

Relationship between Emotional Well-Being and Internet Usage Among Emerging Adults

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ABSTRACT

Among the many aspects of well-being, emotional well-being can be conceptualized as the balance of feelings (positive and negative) experienced and the perceived feelings (happiness and satisfaction) in life, and is crucial to an overall well-being of an individual. The objective of this study is to understand the relationship between emotional well-being and internet usage among emerging adults. An empirical study was conducted using the Internet Usage Scale (2019) constructed by the researcher and the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience by Ed Diener et al. (2009) on a sample of 120 emerging adult participants (18-25 years) from Chennai. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the sociodemographic data and inferential statistics were employed to analyze the data. Results revealed that there exists a significant relationship between internet usage and emotional well-being with internet use being negatively correlated with emotional well-being. Further, internet usage is found to be positively correlated with negative feelings among emerging adults. Gender-wise no differences were observed in internet usage and emotional wellbeing.

Keywords: *Emotional wellbeing, Positive affect, Negative affect, Internet use, Emerging Adults*

Today, in our rapid paced lives humans have learnt and discovered ways and modes of efficient and speedy communication. Communication throughout the world is facilitated in a matter of few seconds due to advances in technology. Technology has enabled humans to achieve greater heights limited not only to communication but extending to all areas of human life; from information processing to well-being of individuals. One of the most influential tools of technology is the Internet. The internet is seen to be the largest used tool of information and communication among humans and has tremendous impact on people of all age groups across various societies and cultures relying on it for different life purposes. Studies have revealed that the past decade has witnessed a rapid growth in internet usage throughout the world impacting the lives of individuals both positively and negatively. While the positive effects of internet use cannot be undermined, it is also crucial to acknowledge that the internet has several limitations too. Some of the adverse effects of internet include internet addiction or compulsive use of internet leading to

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hampering of personal, social and family life on one hand and creating social and cultural threats and misinformation on the other had. In addition to the above, internet usage is also seen to affect psychological and physical health leading to problems of depression, loneliness, impulsivity and obesity, sleep disturbances, concentration difficulties thus impacting the wellbeing of individuals and the society on the whole. The growth of internet is beneficial at a global pace as it is a dynamic tool for communication enabling connections across continents at a very rapid rate (Maheswarappa, 2003). India, at present is said to have an approximate of 700 million internet users and is ranked the second largest country with active internet users in the world in 2019. The rate of internet users in India has dynamically increased in the last few years from 27% internet penetration in 2015 to 48.48% in 2019 and 50% in 2020 (Statista, 2021).

Emerging Adulthood is one such stage of growth and development that is newly proposed by Arnett (2001), defined as a developmental period between adolescence and young adulthood ranging from 18 to 25 years. This period as per Arnett is characterized by five main features of development, viz; identity exploration, period of instability, feelings of being in-between age, being self - focused and being positive and optimistic about own future. The period is influenced by various personal, social and cultural factors that exert their influence on the overall development with technological advancements such as internet being one of them. In any society, the younger population is known to form the crucial crème of mankind and any source that influences and affects this population will have its consequence on the nation too. Hence, the well-being of the young, particularly the age group of 18 years to 25 years (the emerging adults) is very crucial for any country. Moreover, given that the internet usage among this group is very high, studying aspects of their life will help understand their well -being and serve to device any appropriate interventions if in case internet has any adverse effect on their well-being.

Research studies further reveal that internet use has significant impact on the overall well-being of youngsters. Well -being can be understood as the overall functionality of individuals that fosters happiness, poor stress levels and high feelings of satisfaction in life. Subjective well-being is indicative of a healthy physical and mental life. Positive emotions and negative emotions with feelings of life satisfaction are contributors of subjective well-being (Diener et al, 1999). Dangwal et al. (2016) investigated emotional maturity among youngsters using internet and the revealed a dearth of emotional maturity among young internet users with gender differences in emotional stability, independence and maturity. Lo, et al. (2005), reported an increase in online gaming as being directly associated with increase in social anxiety and decrease in interpersonal relations among Taiwanese students. Caplan (2007) in a study confound that social anxiety is a predictor of online social interaction and problematic internet use. Adolescents from Netherlands when examined by Kuss et al. (2010), indicated an increased risk of internet addiction with increase in online gaming and increase in the utilisation of social appliances. In reference to their usage of internet, Turkish adolescents in a study implied that loneliness was associated with increased internet use and increased internet attitude when examined (Erdoğan, Y. 2008). Further, internet is known to serve as a conducive platform to enable the socially shy, anxious or marginalized youth to practice social skills without the fear associated with face-to-face interactions (Heitner et al. 2002). The available literature throws light on internet usage and its overall influence on the lives of the young, thus probing the need for more studies in this regard.

Past and recent studies on internet have emphasized that internet is utilized by individuals across various age groups with increased use observed among adolescents and young adults.

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The importance of internet in the lives of the young has tremendously increased. (Van der Aa et al, 2009). Studies have revealed that the internet is used on large basis by youth on a daily basis and tends to influence various personal, cultural and Psycho-social factors of individuals life globally. It serves as a community building tool (Rainie & Horrigan, 2005) and enables youth with the opportunity to exercise leadership skills in their communities. Internet helps youth procure socially sensitive information such as interpersonal relations (Suzuki and Calzo, 2004) and is also recognized as an important tool for both networking and academic achievements for children by parents. Daily well-being has been tested by measurement of personal characters of social isolation, loneliness and depression (Gross et al. 2002). With the increased use of internet among the young, with increased influence and impact on daily lives and overall well- being of individuals it becomes crucially necessary to understand how one feels and experiences at the emotional level at this point. Pertaining to a dearth of literature available in this regard and also with the availability of mixed results, there arises a need to further explore various emotional aspects of internet usage among the young. Hence this study focuses on studying the emotional well-being and internet usage among Emerging adults.

Hypotheses:

- H₁:** There will not be any significant relationship between Emotional Well-Being and Internet use among Emerging adults
- H₂:** There will not be any significant difference in Emotional Well-Being and Internet usage among men and women

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Stratified Random Sampling Technique was used for the selection of the sample in the present study. The sample size comprised of a total of 120 individuals in the age group of 18 years to 25 years from Chennai. The data was obtained using both paper pencil and Google form surveys. The sample accounted for 50% males and 50% females. 62.5% are in the age group of 18-21 and 32.5% belong to the age group of 22-25 years. 70% of the emerging adult population are degree qualified, 25% are postgraduates and 5% are found to be working individuals.

Measures of the study:

- 1. Internet Usage Scale:** by Nandini. P and K.N. Jayakumar (2019). Internet usage scale on three dimensions viz, *Affective, behaviour and Cognition* was developed by Nandini and Jayakumar in the year 2019. The tool is a five-point Likert scale with a Cronbach's reliability of 0.80. Response for each item on the scale is scored between 1 and 5; for responses "Always" as (5), "Often" as (4), "Sometimes" as (3), "Rarely" as (2), and "Never" as (1).
- 2. Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE):** by Ed Diener and Robert Biswas- Diener (2009)
Scale of Positive and Negative Effect a brief scale used to evaluate 6 positive and 6 negative feelings. The scale contains general positive and negative emotions and experiences, especially emotions specific to the individuals. Response for each item on the scale is based on a 5-point rating and is scored between 1 and 5, Score of 1 is expressed as "very rarely or never", Score of 5 expressed as "very often or always". The reliability of the scale for the current study is 0.73.

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Procedure

Consent from each participant was obtained before the administration of the test. Anonymity and Confidentiality was assured to participants and maintained. The test was administered only in English to participants who knew English. The instructions to the respondents were made very clear to them. There are no monetary benefits involved in this study.

Statistical Techniques

Using SPSS 26, the data was analysed. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the socio-demographic details of the sample. Inferential statistics like independent sample t-test was used to compare the mean of the sample groups and Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to understand relationship between the variables; emotional well-being and Internet Usage. Table 1 presents results of product moment correlations between Internet usage and emotional wellbeing, positive affect, negative affect and overall balance effect. Table 2 presents the results of gender differences between men and women in emotional well-being and Internet usage.

RESULT

Table 1 Showing the correlation between Internet Usage and emotional well-being, sub dimensions of Emotional Well-Being among Emerging Adults.

Variables	Emotional well -Being	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Overall Balance Affect
Internet Usage	-0.31	-0.26*	0.26**	-0.31**

*. Sig at .05 level; ** sig at 0.01 level.

Emotional well-being and internet usage are negatively related signifying that internet usage increases as the emotional well-being decreases among emerging adults. Further, it was found that significant correlations exist among the components of emotional well-being and internet use among emerging adults. A negative correlation was found between positive affect/emotions and internet use among the emerging adults. On the other hand, negative affect was positively correlated with Emotional well-being indicating that higher the negative feelings greater is the internet use.

Table 2 T-test results comparing Emotional Well-Being and Internet usage among Men and Women.

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	't' value	P value
EWB	Men	60	5.62	6.51	1.14	0.26
	Women	60	4.23	6.78		
IU	Men	60	42.43	10.12	-1.14	0.25
	Women	60	44.70	11.59		

The mean scores for emotional well-being for men and women were 5.62 and 4.23 with a standard deviation of 6.51 and 6.78 respectively, with the t-value of 1.14 significant at $p > 0.05$. Further, mean values of men is found to be 42.43 and women is 44.70 with a standard deviation of 10.12 and 11.59 respectively with regard to internet usage. The t-value of the sample is -1.14 and p is > 0.05 . In both emotional well-being and internet usage we find non-significant mean difference between men and women.

DISCUSSION

Major findings of the study

- Emotional well-being and internet usage are negatively related to each other among emerging adults.
- Positive affect and Internet usage were significantly and negatively related including overall balance affect.
- Negative affect was positively correlated with Emotional well-being among emerging adults.

The study confirmed that fact that higher internet usage affects negatively the wellbeing of the individual and also an individual experiencing or nurturing positive emotions or positive feelings tend to have lower internet usage; indicating that higher the emotional positivity lesser the need for internet use. Hence first hypothesis is rejected as we found that there was a significant relationship between Emotional Well-Being and Internet use among Emerging adults. However, second hypothesis regarding gender differences between men and women is accepted as there was no significant mean difference found between men and women with respect to emotional well-being and internet usage.

The results comply with several other studies indicating similar results; negative emotions such as anger, sadness, feelings of negativity, unpleasantness, afraid, feeling bad, anxiety, loneliness, depression are seen to be linked to increased internet use, problematic internet use, compulsive internet use and to a higher extent of internet addiction. According of willenz, (2006) excess time utilization on the web can steer both positive and negative outcomes on the health, emotional state and social life of the young. Emotions of positivity and negativity are an outcome of incidents in people's life and their basic experiences in those circumstances. (Diener, Scollon & Lucas, 2003). A balanced positive and negative emotions are crucial for a productive physical and mental health. Significant interactive influences were observed in a study between internet access and emotional maturity among adolescents (Deswal, 2013). A good emotional health is highly essential for an overall well-being enabling individuals to live effectively and productively (Diener et al., 1999).

There were no significant gender differences among emerging adults with respect to emotional Well-being and gender differences are also absent with reference to internet usage thus indicating that male and female individuals in the age group of 18 to 25 years do not significantly differ in their emotional well-being and internet usage. The present study is based on a small sample and subsequent researches could be extended to a larger sample size.

To summarize, the study is focused on understanding the relationship between emotion well-being and internet use among the population of emerging adults. The results of the study imply that there exists a significant relationship between emotional well-being and Internet usage among emerging adults. Individuals with a good emotional well-being are more likely to have less internet usage. Also, feelings of positivity are related to lower use of internet. Hence, we can conclude that individuals with a good emotional well-being are less likely to use the internet. Individuals with positive emotions such as feeling good, happiness, feeling pleasant, joyful, positivity and contentment are related to decrease in internet use. Further we can infer from the current study that negative feelings are associated with increase in internet usage among emerging adults. More emotional components can be considered for future studies and a wider aspect of internet usage can also be explored. The geographical

area for the study is limited and it is suggested that it can be further extended to larger areas and to other various cities. Demographic information can be further explored and their influences on internet usage and emotional well-being may be considered for future studies. The outcome of the present study calls for more extensive study on aspects of emotional well-being and aspects of internet use too.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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