

Academic And Personal Challenges Among Adolescents: An Association Between Internet Addiction and Various Psychological Correlates

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the internet has become an important resource in an adolescent's life. However, its excessive usage leads to addiction (IA), paving the way for many mental health challenges. Internet usage and IA are related to vulnerability and psychological, family and social stress (Kormas et al., 2011). IA generally causes depression, anxiety, and a sense of isolation, thus a considerable number of individuals with IA experience stress and exhibit low self-esteem (Milani et al., 2009). This study aims to identify if there is a relationship between an adolescent's internet habits and some specific challenges faced by them, namely academic and personal challenges. Academic challenges include: self-handicapping behaviors, procrastination and motivation to achieve and personal challenges include: self-esteem and body image issues. The sample size is 65 adolescent boys and girls of the age group 14-17 years from various schools across Chennai. Data is collected using questionnaires through google forms after obtaining consent from parents. The following questionnaires are used- Self-Handicapping Scale, Procrastination Assessment Scale- Students, Achievement Motivation Scale, Rosenberg's self-esteem scale, Adolescents Body Image Satisfaction Scale for Males and Body Shape Questionnaire for Females. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's product moment correlation is utilized for data analysis. The intention of the study is to identify if adolescents who spend less time on the internet face lesser academic and personal challenges as compared to those who spend long hours on the internet. The investigation observed that Internet Addiction had a significant relationship with Self Esteem and Self Handicapping behavior.

Keywords: *Internet Addiction, Self-Handicapping Behavior, Procrastination, Self-Esteem, Body-Image, Achievement Motivation, Adolescents*

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The Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak brought about a sense of distress and anxiety around the world. Due to its rapid sweep across the globe, and the subsequent global lockdown, many people experienced several mental health challenges as well as long-term psychosocial complications. These circumstances posed a huge challenge to the education system. Many academic institutions that had previously been hesitant to modify their traditional pedagogical methods of teaching were left with no choice but to fully embrace online teaching-learning (Dhawan, 2020) rather than give in to the standstill. With nearly 90% of students being physically cut off from their schools, technology has become an absolute necessity for students to be able to attend classes and get access to their study materials, connect and have a social life. This poses the threat of Internet Addiction. Internet Addiction is the excessive or poorly controlled preoccupations, urges, or behaviors regarding computer use and internet access that lead to impairment or distress (Shaw & Black, 2008). This has become a serious issue among teens as there is a natural tendency for this age group to use the Internet more often. In comparison with adults, addiction vulnerability appears to be a more problematic issue among adolescents. (Lin, M.-P. 2020). Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between Internet Addiction and its effects on the academic and personal challenges faced by adolescents.

Adolescence is a critical period in an individual's development, a transition period between childhood and adulthood in a particular cultural environment. Self-Esteem plays a very important role in development during this period (Minev et al., 2018). Self-Esteem refers to an individual's perception or subjective appraisal of one's own self-worth, one's feelings of self-respect and self-confidence, and the extent to which the individual holds positive or negative views about self (Abdel & Ahmed, 2016). With all the domains shifting to the online mode lately, studies suggest that excessive reliance on the internet has a negative impact on adolescents' self-image, henceforth affecting their Self-Esteem. In short, Internet Addiction is positively correlated to Self-Esteem in adolescents (Sage Day, 2016).

An adolescent's Achievement Motivation plays a vital role in their academic performance (Chetri, 2014). Research suggested that Achievement Motivation is a combination of two personality variables: the tendency to approach success and avoid failure (Singh, 2011). Research also indicates that redundant use of the internet leads decreased Achievement Motivation in adolescents (Wartberg et al., 2011).

Research has consistently demonstrated that Procrastination is one of the biggest threats to the academic performance of students (Ozer, 2011). Procrastination is the practice of needlessly delaying tasks to the point of experiencing subjective discomfort. (Schouwenburg, 1995). Research suggests that Academic Procrastination serves as a predictor Internet Addiction (Traş, & Gökçen, 2020).

Investigations have shown that Body Image can be influenced by certain factors like cultural and social norms, cognitive and affective variables, and biological variables (Slade, 1994). Body Image is the perception that a person has of their physical self, how they view themselves physically, and the thoughts and feelings that arise as a result of that perception (McShirley, n.d.). The Internet has a variety of traits that, in theory, might make them related to eating concerns and Body Image issues. It is possible to speculate that rising body image negativity and eating issues are related to the excessive and disproportionate reliance and significance being put on physical appearance in the online environment (Rodgers & Melioli, 2016). Excessive exposed to the internet may also have a negative impact on an

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adolescent' Body Image (Fatih Canan et al., 2014). In students, Internet Addiction is related to eating behavior disorders and reduces satisfaction with Body Image (Ayran et al., 2021).

The behavior of Self-Handicapping has been considered as a self-protective strategy, used by all, especially adolescents in different situations assessed as threatening the positive Self-Esteem (Kumari, 2015). Research has defined self-handicapping behavior as creating impediments to successful performance on tasks that the individual considers important (Urduan & Midgley, C. 2001). It has been suggested that some students use Self-Handicapping strategies so that if subsequent performance is low, these circumstances will be seen as the cause to justify the result (Midgley et al., 1996). Research found that there was a positive correlation between Internet Addiction and Academic Self-Handicapping (Sabaz & Bilgin, 2020).

Rationale

The COVID-19 outbreak has disrupted normal activities globally. Due to the shift to online schooling, Internet Addiction has become a serious issue among adolescents. The aim of this study is to identify how Internet Addiction may have an effect on various academic and personal challenges that adolescents face. Analysis of the impact of the internet on these challenges will aid in understanding the importance of decreasing and regulating internet usage among adolescents. This study also seeks to identify the challenges present and focus on the areas that require improvement to ensure the mental wellbeing of adolescents.

PROBLEM AND HYPOTHESES

Research question

Is there a relationship between Internet Addiction and academic and personal challenges faced by adolescents?

Objectives

- To identify the relationship between Internet Addiction and Self Handicapping behavior.
- To identify the relationship between Internet Addiction and Procrastination.
- To identify the relationship between Internet Addiction and Hope of Success.
- To identify the relationship between Internet Addiction and Self-Esteem.
- To identify the relationship between Internet Addiction and Body Image.

Hypotheses

- There will be no significant relationship between Internet Addiction and Self-Handicapping Behavior in adolescents.
- There will be no significant relationship between Internet Addiction and Procrastination in adolescents.
- There will be no significant relationship between Internet Addiction and Hope of Success in adolescents.
- There will be no significant relationship between Internet Addiction and Self-Esteem in adolescents.
- There will be no significant relationship between Internet Addiction and Body Image in adolescents.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Research Design

Ex post facto research design.

Independent Variable

- Internet Addiction

Dependent Variables

- Self-handicapping
- Procrastination
- Hope of Success
- Self-Esteem
- Body Image

Sample

The sample size is 71 male and female adolescents, between the ages of 14 and 17 from various private schools across Chennai.

Inclusion Criteria

Adolescent boys and girls of the age group 14-17 years from private schools across Chennai.

Exclusion Criteria

- Adolescents from other schools apart from those in Chennai city
- Adolescents from government schools
- Differently-abled adolescents.

Tools

- The **Internet Addiction scale** (Young, 1998) is a 20 item 5-point Likert scale. It measures the severity of compulsive use of the internet. Internal consistency was established, with an average Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.93. Construct validity was established and it was concluded that the results that were found were in the acceptable ranges.
- The **Self-Handicapping Scale (SHS)** (Strube, 1986) is a 10 item 6-point Likert scale. It is an individual difference measure of the tendency to engage in behaviors that protect Self-Esteem. The internal consistency reliability was established. Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was found as .90 and the test-retest reliability coefficient was found as .94 (Akin, 2012).
- The **Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS)** is a 44-item 5-point Likert type scale. It is divided into two parts; the first part measures the prevalence of Procrastination in six academic areas, and the second part assesses reasons for Procrastination (Solomon & Rothblum, 1994). The stability of the PASS was fair with one-month test-retest correlations of .74 for prevalence and .56 for reasons for Procrastination. For the total score, the test-retest correlation was .80. The PASS has very good concurrent validity, with significant correlations with the Beck Depression Inventory, Ellis Scale of Irrational Cognitions, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Delay Avoidance Scale.
- The **Achievement Motivation Scale (AMS-R)** (Lang et al., 2006) is a revised 10-item version that provided an adequate fit to the theoretically intended 2-factor

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model. Only Hope of Success has been measured among the participants. This scale has 5 items. It measures the expectation of success before it has even been achieved (Smith, 2015). The scales provided adequate reliability, lower interscale correlations, and criterion-related validity with respect to typical criteria of achievement-related behavior (Lang et al., 2006)

- The **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)** is a 10 item 4-point Likert scale. It evaluates individual Self-Esteem. Construct validity was established. High internal consistency and test-retest reliability has been established. (Ciarrochi & Bilich, 2006)
- The **Adolescent Body Image Satisfaction Scale for males** (Leone et al., 2014) is a 16-item gender-sensitive measure that demonstrates initial validity and reliability for the assessment of male Body Image. Composite reliability for the subscales, Body Competence, Body Inadequacy, and Internal Conflict, ranged from .64 - .82. Internal consistency was established with a range of .48 - .78.
- **Body Shape Questionnaire for women** (Cooper et al., 1987) is a 34 item self-report measure of concerns about body shape. It demonstrated good test-retest reliability, concurrent validity with other measures of Body Image, and criterion validity for clinical status

Procedure of Data Collection

The questionnaires were administered through google forms. Purposive sampling was adopted.

Ethics

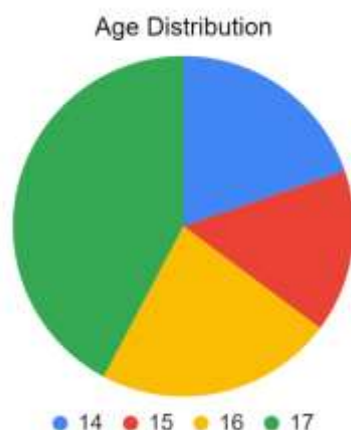
Ethical guidelines were followed. Sample groups were given a choice of voluntary participation. Data was collected after obtaining consent from parents. Anonymity was maintained and confidentiality was assured.

Statistical analysis

The association between Internet Addiction and the dependent variables of Self-handicapping, Procrastination, Hope of Success, Self-Esteem, and Body Image was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation. The statistical analysis was performed using SPSS Version 28.0.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 represents the ages of the participants in the sample group.



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Table 1 represents the descriptive statistics of the study variables

Variable	n	M	SD	Range
1. Internet Addiction	71	36.52	13.83	72
2. Self- Handicapping Behavior	71	37.32	6.50	36
3. Procrastination	71	67.09	18.24	78
4. Hope of Success	71	19.59	2.25	8
5. Self-Esteem	71	27.15	4.99	24
6. Body Image	71	64.97	40.23	170

From table 1, it can be observed that the participants have a mean score of 36.52 in Internet Addiction, 37.32 in Self Handicapping Behavior, 67.09 in Procrastination, 19.59 in Hope of Success, 27.15 in Self-Esteem and 64.97 in Body Image.

Table 2 represents the correlations of the study variables

Variable	n	r
1. Internet Addiction	71	
2. Self- Handicapping Behavior	71	0.492**
3. Procrastination	71	0.163 ^{NS}
4. Hope of Success	71	0.017 ^{NS}
5. Self-Esteem	71	-0.263*
6. Body Image	71	0.142 ^{NS}

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

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

^{NS} Not Significant

From Table 2, it can be observed that there is a significant relationship between Internet Addiction and the psychological correlates- Self-Handicapping Behavior and Self-Esteem. Therefore, the null hypotheses which state that there will be no significant relationship between Internet Addiction and the psychological correlates- Self-Handicapping Behavior and Self-Esteem are rejected. It can be also seen that there is no significant relationship between Internet Addiction and the psychological correlates- Procrastination, Hope of Success, and Body Image. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there will be no significant relationship between Internet Addiction and the psychological correlates- Procrastination, Hope of Success, and Body Image have failed to be rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study established a significant relationship between Internet Addiction and Self Handicapping behavior. The longer the time spent on the internet, the higher are the chances of indulging in Self-Handicapping Behavior. This finding is consistent with past literature. This may be because students use the internet to shield and distract themselves from the task at hand due to the fear of failure. They use the internet as an excuse to justify any potential failure. Research findings have shown that Internet Addiction adversely affects one's academic performance. Academic problems caused by Internet Addiction include a decline in study habits, a significant drop in grades and poor integration in extracurricular activities (Akhter, 2013).

There is no significant relationship between Internet Addiction and Procrastination. The internet is only one of the many methods people use to procrastinate. The participants of this study may not necessarily use the internet as a medium to procrastinate as there are multiple other activities, they may indulge in such as playing around, helping the family, or finding other different ways to delay the task.

No significant relationship was found between Internet Addiction and Hope of Success. This is a finding which is inconsistent with past literature. Pathological internet users exhibited significantly lower scores on "achievement ambition" and "perseverance/diligence". The results also revealed that adolescents with pathological internet use report a higher level of psychopathology and lower levels of achievement motivation and drive (Wartberg et al., 2011). Wartberg's study is contradictory to the findings of this paper. This may be because the sample group of this study does not show any pathological scores of Internet Addiction. The study also revealed that Internet Addiction and Self-Esteem have a significant relationship. This means that the more time they spend on the internet, the higher are the chances of them having low Self-Esteem. Adolescents use the internet as a coping style, as through the internet they can take on a different personality or social identity. Self-Esteem is a vital predictor of an individual's behavior and daily activities (Aydm & San, 2011). Hence, people compare their realistic offline selves to the idealized online versions of others, which can lead to the deterioration of their self-identity and Self-Esteem.

No significant relationship was established between Internet Addiction and Body Image. This may be due to body-positive content available on the internet that aims to challenge mainstream beauty ideals and encourage acceptance and appreciation of all body types (Cohen et al., 2019). Body positive content, blogs, and articles on the internet focus on cherishing and admiring all types of bodies. Through exposure to positive content, people may begin to love and appreciate their bodies and look beyond conventional beauty standards.

Students who are addicted to the internet might have behavioral and emotional issues. They may have issues with conduct, self-image, and concentration, and hence, they are frequently chastised by parents and instructors, and rarely receive approval from them. These characteristics may encourage these kids to utilize the Internet to vent their frustrations and get a sense of accomplishment and escape from reality. Parents and educators should pay more attention to regulating internet usage. Internet usage can also be monitored and reduced by replacing screen time with other hobbies and outdoor activities.

CONCLUSION

- Internet Addiction has a significant relationship with Self Esteem and Self Handicapping behavior.
- Internet Addiction has no significant influence on Procrastination, Hope of Success, and Body Image of adolescents.

Implications

Having understood the relationship of Internet Addiction with Self-Esteem and Self-Handicapping Behavior helps to comprehend the importance of curbing Internet Addiction in adolescents. This study provided possible rationales as to why adolescents may be addicted to the internet. Various plausible reasons as to why Internet Addiction may or may not have a negative psychological impact on adolescents have also been provided by studying different variables. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this study would spark more research and in-depth investigations of adolescent Internet Addiction.

Future Directions

This study can be expanded to adolescents of non-private schools and differently-abled children. This study can further be conducted among adolescents, in schools outside Chennai.

Limitations

Since these findings are procured from cross-sectional data, they must be reviewed with caution. Other unmeasured variables, such as participant mood or environmental factors, may have impacted their responses.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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