

INTERNET ADDICTION AND AFFECTS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Background: Internet is the biggest world-wide communication network of computers. Internet addiction has pessimistically impacted users' lives especially adolescents those who depend on internet for everything. Affect corresponds to human emotional experiences in our social encounters as well as within oneself.

Objective: The aim of the study is to find out the possible correlation between positive affect, negative affect and internet addiction among undergraduate students.

Methods: This descriptive study involved 150 sample (17-20 years of age) selected by simple random sampling from the undergraduate student population. Young's Internet Addiction Test and the PANAS scale were used to collect data. The Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to calculate the correlation between the internet addiction test scores and the positive/negative affect scores.

Results: A significantly positive correlation was found between the internet addiction test scores and the negative affect scores. A negative correlation was found between the positive and negative affect scores also between internet addiction and positive affect scores.

Conclusion: The study culminated the role of affect in behavioral addictions by illustrating a correlation between negative affect and internet addiction. This correlation can be made as a useful tool in screening adolescents for internet addiction.

Keywords: *Internet Addiction, Positive Affect, Negative Affect, Adolescent, PANAS*

I. INTRODUCTION

Internet addiction can be viewed as excessive use of the Internet which leads you to mental health issues (Lu, Lee, Ko, Hsiao, Hu, & Yen, 2017). The Internet today has innumerable applications, including gaming, social networking, dating, shopping, and countless others. Problematic use of several of these applications has been the subject of several studies in recent years (Duke, & Montag, 2017; Wolniewicz, Tiamiyu, Weeks, & Elhai, 2018; Marino, Gini, Vieno, & Spada, 2018). It provides indirect evidence for the idea that an individual becomes addicted to one or more of the many. The Internet connects every individual through electronic gadgets operated by administration, business, academic world and private parties. From a psychological perspective, the Internet has become a major medium for interpersonal communication that can significantly affect people's decisions, behaviors, attitudes and emotions. Internet addiction has negatively impacted users' lives especially in college students who demonstrate pleasure-seeking with the internet (Li, Zhang, Li, Zhou, Zhao, & Wang, 2016).

The term "addiction" has generally been related with substance use. Excessive internet use could represent addictive behavior with mental health implications (Ko, Yen, Yen, Chen, & Chen, 2012). The DSM-V has included "Internet Gaming Disorder"- a subtype of internet addiction which can be included in the future editions of the DSM after a broad research on it (Young, 2017). The term 'affect' refers to the brief feelings that are experienced in response to a particular stimulus. The experience of affect guides the individual for quick physical responses, and directs behavior to meet a particular need. These feelings have been considered as adaptive tendencies that are the direct result of situations. Affect is thus compromised in a range of concepts relevant to substance use, including positive and negative reinforcement, behavioral motivation and the regulation of cognition.

The present study takes into consideration the present state of mood in relation to internet addiction. Therefore it is conducted to find out the possible association between positive/negative affect and internet

addiction in a sample population of undergraduate students. This could shed some light on the etiological basis of internet addiction, which represents a behavioral addiction.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Internet addiction can be found at any age and in any social condition, but most of the researchers' major attention has been focused on adolescent because adolescent seem to be a critical period of addiction vulnerability (Pallanti, Bernardi, & Quercioli, 2006; Lai, & Cheah, 2020; Wartberg, & Lindenberg, 2020). The research of Rooij and Eijnden (2007) had reported that, using internet has become one of the most popular leisure-time activities among adolescent in western societies. Now it also prevails in India. Adolescents in Netherlands use the internet for leisure activities and they regard internet usage as an important leisure-time activity than watching TV (Eijnden, Spijkerman, Vermulst, Rooij, & Engels, 2010). India is no exception to this global trend of excessive internet use. Few studies have explored problematic internet use in Indian context (Bhat et al., 2016; Davey, Davey, & Singh, 2016; Shrivastava, Sharma, & Marimuthu, 2018; Mathew, & Raman, 2020). It is therefore worthwhile investigating the factors that predispose to problematic internet use among college students in the Indian context. Thus the researcher tries to explore the correlation between the Internet Addiction scores and the positive/negative affect scores among undergraduate students.

1.2 Research Questions

1. Can internet addiction be measured?
2. Is there any relation between internet addiction and affect?
3. Is there any significant correlation between positive and negative affect?
4. Is there any correlation between internet addiction, positive affect and negative affect?

1.3 Hypotheses

1. H_a : Internet addiction and negative affect are significantly associated among undergraduate students.
2. H_a : Positive affect and negative affect are significantly associated among undergraduate students.
3. H_a : Undergraduate students differ significantly in internet addiction on the basis of social media usage.
4. H_a : Undergraduate students differ significantly in negative affect on the basis of social media usage.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aim

The aim of this study is to understand whether internet addiction affects the moods of the undergraduate students. This study is conducted to find out the possible correlation between positive/negative affect and internet addiction.

2.2 Definition

Internet Addiction: any online-related, compulsive behavior which interferes with normal living and causes severe stress on family, friends, loved ones, and one's work environment. In other words it is called Internet dependency and Internet compulsivity.

Positive Affect: the extent to which an individual subjectively experiences positive moods such as joy, interest, and alertness.

Negative Affect: personality variable that involves the experience of negative emotions such as anger, contempt, disgust, guilt, fear, and nervousness.

2.3 Materials and Methods

This study was carried out on undergraduate students from Vellore. Both male and female undergraduate students were administered in the age group of 16-19 years. A total of 150 students were selected by random sampling method. Subjects were briefed in detail about the nature and purpose of the study.

Confidentiality was assured and informed consent was taken. Two questionnaires were administered to the subjects as described below.

1. **Young's Internet Addiction Test (IAT)** is a 20-item scale with a scoring of 0-5 for each question and a total maximum score of 100. Based on the scoring, subjects were classified into normal users (<20), mild (20-49), moderate (50-79) and severe (>79). The internal reliability of scale is 0.93. Cronbach's alpha coefficient is found to be 0.90.
2. **Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)** is a 20-item questionnaire designed to measure participants' positive and negative moods. This scale consists of 20 words that describe different feelings and emotions. Some assess positive affect and others assess negative affect. Each of this is graded from 1 to 5. A total score is thus calculated individually for positive and negative affect. For positive affect and negative affect, the maximum total score is 50. A higher score represents a higher level of positive/negative affect.

2.4 Research design and sampling

The descriptive design, field survey method, is used for the study because the various aspects related to internet addiction and affect are described based on the data. Sample of the study is undergraduate students of boys and girls aged from 16 to 19. Sample size is 150 (75 males and 75 females) belonging to various demographic backgrounds. SPSS Ver.23 is used. Mean and standard deviation is calculated for the variables. Correlation between the variables is assessed by means of the Pearson's correlation coefficient.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive analysis is used to understand the demographic background of the samples. Further analysis is done in terms of relationship between variables.

Table-1 Background information of the participants

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	
Gender	Male	75	50
	Female	75	50
Age	17	40	26.7
	18	38	25.3
	19	40	26.7
	20	32	21.3
Year	First Year	50	33.3
	Second Year	53	35.3
	Third Year	47	31.3
Course of Study	Arts	77	51.3
	Science	73	48.7
Area of Living	Rural	83	55.3
	Urban	67	44.7
Social Media Usage	Yes	123	82
	No	27	18

The background of the participants are presented here. Participants belong to various demographic category. All the students are internet users.

Table-2 Relationship between internet addiction and positive and negative affect

	Negative Affect	Positive Affect
Internet Addiction	.197*	-.096*

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

H_a : Internet addiction and negative affect are significantly associated among undergraduate students.

From Table 1, it is found that the above hypothesis is confirmed. It is positively correlated which means when the addiction level is high, the negative affect will also increase (anger, contempt, disgust, guilt, fear, and nervousness). The negative correlation between internet addiction and positive affect should also be noted which indicates that the excessive internet usage has a negative effect over the positive affect of the adolescents.

Table 3: Relationship between positive affect and negative affect

Variables	Negative Affect	Positive Affect
Negative Affect	1	-.202*
Positive Affect	-.202*	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

H_a : Positive affect and negative affect are significantly associated among undergraduate students.

From Table 2, it is found that the above hypothesis is confirmed. Negative affect and the positive affect is negatively correlated which shows, when the level of negative affect is high, the level of positive affect becomes low. Since the usage of internet has a positive effect over the negative affect, the positive affect goes down.

Table 4: The difference in internet addiction on the basis of social media usage

	Social Media		Mean	SD	't' value
Internet Addiction	Yes	123	73.44	6.625	3.64*
	No	27	67.26	12.544	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

H_a : Undergraduate students differ significantly in internet addiction on the basis of social media usage.

From Table 3, it is found that the 't' value is significant for the internet addiction. Hence it is being concluded that undergraduate students differ significantly in internet addiction on the basis of social media usage.

Table-5 Difference in positive and negative affect on the basis of social media usage.

	Social Media		Mean	SD	't' values
Negative Affect	Yes	123	32.54	3.709	2.02*
	No	27	31.00	2.842	
Positive Affect	Yes	123	27.87	4.264	0.232
	No	27	28.07	3.474	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

H_a : Undergraduate students differ significantly in negative affect on the basis of social media usage.

From Table 4, it is found that the "t" value is significant for the negative affect on the basis of social media usage. Hence it is being concluded that undergraduate students differ significantly in negative affect on the basis of social media usage.

IV. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the relation between the internet addiction and the positive and negative affect among adolescents of Vellore, Tamilnadu. In the current study, we found that (8.9%) of our sample met the criteria for severe Internet addiction. In Vellore, the prevalence of internet addiction is expected to increase in the future due to rapid revolution of telecom companies and the widespread of internet coverage areas in Vellore and low cost of internet services, increased usage for educational and recreational activities and widespread of Smartphone among adolescents.

In the present study students at the age of 20 are high in Internet addiction (39%), which shows that the final year students of Degree College are more prone to internet addiction by using it regularly. Students at the age of 17 are low in negative Affect (27%). It clearly shows that when the usage of internet is in adequate level, the negativity of emotion is under control. In some of the previous studies gender differences are observed to be

associated with internet addiction among adolescents (Lin, Ko, & Wu, 2011; Goel, Subramanyam, & Kamath, 2013; Kuss, Griffiths, Karila, & Billieux, 2014; Goswami, & Singh, 2016). In the present study two third of severe level of internet addiction are male (70%). Adolescents are more influenced by the social networking apps where they can communicate and have a link with any unknown person. It is very easy to contact someone. In this study, three fourth of the sample use internet for social media (76.2%). First born and only child are low in positive affect (16% and 12%) due to the use of internet in excess.

Internet addiction needs a multidisciplinary intervention to be controlled. It is a contemporary behavioral and public health problem. Psychological counsellors, school teachers, social workers should be involved in designing behavioral promotion programs to reduce the rates of Internet addiction among adolescents. In addition, national efforts are needed to raise the public awareness about health and behavioral risks of Internet addiction.

4.1 Suggestions

1. Identify the most addictive element of the internet.
2. Block those websites on select devices.
3. Schedule your internet time.
4. Find new ways to socialize.
5. Work with an addiction counsellor.
6. Spent time with family member and friends in person.
7. Think about how your emotional health relates to internet usage.
8. Keep an addiction journal. When you're using the internet, take a moment to write down how you feel in the moment.
9. If your internet addiction is interfering with your quality of life, you should seek professional help to get to a better place.
10. Delete useless accounts.
11. Turn off notifications.
12. Develop new hobbies.

4.2 Limitations

1. The sample of the study consisted of undergraduate students from Vellore and sample size is very small and generalization will have limited accuracy.
2. Further study may be conducted to explore internet addiction and positive/negative affect in comparison with other group.

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