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Research Paper



Impact of Internet Addiction on the Social Skills and Emotional Skills of Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Internet being a relatively new technology, even though it has impacted the world and provided various benefits, it has also had its negative outcomes. Few studies have been conducted to study the relationship between technology and its impact on the present generation's mental health. The aim of the present study investigates the impact of excessive internet usage on a young adult's social and emotional skills. While Internet use is said to enhance social connectedness through social media, compulsive Internet use has been associated with poor social and emotional skills. In this research study, 100 participants aged from 18-25 were randomly selected with 47 females and 53 males and were given an online survey on the standardized scales of Internet Addiction Test and the Social Skills Inventory – Brief Form. After performing correlation and regression it was found that there was a negative relationship of -0.468 between internet addiction and emotional expressivity and a negative relationship of -0.355 between internet addiction and social sensitivity. Internet addiction also acts as a good predictor variable for emotional expressivity and social sensitivity.

Keywords: Internet Addiction, Emotional Skills, Social Skills

In the past decade, humans have increasingly become more dependent on technology to fulfill their necessities and in the coming years they might even depend on it for their survival. Internet being a relatively new technology, even though it has impacted the world and provided various benefits, it has also had its negative outcomes. So most individuals are on their phones, laptops, desktops and other internet use related devices. With the advancements in the technology, it has proved to be our helping hand and has made our lives much easier. However, too much of anything is not good. With excessive use of technology, it has drastically impacted our physical and mental health. Professor Larry Rosen in one of his books theorizes that people of this generation have what he defines as iDisorder where people tend to exhibit symptoms of various psychiatric disorders such as obsessive compulsive disorder, addiction, narcissism or even attention deficit hyperactive disorder which are all caused due to over use of technology. It affects the way our mind and body function. In a study conducted by Rosen (2013) on 236 middle school, high school and university children he found that children spent 6 minutes on an average studying before

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switching back to facebook, texting or surfing and had lower GPA's when compared to those who avoided it.

Most of us in this generation are unable to recognize or communicate with the people around us, since we are looking at a screen most of the time. Whether it be watching the television or a movie or playing a game, our eyes are glued to a screen. This makes it difficult for humans to interact and communicate with each other since humans are sociable creatures by nature and need some form of physical or emotional contact all the time. When seen on an emotional level, posting a photo online, sending out a tweet or sharing a status, it reinforces our need for instant positive feedback. However, too much of it leads to poor decisions and choices in the real world. Hence, with excessive use of the internet and technology there are highly potential negative effects of it on children, adolescents as well as adults.

Internet Addiction

When it comes to individuals and internet, there are two extremes: compulsive internet user at one end and aversion to internet use at the other end. Most individuals lie in between the extremes with some of us surfing the internet for learning about the world and the news that comes with it while others use to play online games. Individuals who are near or at the extreme of compulsive use are at a risk of developing internet addiction. Being addicted to the internet can be defined as being preoccupied with the use of internet, repetitive thoughts that come from either limiting or controlling the use, persistent failure to prevent the use of internet, persistent failure to control the need to use the internet, when the behavior associated with the use of internet causes significant distress and hampers with the interpersonal, academic or other important areas of functioning (Pietro Ferrara et al. 2017). The symptoms of internet addiction are feelings of guilt, feeling embarrassed or ashamed, weight loss or gain, feelings of anxiety or depression due to online behavior, lack of proper sleep, body pain, Withdrawing from other pleasurable activities. Various studies and research has shown that impulsive use of the internet has brought drastic changes in the structure and functioning of the brain. However, there are other studies which show rise in hormonal level of the brain such as adrenaline and dopamine on the use of internet or screen related activities. These levels drop when not in use of the device, which in turn leads to its use. This cycle continues leading to addiction. Addiction caused due to excessive use of internet is also known to cause or aggravate certain personality disorders. Young females are more likely to develop relationships with strangers online and get easily affected by it. Various problems that arise from excessive use of internet usually stem from feelings of isolation, relationship issues and developmental delays in various domains of life.

Surveys on internet addiction disorder in the United States and Europe have indicated alarming prevalence rates between 1.5 and 8.2% (Hilarie Cash et al. 2012). Some argue that such Internet communication is ruining the brains of young people, whereas others claim that it represents an entirely new and creative way of interacting. However the most frequently asked question is what is so addicting about the use of internet. According to various psychologists and researches the applications provided by the use of internet gives the user numerous rewards. It functions on a variable ratio reinforcement schedule, which is quite similar to the reinforcement which is reinforced by gambling. Whatever the application, these activities support unpredictable and variable reward structures. The reward which is experienced by various applications is intensified when combined with mood enhancing/stimulating content. Examples of this would be pornography (sexual stimulation), online games (e.g. various social rewards, identification with a hero, immersive graphics),

dating sites (romantic fantasy), online poker (financial) and special interest chat rooms or message boards (sense of belonging).

Social Skills and Emotional Skills

Individuals are social animals and we have created numerous approaches to impart our messages, contemplations and sentiments with others. Social skills are the skills we use to convey and cooperate with one another, both verbally and non-verbally, through signals, nonverbal communication and our own appearance while emotional skills is the ability to identify and manage one's emotions, as well as the emotions of other people which is being able to understand, express and regulate one's emotions irrespective of the situation Possessing such skills proves to have a greater impact on a child's ability to have friends and form friendship. It is impacted by both language and the manner in which we use it - manner of speaking, volume of discourse and the words we pick and non-verbally for example, body language, signals and other non-verbal communication techniques. Social and emotional skills are divided into two types: Verbal communication skills and Non-verbal communication skills. Verbal communication skills or social intelligence is further divided into social expressivity (SE) which is the ability to speak and interact with others in a social situation; social sensitivity (SS) which is the ability to listen and understand social situations and social control (SC) which is ability to monitor and act according to the social situation. Non-verbal communication skills or emotional intelligence is divided into emotional expressivity (EE) which is the ability to encode and express emotions accurately; emotional sensitivity (ES) which is the ability to be empathetic and decode others emotions and emotional control (EC) which is the ability to control and regulate one's emotions.

Pedophiles, rapists and sex offenders are also given social skills training as a part of their rehabilitation. (Cohen, Seghorn, and Calmas, 1969; Whitman and Quinsey, 1981). The ability to identify with a person, to make friends and the behavior associated with it develops early in a young child's life (Niffenegger & Willer, 1998). Not all children, however, are able to attract and maintain a relationship and this result in loneliness. Lonely children experience feelings of sadness, malaise, boredom, and alienation. Being regularly excluded and rejected damages relationships and self-esteem. Lack of attachment with people can be reflected in other domains in later life.

It is hypothesized that young adolescents with social skills difficulties can be helped by group social skills training if a school setting is used and school staff are involved in selection and treatment (Bulkeley and Cramer 1990).

Internet addiction is quite prevalent during this generation and will continue to grow in the coming generations as well. Many researchers such as Daria J. Kuss, et al. (2013) conducted research on adolescents in relation with internet addiction: its prevalence and risk factors. Compulsive Internet Use scale and Big Five scale were given out to 3105 adolescents. After analyzing the data it was found that 3.7% of the sample was at risk to develop internet addiction. Possessing extraversion and conscientiousness traits reduced the risk of developing the addiction. Since most of the extroverts have the trait of being able to interact with people easily, it makes it difficult for introverts since they avoid going to and interacting with people at big parties and are usually at home playing online games or watching a movie.

Depending on the type of traits that an individual possess, it also partially helps to determine the use of social media where a study by Gwendolyn Seidman (2013) on 184 undergrad students and it was found that Extraversion was associated with more frequent use of

Facebook to communicate with others while conscientious individuals are cautious in their online self-presentation. However a similar study conducted by Pandya (2015) in Rajkot on 120 adolescents proved that there was no significant correlation between the use of internet and its addiction and that with the personality traits of the adolescents.

There have been various factors which lead to addiction towards internet, however it has been found that personality traits is the most important factor in predicting internet addiction. Studies have shown that there is a relationship between internet addiction and introversion where Erica McIntyre, Karl K.K.Wiener and Anthony J.Saliba (2015) studied Compulsive Internet use and its relation between social connectedness and introversion. Standardised tests were given to 168 Australian students and it was found that introverted students had higher scores for compulsive internet use when compared to extroverts and also had poor social connectedness. The relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Social Interaction was found to have a positive relationship between the 2 variables. This study was by Paulo N. Lopes, Marc A. Brackett, John B. Nezlek and others (2004) where the first study was conducted on 118 American college students where higher scores on MSCEIT positively correlated to better interaction with friends. The second study included a diary study which was conducted on 103 German students and showed similar results.

Emotional intelligence, social stress, self-regulation, age and gender have an important role on smartphone behavior which was studied by Alexander J.A.M.van, et al. (2015) on 386 participants where it was found that emotional intelligence did not play any role in predicting smartphone addiction whereas there was a positive relation between social stress and smartphone addiction. Since men had lower levels of social stress when compared to women, from research it was found that it was less likely for men to develop smart phone addiction. One of the reasons for this result could be women find it easy to gain or increase their self-esteem by posting pictures of themselves online and might develop social stress if the picture is not hyped enough or is not given appropriate recognition.

Many individuals don't have the luxury of having access to internet and other technologies. In such cases there are internet cafes which provide services of using the system along with internet. Even without owning a computer system and simply visiting a café can affect our mental health. Mohsen Mesgarani, et al. (2013) studied the relationship between Internet Addiction and Emotional Intelligence, Sensation Seeking and Metacognition among those who referred to cafes. This study included 129 café internet users. It was found that there was no major relationship between emotional intelligence and internet addiction. However Jalaleddin Hamissi et al. (2013) studied the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Technology Addiction among 201 University Students. After analyzing the data collected from Young's Internet Addiction Test and Emotional Intelligence test, out of 201 participants, 38.3% were addicted to the internet in general while 2% of them were dependent on it. There was an inverse relationship between internet addiction and emotional intelligence.

A lot of individuals suffer from Alexithymia which is where they lack the ability to express, describe and identify one's feelings, the inability to have creative thoughts, experience difficulty in differentiating between their own or others emotions and body sensations. Scimeca et al. (2014) studied the relationship between alexithymia, anxiety, depression and internet addiction on 600 high school students. The findings showed that internet addiction scores were associated with alexithymia scores where students with pathological levels of alexithymia reported higher scores on internet addiction severity.

Findings also suggest that parenting styles and the way a family functions also affects the dependency and development of internet addiction. Xiuqin et al. (2010) conducted a study where the researchers compared the personality profiles of male adolescents with (204) and without (100) internet addiction. The results revealed that adolescents with personality traits as being introverted and psychotic majorly had internet addiction and revealed that their parents were lacking in emotional warmth, were being over-involved, rejecting with mothers being punitive.

Various studies have compared the prevalence of internet addiction on adolescents. Yeong Mi-Ha and Won Ju Hwang (2014) investigated the relationship between gender and internet addiction with health, happiness and depression on 56,086 students. After analysis it was found that 2.8% of the students with 3.6% being boys and 1.9% being girls were addicted to the internet, which meant that boys had a higher prevalence rate of being addicted to the internet. It was also seen that addicted users have poor health, had subjective unhappiness and met the criteria for depression when compared to non-addicted users.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample will be selected from a population of young adults from various colleges in Delhi NCR. The age range of the sample is 18-25. The total sample size is 100 with 47 females and 53 males.

Instruments

Two measures were used in this study,

- 1. Young's Internet Addiction Test: Young's Internet Addiction Test is a 20 item scale that is used to measure the intensity and severity of an adult's dependence on the internet and technology. This test was developed by Dr. Kimberly Young in 1998. Christos C. Frangos and others (2012) conducted a meta-analysis of the reliability of Young's internet test. Overall Cronbach's alpha is 0.889. The internet addiction test was constructed by Young to capture the problematic behavior which is associated with compulsive and excessive use of technology including online porn, internet gambling, compulsive use of online games and social media. A total score on internet addiction yields only an estimate of the overall severity of Internet addiction being described by a person, however an indepth analyses reveals scores on various symptoms such as salience, anticipation, lack of control, neglect social life, neglect work and excessive use.
- 2. Social skills Inventory: Social skills and emotional skills which would be measured using Social Skills Inventory brief form. The Social Skills Inventory (SSI) or Self-Description Inventory assesses 6 basic social skills where it evaluates verbal (social) and non-verbal (emotional) communication skills and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the individual. The inventory consists of 30 questions. Yasemin Aydogan and Arzu Ozyurek (2016) conducted the reliability of the scale and found that the overall cronbach's alpha is 0.98.

RESULTS

Table No. 1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internet_Addiction	100	13	74	36.89	13.980
Emotional_Expressivity	100	9	24	16.13	2.973
Emotional_Sensitivity	100	5	25	15.17	4.151

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional_Control	100	9	24	15.33	3.085
Social_Expressivity	100	5	25	13.19	5.606
Social_Sensitvity	100	5	25	14.57	4.046
Social_Control	100	8	25	16.26	3.675

Table No. 2: Correlation:

			Emotional_E xpressivity	Emotional_ Sensitivity		Social_Ex pressivity	ensitvity	Social_ Control
Internet_ Addiction	Pearson Correla tion	1	468*	.073	034	.005	355**	058
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.014	.468	.735	.958	.000	.566
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

^{**.} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table No. 3: Regression

Predictor Variable: Internet Addiction and Dependent Variable: Emotional Expressivity:

Model S	Model Summary									
		T	Adjusted R							
Model	R	R Square	Square	Std. Error o	of the Estima	ate				
1	.359 ^a	.129	.120			2.982				
a. Predic	ctors: (Const	ant), Internet_	Addiction							
			Coefficients	a						
			ndardized	Standardized Coefficients						
			efficients	Coefficients		a.				
Model		В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.				
	(Constant)	16.66		+	19.719	.000				
1	(Constant)		.845	+	19.719 677					

Predictor Variable: Internet Addiction and Dependent Variable: Emotional Sensitivity:

Teulcio	redictor Variable: Internet Addiction and Dependent Variable: Emotional Sensitivity:									
	Model Summary									
R Adjusted R Model R Square Square Std. Error of the Estimate										
1	$.073^{a}$.005	005			4.161				
a. Pred	dictors: (Co	nstant), Int	ernet_Addictio	1						
			Coeff	icients ^a						
		Unst	andardized	Standardized						
		Co	efficients	Coefficients						
Model		В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.				
1	. 1.5									
	IA .022 .030 .073 .729 .468									
a. Depe	ndent Vari	able: Emoti	onal_Sensitivit	y						

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

Predictor Variable: Internet Addiction and Dependent Variable: Emotional Control:

	Model Summary									
		R	Adjusted R							
Model	R	Square	Square	Std. Erro	or of th	e Estimate				
1	.034 ^a	.001	009				3.099			
a. Pred	ictors: (Con	stant), Interi	net_Addiction							
			Coeffic	ients ^a						
		Unsta	ndardized	Standardized						
		Coe	fficients	Coefficients						
Model		В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.				
1	(Constant)	15.60	.878		17.77		.000			
					2					
	IA	00	.022	034	340		.735			
a. Depe	endent Varia	able: Emotio	onal_Control		•	-				

Predictor Variable: Internet Addiction and Dependent Variable: Social Expressivity:

Predicti	redictor variable: Internet Addiction and Dependent variable: Social Expressivity:									
	Model Summary									
		R	Adjusted R							
Model	R	R Square Std. Error of the Estimate								
1	$.005^{a}$.000	010				5.635			
a. Predi	ctors: (Con	stant), Inter	net_Addiction							
			Coeff	icients ^a						
				Standardize						
		Unsta	ndardized	d						
		Coc	efficients	Coefficients						
Model		В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.				
1	(Constant)	13.1	12 1.59	7	8.210		.000			
	IA .002 .041 .005 .052 .958									
a. Depe	ndent Varia	able: Social	_Expressivity							

Predictor Variable: Internet Addiction and Dependent Variable: Social Sensitivity:

	Model Summary									
	R Adjusted R									
Model	Model R Square Square Std. Error of the Estimate									
1	.355 ^a	.126	.117	3.	.802					
a. Predi	ctors: (Con	stant), Inter	rnet_Addiction							

	Coefficients ^a								
		Unstandardized		Standardized					
		Coeffi	cients	Coefficients					
Model		В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.			
1	(Constant)	10.783	1.078		10.006	.000			
	IA	.103	.027	.355	3.756	.000			
a. Dep	endent Varia	ble: Social_Se	ensitivity	•					

Predictor Variable: Internet Addiction and Dependent Variable: Social Control:

	Model Summary								
Model	Model R Square Adjusted R Square Estimate								
1	.058 ^a	.003	007	3.688					
a. Predictors	s: (Constant), Inte	ernet_Addiction							

Coefficients ^a										
Unstandardized Standardized Coefficients Coefficients										
Model		В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.				
1	(Constant)	16.823	1.045		16.095	.000				
	IA	015	.027	058	575	.566				
a. Depe	ndent Variable	e: Social_Contr	ol	•						

The results obtained for the relationship between Internet Addiction and Emotional Expressivity, Emotional Sensitivity, Emotional Control, Social Expressivity, Social Sensitivity and Social Control for 100 young adults are explained below. From table 1, it is seen that the maximum score obtained for internet addiction is 74 while the minimum score obtained is 13 with a mean of 36.89 which indicates that there is a presence of mild level of internet addiction. 44 males and females scored a total of more than 37 on internet addiction and around 22 males and females being at a risk to develop internet addiction disorder.

Table 2 explains the correlation among the variables and it was found that there is a negative correlation between Internet Addiction and Emotional Expressivity with a correlation coefficient of -0.468 and Internet Addiction and Social Sensitivity with a correlation coefficient of -.0355. The correlation among the other variables indicates an insignificant relationship.

On using regression analysis, it was found that when internet addiction was the predictor variable/independent variable for emotional expressivity the adjusted R² was 0.12 with significance level at 0.014. It means that 12% of the variance in social sensitivity is being explained by internet addiction. When internet addiction was the predictor variable/independent variable for social sensitivity the adjusted R^2 was 0.117 with significance level < 0.01. It means that 11.7 % of the variance in social sensitivity is being internet addiction. When internet addiction was the predictor variable/independent variable for emotional sensitivity, emotional control, social expressivity and social control the significance was >0.4. Hence internet addiction does not act as a good predictor for emotional sensitivity, emotional control, social expressivity and social control.

According to the above studies, when compared with the sample size, a significant percentage of students are prone to getting addicted to the internet which was shown in my results. Having poor social and emotional skills such as inability to express or be sensitive to social situations acts a causal factor to internet addiction where the study by McIntyre (2015) found similar results. Variables like emotional sensitivity and emotional control found no significant relationship with internet addiction which was similar to the study done on the impact of emotional intelligence on smart phone addiction. However the results indicate no difference between the gender and level of indication which does not match with the study done on gender difference and internet addiction.

DISCUSSION

From the results shown in table 1, table 2 and table 3, it is clearly seen that there is a significant relationship between internet addiction with emotional expressivity and social sensitivity where with increase in levels of internet addiction, it impacts and lowers the levels of emotional expressivity and social sensitivity.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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