

## Effect of Internet Addiction on Mental Health among College Students

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of internet addiction on mental health among college students. Present study was conducted on 80 college students (40 boys and 40 girls) in Ghaziabad city. Data was collected using standardized questionnaires. Internet addiction was measured by "YOUNG'S Internet Addiction Questionnaire" and mental health by "VEIT AND WARE'S Mental Health Inventory". Two-way analysis of variance was used to analyse the data. After analysis of the data, effect of internet addiction on mental health was found significant at .01 level of confidence while effect of gender difference was found non-significant. Interaction effect also was not found significant at any level of confidence. It can be concluded that internet addiction is affecting the mental health of our college youth significantly.

**Keywords:** *Internet addiction, college students, Mental health*

Nowadays majority of people are using internet for one reason or the other. It has become an inseparable part of their lives and daily functioning. Sometimes they use internet more often than they thought of, but it does not create problems until they feel bound towards using internet or it affects their daily routine and functioning adversely. Shaw and Black (2008) described internet addiction as those urges or behaviours towards using computer or accessing internet which a person is unable to control and that lead towards impairment and feeling of distress. It may be said that showing problematic behaviour such as lying about actual uses or feeling low, when unable to use internet is internet addiction (Servidio, 2017). Excessive use of internet in today's life is causing many health and relationship issues. It has been a great concern for researchers to identify the reason behind it and the effects of its problematic uses. Goel, et al. (2013) found 0.7% prevalence of internet addiction among adolescents while Sharma, et al. (2018) found 44% prevalence of internet addiction among youth in Udupi Karnataka which clearly reflects a tremendous growth in internet addiction in India.

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Literature review also showed that there are some common symptoms found in problematic internet users such as no sense of time, defensive behaviour, work avoidance, apathy with online relationships, no sense of health or proper diet, insomnia, headache, eye pain or infection and compulsion for using internet (Gregory 2019).

Snyder (2016), explored the effect and reason behind internet addiction. In this study, students reported that using internet improve their relationship with their family members when they live far from each other but at the same time, it increases the conflict when they live together because they give more time to internet, not to their family.

Kawabe, K. et. al (2016) observed strong correlation between internet addiction and mental problems such as suicidal depression. Orsal O. et al. (2013) also found a significant positive correlation between the level of depression and internet addiction.

A one-year longitudinal study of Japanese high school students demonstrated a relationship between internet addiction and poor mental health, in which internet addiction and poor mental health could be the cause or result of the other. (Otsuka, Y. et.al. 2020)

Singh, et al. (2019) found positive relationship between internet overuse, excessive daytime sleepiness and other sleep problems. Increased duration of internet use may decrease the amount of sleep that led to a diagnosis of insomnia. Studies have further suggested that excessive use of internet negatively affects the psychological status of youths. In the present study an effort was made to find out the effect of internet addiction on mental health of college students.

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Objective*

To study the effect of internet addiction and gender difference on mental health among college students.

#### *Hypotheses*

- Internet addiction would not significantly affect the mental health.
- Gender difference would not significantly affect the mental health.
- Interaction effect of Internet addiction and Gender difference would not significantly affect the mental health.

#### *Sample*

Present study was conducted on college students. Students were selected from two government colleges of Ghaziabad city. The sample included 80 college students (40 girls and 40 boys). They were again divided into high Internet addiction and low internet addiction groups on the basis of their measured score on Internet Addiction Test. Students were oriented about the research and were willing to participate in the same.

**Tools Used:** Two different study tools were used in the present study-

- 1. YOUNG'S INTERNET ADDICTION TEST- IAT** was adapted from the DSM-4 pathological gambling criteria, and was 1st published in 1998 (Young 1998). This instrument covers a variety of internet use behaviours and common addiction symptoms. To measure the level of internet addiction, there are 20 items in this test.

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Good test-retest reliability of this test is ( $r = 0.85$ ). The validity of this test is ( $\alpha = .90-.93$ ).

2. **MENTAL HEALTH INVENTORY-** MHI was developed by VEIT and WARE (1983). There are 18 items in this full inventory. MHI is a part of MSQLI. This test measures the mental health of a person. Total mental health scores are addition of obtained scores on 4 subscales [anxiety, depression, behaviour control, positive affect]. The reliability of this test is .93.

### **Research Design**

2x2 factorial design was adapted for the present study. The two independent variables were studied both having two levels each, Internet Addiction [ High and Low] and Gender [male and female].

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Two way ANOVA was used to assess the main effects of the Internet Addiction and Gender and Interaction Effect of these two variables on Mental Health. Findings are presented in table 1.

**Table - 1: Summary Table of ANOVA for the effect of internet addiction and gender on Mental Health**

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	MS	F - ratio	Level of Significance
Internet Addiction (A)	38588.11	1	38588.11	405.04	.01
Gender (B)	59.51	1	59.51	0.62	NS
Interaction (A x B )	19.02	1	19.02	0.20	NS
Error Variance	7240.25	76	95.27		
Total	45906.89	79			

It is evident from table 1 that the main effect of Internet Addiction on Mental health was found to be significant beyond chance ( $F = 405.04$ ,  $df = 1/76$ ,  $p < .01$ ), whereas the main effect of gender difference was found to be non-significant. The interaction effect between Internet Addiction and Gender of the students was also not found to be significant. To summarize, it can be said that the Internet Addiction itself is a significant variable to affect the mental health.

**Table- 2: Mean Mental Health scores of college students having High Internet Addiction and Low Internet addiction**

	Internet Addiction (High)	Internet Addiction (Low)
Mental Health Mean Scores	35	78
N	40	40

The findings of the present study revealed that the level of internet addiction significantly affect the mental health of college students. Mean scores reported in Table-2 clearly indicates that students having high internet addiction obtained an average score of 35 while students who were low in internet addiction scored 78 which is significantly higher than the previous group. As high scores reflect better mental health result suggests that students having low internet addiction possess good mental health. Hypothesis made in this regard that internet addiction would not significantly affect the mental health of the college students is rejected. Main effect of gender difference was found non – significant which indicates that

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gender of the students do not affect their mental health significantly. Male and female students do not significantly differ with regard to their mental health or are at same level of mental health. Hypothesis formulated earlier in this regard that gender of the subjects would not significantly affect the mental health of the college students is retained. Interactional effect of Internet Addiction and Gender was also found non – significant which suggests that together they do not significantly affect mental health.

The present findings are also supported by some previous findings. Sharma and Sharma (2018) found that college students are getting affected by Internet Addiction and their psychological wellbeing was also negatively affected by it. Gedum et al. (2017), also found significant association between psychopathology and internet addiction. Students reported in this study that most of the time they use internet to avoid their mental stress. In another study Masih and Rajasekaran (2019), reported that problematic internet users are more likely to develop problems related to mental health and relationships than other normal internet users. Shresta N and Kenwood D' Mello M (2020), reported a significant correlation between Internet Addiction and Psychological Well Being in their study. In another study Lebni et al.(2020) found that excessive use of internet leads towards depression, anxiety and reduced Mental health, thereby affecting student's academic performance.

While exploring the effects of internet addiction Kumar and Mandal (2018) found in their research that internet addiction is affecting the whole life of students specially their mental health as well as their relationships and social life. In the present study also, researcher found some common feelings of using excessive internet. In their introspective report students shared that they feel irritated or depressed if for any reason their internet use is interrupted or stopped. Students also reported that their parents and relatives complain about spending most of their time on internet and that they feel more comfortable in communicating through internet instead of a face-to-face interaction.

No significant effect of gender difference and interaction between gender and Internet addiction was found in the present study. It may be due to certain limitations of the study, as the present study was done in Ghaziabad city only with a small sample size. But a significant effect of internet addiction on mental health raises a concern and need for further exploration.

### CONCLUSION

To conclude, it can be said that internet addiction is affecting the mental health of our college students significantly. As students using internet within normal limits were in a better mental health status than students who were using internet beyond the normal limits, making them dysfunctional and affecting their mental health adversely.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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