focus of research by Lin and Tsai (2002). Using cluster sampling, 753 Taiwanese high school students were the chosen sample population. According to the findings, people who are Internet dependents log on and off more frequently. Non-dependents and dependents alike saw Internet use as enhancing peer relations, but Internet dependents perceived greater negative effects on their daily routines, academic performance, and relationships with their parents than their non-dependent counterparts. Tolerance, compulsive usage, and withdrawal connected issues: health, other related issues: personal relations and finance were all significantly greater in Internet dependents than in non-dependents.

The results of the study on the association between both gender and Internet addiction were equivocal. Some studies found no relationships (Hall & Parsons, 2001), whereas others found males to be drug abusers (Chou & Hsiao, 2000; Greenberg, Lewis, & Dodd, 1999; Tsai & Lin, 2000, 2001; Thompson, 1996), Young (1998), and Pet When Lin and Tsai (2002) investigated compulsive Internet use among Taiwanese youths, they discovered that males were twice as likely as females to be Internet-dependent.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study's goal is to better understand the relationship between online addiction and interpersonal relationships to determine Internet Addiction as a predictor of interpersonal relationships. The t-test and regression analysis were used to analyze the data.

2.1 Participants

The research was conducted on a sample of 200 college-going students [100 Males, 100 Females], ages ranging from 17 to 25 years, from various colleges across Rajasthan and Delhi. Each participant was given a choice to participate in the research. Random selection of the sample was done using stratified random sampling

2.2 Measures

Young's internet addiction test (1998) and Tilden, Nelson, and May's Interpersonal relationship inventory (IPRI) are essential materials for this study (1990). Young's (1998) internet obsession test is a 20-item questionnaire in which participants assess the questions on a five-point Likert scale from 1 to 5. i.e., 1- rarely, 2- occasionally, 3- frequently,4- often, 5- always, respectively. The rating scale runs from 20 to 100, with a higher score indicating increased individual internet reliance. The total score was calculated according to Young's guidelines: a score of 20-39 indicates a normal user, a score of 40-60 indicates a mild addiction, and a score of 70-100 indicates a severe level of internet addiction. Cronbach's alpha is 0.95, while the dependability coefficient is 0.85. The Interpersonal Relationships Inventory-Short Form is a 26-item self-administered questionnaire divided into two subscales: social support and conflict in society. A simple sum of item scores was used to calculate the scale scores. Tilden, Nelson, and May (Tilden, Nelson, and May 1990a, 1990b). The social support subscale has a test-retest reliability of 0.91, whereas the conflict subscale has a reliability of 0.81. Each subscale's alpha coefficient is 0.92 for social support and 0.91 for social conflict. The reported content validity is 0.97.

2.3 Procedure

The study was carried out after obtaining authorization to collect data from different colleges in Delhi in 2018 and 2019. The surveys were distributed to the subjects after authorization was granted. Before handing out the surveys, participants were given instructions. They were instructed to respond to all of the statements. The exclusion was not permitted. The sample was chosen at random.

3. RESULTS

The results of this study have been depicted in Tables 1 & 2. Table1 demonstrates the t-value of the variables of the study, that is, internet addiction and interpersonal relationships for males and females. Results indicate that there is a significant difference among t-value of the interpersonal relationship of males and females (t= 5.40. p<.001). Significant gender difference has also been noticed for internet addiction (t= 5.08, p<.001)

Table 1: t-value of variables for male and female

Variable	Mean		t	df	Significance
	Male (n=100)	Female (n=100)			
Interpersonal relationship	78.28	89.68	5.40	198	.000
Internet Addiction	50.06	38.85	5.08	198	.000

Table 2: Regression table for interpersonal relationship

Independent variables	B	Beta	R	Adjusted r2	F	Sig. off	t	P
Internet addiction	-.27	-.26	.26	.06	13.83	.000	3.72	.000

Table2 shows that internet addiction predicts interpersonal relationship negatively. Internet addiction shows 6% variability of value of interpersonal relationship with an adjusted R2 value of 26, F (1, 198) = 13.83 and p< .001. It is evident from the results that there is a significant impact of internet addiction among college students on their interpersonal relationships.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings show that there is a substantial difference in the t-value of males' and females' interpersonal relationships. In addition, there is a considerable gender variation in internet craving. When Lin and Tsai looked at the high levels of Internet usage among Taiwanese teenagers, they concentrated on the mental effects of consciousness-seeking (2002). 753 Taiwanese high school students, 88 of whom were designated as Internet-dependent users, were selected for the study using cluster sampling. Males were shown to be twice as dependent on the Internet as females. Since males and females have different priorities like males indulge in more of the working environment and related relations while females are devoted more towards their families and children thus they have a difference in their quality of interpersonal relationships.

In addition to the above findings, results exhibit negative predictions for interpersonal relationships by internet addiction. This finding has received support from several previous types of research. Punamäki and his colleagues (2009) discovered in their study that teenagers who use the internet frequently are more likely to have poor relations with both parents and friends. Chang, Lai and Chang (2019), in their study on 563 Junior High School students discovered a significant negative association of Internet Addiction with Interpersonal Relationships. It can, thus, be concluded that interpersonal relationships and internet addiction have an inverse relationship with each other. Increasing use of the internet in day today's lives in different ways: for information seeking, for social interaction, etc. has turned fatal for interpersonal relationships with parents, siblings, peers, spouses, or in working organizations. Since more time is being devoted to the internet, relationships are losing their space in time.

It can be concluded based on this study's findings that with increasing technological advancements there is a significant reduction in interpersonal relationships of individuals due to their inclination towards the virtual world of the internet- gaming, chatting, etc. there needs to be a check on the use of the internet so that it does not hamper the health and social life of individuals.

Since this study was limited to a small sample of two hundred individuals, more in-depth research could do with a larger sample size. Also, the variables could be studied with other variables like personality, stress, satisfaction with life, etc. Demographics like age, education, occupation can also be studied on a larger level and a cross-sectional study may derive more meaningful results.

With the increasing technological advancements, there have been a great downfall in interpersonal relationships and a sudden rise in internet addiction. This study is a small contribution in this field and gives brief information about the ill effects of internet addiction and the importance of interpersonal relationships. The phrase "excess of everything is bad" is applicable in the case of internet dependence. This study implies that the internet should be used in limits as it hampers one's social life. There should be awareness programs regarding the importance as well as limitations of internet usage. The study is a revelation towards the excessive use of the internet and its ill effects on interpersonal relationships with others. In short, this study is a contribution towards the awareness about the changing era and its pros and cons in individual lives.

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