

Personality Correlates of Internet Addiction among College Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study assesses the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and internet addiction among college students studying in Mysuru city. Big five personality scale (John & Srivastava, 1999) and internet Addiction Scale (Young, 1998) were administered to a sample of 163 (70 male + 93 female) college students. Personality in 5 traits of students was measured by Big five personality questionnaire and Internet addiction in 6 factors. Data were subjected to product moment correlation and stepwise multiple regression to find out the relationship between personality traits and internet addiction, including the personality factors which predict internet addiction. Results revealed that four of the personality factors- Extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness were negatively and significantly related with internet addiction, whereas neuroticism factor was positively related to Internet addiction. Further, multiple regression analysis revealed that only two personality factors- neuroticism and Conscientiousness best predicted the Internet addiction to the extent of 13.6%.

Keywords: *Big Five Personality Factors, Internet Addiction, College Students*

Today, the budding generation is relying on technology more than ever for nearly everything; they are making the world come closer. Cyberspace is a fascinating world with lots of features, places, activities, people and subcultures to explore. Approximately 20% of youth have been reported to have internet addiction (Ko et al., 2005), and approximately 45% of elementary and junior high school students were reported by their parents to have had at least one kind of sleep problem (Gau, 2006). In India among teenagers, the estimated addiction to internet is 0.7% (Goel, Subramanyam & Kamath, 2013). Addiction contributes to a notable fraction of the disease burden in mental and neurological disorders in established market economies (Fineberg et al., 2013). Other symptoms include anger, tension and anxiety (Goldberg, 1995), increased social maladjustment (Chandrashekhara & D'Souza, 2013) and reduced sleep quality (D'Souza, Samyukta & Tejaswini, 2018). Internet addiction disorder (IAD) is rapidly becoming a prevalent mental health concern around the world. Mahadevaswamy and D'Souza (2017a) in a recent study reported that internet addiction

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adversely affects psychological wellbeing of adolescents. However, internet addiction did not affect subjective wellbeing of the adolescents (Mahadevaswamy & D'Souza, 2017b).

Internet opens up avenues for several social networking sites and may lead to addiction later. In an alarming proportion youth are engaged in usage of social networking sites like Twitter, Linked in, Facebook and so on. In the year 2016, 22.9% of the world population used Facebook (Statista, 2017). The prevalence of Facebook addiction was found to be 41.8% among high school students (Khumsri, Yingyeun, Mereerat, Hanprathet, and Phanasathit, 2015) in Thailand, 13% in Iraq (Al-Humairi et al, 2016). In India, an International study found that "97 per cent of the respondents from India said they have a Facebook account with 77 per cent saying they logged in to the social network daily," (www.indiatoday.in/technology/news/story/229324-2014-12-01). Ryan, Chester, Reece and Xenos (2014), people who crave for belongingness, individuals with high extroversion nature, and lesser conscientious are highly addicted Facebook. Ryan, and Xenos (2011), Ryan, Chester, Reece and Xenos (2014), and Ehrenberg, Juckes, White, and Walsh (2008) in their studies found that personality factors like neuroticism and extraversion and related positively to Facebook addiction and conscientiousness is negatively related.

In the present study an attempt is made to find out the relationship between Internet addiction and Big-five personality traits among students pursuing their undergraduate courses. College students were selected for the present study as they are using smartphone and other devices extensively and relatively e internet is cheap in India with additional and attractive youth offers by various service providers. It is hypothesized that personality factors do influence internet addiction and there are specific personality factors predict internet addiction.

METHODOLOGY

Sample:

Male and female students pursuing undergraduate courses were selected from few colleges of Mysuru city for the purpose of the study. A total of 163(70 male and 93 female) students pursuing their education in Arts, Commerce, and Science were randomly selected.

Tools employed:

1. Big Five personality Inventory:

The big five inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999) measures the respondent on big five personality factors or dimensions-namely- Extraversion vs. introversion, Agreeableness vs. antagonism, Conscientiousness vs. lack of direction, Neuroticism vs. emotional stability and Openness vs. closedness to experience. It has 44 items having five big factors further divided in to personality facets. The respondent has to reach each statement and answer one of the following options-Disagree, Strongly, Disagree a little, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree a little, and Agree Strongly. Few of the authors reported the reliability of 0.7 (Hee, 2014). Study by Gurven, von Rueden, Massenkoff, Kaplan and Vie (2013) found that Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness were positively correlated with smiling and negatively correlated with shyness. They also positively correlated with talkativeness and negatively correlate with distractedness, Neuroticism was positively correlated with the respondent's shyness and negatively correlated with smiling.

2. Internet addiction scale

Internet Addiction Test (IAT) was developed by Dr. Kimberly Young (1998), and it consists of 20 questions was adopted to evaluate the respondents' level of internet addiction. Each item is scored using a five-point Likert's scale, a graded response can be selected (0 = "does not apply" to 5 = "always"). It covers the degree to which internet use affect daily routine,

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social life, productivity, sleeping pattern, and feeling. The minimum score is 20 while the maximum is 100 and the higher the score the greater the level of internet addiction. The types of Internet-user groups were identified in accordance with the original scheme of Young and the score < 20 indicate normal users. The scores ranging from 20 to 49 indicate minimal users, while scores from 50 to 79 indicate moderate users and the scores from 80 to 100 indicate excessive users. The minimal users were classified as problematic internet users, while moderate and excessive users were categorized as internet addicts. The instrument has exhibited good psychometric properties in previous researches. The reliability for this questionnaire is 0.899 using Cronbach's Alpha.

Procedure

The second and third authors personally visited few colleges in took the permission from the respective heads of the institution and administered the tool to 200 students. They could get back only 163 completely filled questionnaires. Before administrating the questionnaire, they were assured of confidentiality. They were asked to answer all the questions. The instructions were read out and each item in the questionnaire was explained in case of difficulty in understanding the item/s, in order to get good response. Once the data were collected, they were scored and fed to the computer.

The data were analyzed using Pearson's product moment correlation and stepwise multiple regression analysis. Table 1 present's results of Pearson's product moment correlations between dimensions of internet addiction and sleep quality and Table 2 shows results of stepwise multiple regression for sleep quality scores by various dimensions of Internet addiction.

RESULTS

Table: 1, Results of product moment correlations between big five personality traits and internet addiction.

Variable 1 B5 PERSONALITY Traits	Variable 2	Pearson Correlation (r)	Significance (p)
Extroversion	Internet addiction	-.156	.047
Agreeableness	Internet addiction	-.182	.020
Conscientiousness	Internet addiction	-.264	.001
Neuroticism	Internet addiction	.326	.001
Openness	Internet addiction	.079	.317

From the above table it is clear that internet addiction scores were significantly and negatively related to three of the big five personality factors-Extroversion ($r=-.156$, $p=.047$), Agreeableness ($r=-0.182$; $p=0.020$), and conscientiousness ($r=-0.264$; $p=0.001$), revealing that as the extroversion, agreeableness and Conscientiousness of the individual increased, internet addiction decreased linearly and significantly and vice-versa. However, as the neuroticism scores of the individuals increased, internet addiction also increased linearly and significantly ($r=.326$; $p=.001$). However, openness factor of big five personality was not significantly related to internet addiction.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Table: 2, Summary results of stepwise multiple regression for prediction of Internet addiction by big five personality factors.

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	Neuroticism	-	.326	.107	.101
2	Conscientiousness	-	.383	.147	.136
Beta coefficients					
			Step I	Step II	
1	Model 1		0.326	.284	
2	Model 2		-	-.206	

Regression analysis: When all the scores of 5 personality factors were regressed on the internet addiction scores, stepwise multiple regressions revealed that only two factors of personality were found to be the best predictors of internet addiction. The first factor entered into the equation was neuroticism with correlation of 0.326, squared R value of 0.107 and variance of 0.101. The second personality factor to enter into the equation along with neuroticism was conscientiousness with the combined correlation of .383, squared R value of .147 and variance of .136. In other words, both agreeableness and conscientiousness contributed to 13.6% of the internet addiction among the present sample. The beta values for the first predicted model at step I and II were found to be 0.326 and 0.284 respectively and the beta value obtained for the second predicted model at second step was found to be -.206.

DISCUSSION

Major findings of the study:

1. Three of the personality factors-extroversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness were negatively and significantly with internet addiction.
2. Neuroticism as a personality factor was significantly and positively related to internet addiction.
2. Personality factors- neuroticism and Conscientiousness best predicted the internet addiction to the extent of 13.6%.

Out of the five factors of Big five personality, four factors were related to internet addiction. Further, out of 4 factors, 2 factors majorly predicted the internet addiction to the extent of 13.6%, which clearly provides the hint that personality does play a major role in the internet addiction. Those who tended to be more extroverted, agreeable and conscientiousness had lesser addiction and those who were likelihood to be affected by neuroticism had higher levels of addiction. It's quite clear that those are assertive, energetic, sociable and talkative were found to be lesser addicted to internet. Likewise, those who were compassionate and cooperative, organized, and self-disciplined were less addicted to internet. However, those who had proneness to stress, easily upset, lesser impulse control were more addicted to internet.

A glance at previous results almost revealed the similarities with the findings of the present study. In a recent study by D'Souza, Skanda, and Suuky (2018) found that two personality factors-agreeableness and neuroticism best predicted the Facebook addiction. Zamani, Abedini and Kheradmand (2011) opined that people who tend to be highly extroverted prefer social, face to face interactions with others and avoid virtual world. However, those with high neuroticism and low Conscientiousness have increased risk of developing internet addiction.

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Ehrenberg, Juckes, White, and Walsh (2008), Ross et al (2009) and Ebeling-Witte, Frank and Lester (2007), in their studies revealed that individuals with neurotic characteristics are prone to use new feeds and social networking sites. Their choice is more towards chatting and friendship making online and they are more proactive users of Facebook. Hwang (2017), in his research revealed that students who were high in extraversion and neuroticism were more likely to update their profiles, share photo and images with others and give feedback on other's posts.

The present study showed a definite relationship between specific personality factors of Big five personality factors and Internet addiction. The specific factors included are Extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism. Future researchers need to further investigate the personality factors influencing internet addiction to conclude which of the specific personality factors (apart from big five personality factors) predict internet addiction and other factors mediate it. If researchers are able to identify the reasons for internet addiction, they may open up new avenues in reducing the negative effects of internet addiction.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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