

Research Paper

Relationship Between Internet Addiction and Emotional Maturity: A Study on School and College Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between Internet addiction and Emotional maturity. Emotional maturity involves an individual's adjustment skill, knowledge about self, and strategies to control self. Internet addiction is excessive use of the internet that hampers other functioning of an individual's life. The sample of this study involved 80 adolescents out of which 40 adolescents are school going students making 50% of the total sample and the other 40 adults are postgraduate students making another 50% of the total sample. In this study the Internet addiction test (IAT) (Kimberly Young, 1995) is used to measure the level of internet use behaviour among participants. The Emotional Maturity Scale (Yashvir Singh & Mahesh Bhargava) is used to measure emotional maturity of participants. The results of this study found that there is no statistically significant difference between postgraduate and school going students on level of internet addiction. The groups are addicted to the internet up to approximately the same extent. The study also found that there is a weak but positive correlation between internet addiction and emotional immaturity. This study found no statistically significant difference for emotional maturity between school going students and postgraduate students.

Keywords: *Emotional maturity, Internet addiction, Age*

As the world is progressing, it is next to impossible to remain away from technology. Even though it is now part of children's lives, overuse/misuse of technology has a serious impact on an individual's mental as well as psychological health. Some researchers found that internet and smartphone addiction are positively correlated with depression, stress, anxiety and suicidality (Wan Salwina Wan Ismail et al. 2020, p.1). The Internet is one of the examples of this change. The Internet is a global network through which its users can communicate with each other and share information with each other. Addiction is to get involved in overuse of any activity that may cause physical or psychological harm. There is no clear conclusive definition of Internet Addiction as it is a global concept. Although in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (Fifth edition) there is a commitment to achieve a clear definition of Internet Addiction. But

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researchers and clinicians are unable to design internet addiction as an Impulse Control Disorder (Block, 2008; Negovan, 2010; Oktug, 2010). In addition, studies show that adolescents with Internet Gaming Disorders have sleep disturbances and poor academic achievement. Students who are showing bad performance at schools should be monitored for Internet Gaming Disorder while concerning the different factors for low academic performance (Nazir S. Hawi et al., 2017).

Emotional maturity plays a very important role in an individual's balanced life and it is one of the most important parts of psychological health. Emotional maturity is an individual's ability to deal with different situations of life in an ease and sensible manner. Emotional maturity involves good social adjustment skills, ability to cope, self-awareness and self-control. Internet addiction is frequent, compulsive and excessive behaviour of using smartphones, laptops, tablets and other devices that access the internet. It hampers daily activities and performances. Internet addiction causes the individual to develop social isolation, bad academic performances, relationship issues and many more problems in life. Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development states that thinking and reasoning of children at different stages of life are different. This theory supports the fact that with increase in age there is increase in maturity, cognitive abilities, adjustment and different types of skills.

Several studies show that people who have severe addiction to social networks have less emotional maturity compared to those with moderate addiction (Hosseini et al., 2017, p.1).). In this context a study shows that among male and females of the same age group, females are more emotionally mature. Also, age is a factor which affects emotional maturity and it increases with increase in age. The author concluded that people who are less emotionally mature are relatively more likely to drive after drinking (Neal Richard Boyd jr, Warren J. Huffman et al). In addition, working women were found to have better emotional maturity than non-working women (Jayendra A. Jarsaniya, 2015). Charles E. Skinner (1949) defines emotionally mature individuals as those who have the ability to keep a lid over their feelings. They express emotion with decency, moderation and good order. Another study shows that addictive behaviour towards the internet leads to specific anxiety and distress which is also seen in the case of internet disconnection (Hatam Siavoshi & Davood Kordestani, 2015).

No previous studies have been done over the population of least developed areas i.e., Eastern U.P, regarding internet addiction and emotional maturity of people. In these areas people have the least approach to smartphones and new technologies. After the launching of Reliance Jio4G system Internet became accessible and approachable for low-income individuals and for these lower developed areas as well which leads to very drastic change in the number of users of internet. During the Year 2010 there were 635.1 million users of internet while in the year 2021 there are approx. 1151.44 million users of the internet across India. From this data of internet subscribers 406 million users belong to the subscriber list of Reliance Jio 4G and this led Reliance to be one of the leading service providers in September, 2020 (Statista Research Department, 2021). Beside this after the exploration of the cheaper Chinese smartphones (Xiaomi/Mi, Vivo, Oppo, Realme, etc.) into the Indian market the smartphones became approachable for low-income people and to poor and least developed areas.

This research has been designed to study how internet addiction among younger and older adults is related with the Emotional maturity and age of individuals among the population of

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Eastern U.P. This research will help people to understand the relationship among emotional maturity, age and internet addiction. It will help to control Internet Addiction by increasing emotional maturity of younger and older adults.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Setting

The sample of this study is drawn from the student population by using a disproportionate stratified sampling method of probability sampling. This study involves 40 adolescents between the age of 15-18 years, making 50% of the total participants of this study, whereas 40 adults between the ages of 20-23 years, making another 50% of the participants. The 40 younger adults were taken from the population of the class 9-12 students and 40 older adults were taken up from the population of undergraduate and postgraduate students. The procedure followed in this research was in accordance with the ethical standards of American Psychiatric Association.

Procedure

Data for adolescents were collected in an educational coaching institute which includes students from various schools thus the school population was randomized to avoid error, whereas data for adults were collected from different educational departments of Veer Bahadur Singh Purvanchal University. The population was divided into two strata just to find out the effect of age over internet addiction. The scores were calculated on each scale for each participant. Data were then fed in SPSS and by using statistical analysis the significance difference between the scores of groups were calculated.

Measures

In both the groups of school and college students emotional Maturity and Internet Addiction were measured by using Internet Addiction Test (IAT) by Dr Kimberly Young and Emotional Maturity Scale by Dr Yashvir Singh & Dr Mahesh Bhargava. Data collection took place between February-March (2019) and was collected from the population of Eastern Uttar Pradesh. The socio-demographic details of participants were collected to characterize participant related variables like- gender, age, years of using the internet.

The Internet Addiction Test (IAT) (Kimberly Young, 1995) measures the level of internet use in participants. It consisted of 20 statements with a 5 point Likert-type response format. Maximum score on this test is 100, higher the score, higher is the level of internet in the participant. The score of 0-30 shows normal internet use, score of 31-49 shows mild internet use, score of 50-79 shows moderate internet use, while score of 80-100 shows severe dependence on internet. The items- 10, 12, 13, 15, and 19 are the items measuring saliency, the items- 1, 2, 14, 18, and 20 are the items measuring excessive use, the items- 6, 8, 9 is measuring neglect work, the items- 7, 11 is measuring anticipation, the item- 5, 16, 17 is measuring lack of control while the items- 3 and 4 is measuring neglect social life.

The Emotional Maturity Scale (Yashvir Singh & Mahesh Bhargava,) is a measure of emotional maturity of participants. It consisted of 48 statements with a 5 point Likert-scoring response format. Five areas of emotional maturity were measured by this test. Emotional Instability was measured by item- (1.1-1.8), Emotional Regression was measured by item-(2.1-2.10), Social Maladjustment was measured by item-(3.1-3.10), Personality Disintegration was measured by item-(4.1-4.10) and Lack of independence was measured by item-(5.1-5.8).

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Analyses

Analysis of this study is carried out by using SPSS 21.0. In sample Bivariate Correlation were used to examine the relationship between emotional maturity and internet addiction. Independent t-test were used to examine whether age has resulted in any significant difference in internet addiction/usage and emotional maturity parameter among school and college students.

RESULT

Table-1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics

	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
INTERNETAD DICTION	80	10	81	39.52	13.576
EMOTIONAL MATURITY	80	76	201	130.92	27.611
AGE	80	15	23	19.31	2.962
Valid N (listwise)	80				

Table-2 Correlations

Correlations

		<i>INTERNET ADDICTIO N</i>	<i>EMOTIO NALM ATURITY</i>
INTERNETAD DICTION	Pearson Correlation	1	.275*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.013
	N	80	80
EMOTIONAL MATURITY	Pearson Correlation	.275*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	
	N	80	80

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

Table-3 Group Statistics

Group Statistics

	<i>Age1</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
Internetaddictio n	PG	40	39.4000	14.60207	2.30879
	SCHOOL	40	39.6500	12.65225	2.00050
Emotionalmaturi ty	PG	40	127.5400	27.54977	4.35600
	SCHOOL	40	134.3025	27.60067	4.36405

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Table-4 Independent Samples Test

Independent Samples Test

		<i>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</i>		<i>t-test for Equality of Means</i>						
		<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Std. Error Difference</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</i>	
Internetaddiction	Equal variances assumed	.844	.361	-.082	78	.935	-.25000	3.05491	-6.33187	5.83187
	Equal variances not assumed			-.082	76.451	.935	-.25000	3.05491	-6.33381	5.83381
Emotionalmaturity	Equal variances assumed	.669	.416	-1.097	78	.276	-6.76250	6.16601	-19.03808	5.51308
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.097	78.000	.276	-6.76250	6.16601	-19.03808	5.51308

DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to study the relationship between Internet addiction, Emotional maturity and Age. Using descriptive statistics this study found that for levels of emotional maturity the average score was 130.92 and standard deviation was 27.611, and the average score for internet addiction level was 39.52, and standard deviation was 13.576 (see Table-1). The sample shows that 21.25% of participants have complete control and have proper use of the internet, 57.5% of participants had mild level of internet addiction, 20% of participants had moderate level of internet addiction, and 1.25% of participants had severe level of internet use. Regarding the demographic results “age” was subdivided into two groups, school going students (15-18 Years) from class 9th to 12th and college going students (21-23 Years) from Post-graduation. From the whole sample 50% of participants were from Class 9th to 12th and 50% were from Post-graduation.

The first hypothesis of this study was that- There will be a positive relationship between high Internet usage and Emotional immaturity.

The result of this study shows that there is a weak but positive correlation between high internet usage and emotional immaturity as our Pearson Correlation value is $r(78) = 0.275$ and there is strong evidence in our study that this correlation exists in our population. Because our p-value is 0.013 which is less than our confidence level i.e., 0.05. It shows that the significant correlation had not occurred by chance. Hence our above alternate hypothesis is accepted. So, there is statistical evidence that higher internet addiction shows a higher level of emotional immaturity (see Table-2). A previous study done by Hossein et al., (2017) also shows that internet usage decreases with higher levels of emotional maturity.

The second hypothesis of this study is- There will be significant difference between Postgraduate and School going students on level of Internet addiction. The result of this study shows that there is No Statistically Significant differences for Internet addiction levels between Postgraduate and School going students, ($t(78) = -0.082$, $p > 0.05$) with Post-graduation students scoring approximately same in internet addiction ($M = 39.40$, $SD = 14.602$) as school students in internet addiction ($M = 39.65$, $SD = 12.652$) (see Table-3). The study claims that the students of both groups (i.e., school and college) use the internet up to the same extent. Approximately there is no existence of the statement that School students use more internet than Post-graduation students because they are highly immature. Hence internet use behaviour is present in both groups up to approximately the same extent. No significant difference has been found among school going and college students.

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The third hypothesis of this study was that- There will be significant difference in level of Emotional maturity between Postgraduate and School going students. The finding of this study shows that there is No Statistical Difference for emotional maturity between Postgraduate and School students ($t(78) = 1.097, p > 0.05$), in addition EM score for PG students ($M = 127.54, SD = 27.550$) and EM score for School students ($M = 134.30, SD = 27.601$). Results for all other dimensions are given in Table-3. So the results of this study reject the above alternate hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis. The study claims that there is not any stronger evidence that emotional maturity increases with age as both groups of students (i.e., school and college students) have approximately similar levels of emotional maturity.

Also, there are No previous studies which shows that Internet addiction level slows down with increase in age and emotional maturity. Most of the previous studies done on this topic predicts the factors which affect Internet addiction level like- anxiety, depression, gender, etc., but No studies show that Internet addiction level decreases with increase in emotional maturity and age.

So, this study doesn't find any significant difference between Emotional maturity and internet addiction level of school and college going students. The result is not significant and for this there might be many factors involved which affected the behaviour of internet use. The sample size of this study was small i.e., $N = 80$. This can be a reason for non-significant result. The Internet is a good source to gain knowledge and also it attracts its users to explore the world digitally and to engage in various online activities. This can be another reason for frequent use of the internet among school and college going students.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to study the relationship between Internet addiction, Emotional maturity and Age. This study finds that Internet addiction and Emotional maturity have positive but weak relationship while there is no evidence that Internet addiction decreases with age and emotional maturity increases with age. Both groups (i.e., school and college going students) were found to have frequent use of the internet. This study will help the population to understand that not only age and emotional maturity can predict internet addiction level of people, so other factors might be involved in Internet usage behaviour.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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