

## Impact of Internet Addiction on Perceived Stress and Emotional Regulation of Young Adults

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### ABSTRACT

This study looked into the connections between young individuals' emotional regulation, perceived stress, and internet addiction (IA). A sample of 151 participants aged 18-25 completed self-report questionnaires. The majority (54%) displayed mild internet addiction, with a slight male majority and a mix of educational backgrounds (high school completion and postgraduate studies). Interestingly, only 43% reported using the Internet primarily for work. Descriptive statistics showed moderate perceived stress and mild IA levels within the sample. Statistical analyses revealed significant gender differences in IA scores, with males exhibiting higher internet addiction than females. However, no significant relationships were found between IA, perceived stress, age, or the emotional regulation strategies of cognitive reappraisal and emotional suppression. Our hypotheses predicted higher IA in males (H1 - supported), lower perceived stress with higher IA (H2 - not supported), and lower emotional regulation with higher IA (H3 - partially supported). The findings suggest a need for further research to explore these relationships in more detail. Implications and future suggestions for research have been discussed.

**Keywords:** *Internet Addiction, Perceived Stress, Emotional Regulation*

### Internet Addiction

A problematic pattern of internet use is characterized by impaired control over internet use, leading to distress or functional impairment in daily life. Internet addiction is a new type of addiction that is fueled by Internet-connected devices. This addiction has several detrimental consequences. It is defined as excessive or poorly regulated obsessions, urges, or behaviours connected to Internet use that cause difficulties in real life.

### Perceived Stress

The cognitive appraisal of stressful situations and an individual's ability to cope with them Emotional Regulation.

The processes by which individuals manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in response to internal and external stimuli.

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### Young Adults

WHO defines 'youth' as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 and 'adolescents' as those between the ages of 10 and 19. However, "Young People" refers to anyone between the ages of 10 and 24.

### *Problem Statement*

The purpose of this study is to investigate the causal links between internet addiction, perceived stress, and emotional regulation issues in a cohort of young adults. The research will explore whether IA leads to increased stress and emotional dysregulation, or if stress and emotional difficulties contribute to the development of IA. The study will also look at moderating variables like age, gender, and particular kinds of internet addiction.

### *Significance of the Study*

The current study holds significant value in furthering our comprehension of the complex interplay between internet addiction (IA), perceived stress, and emotional regulation. While previous research suggests a correlation between these factors, the precise nature of this relationship remains unclear. This work intends to close this gap by using a rigorous technique to investigate the direction of causation and discover probable underlying processes. This comprehensive approach has the potential to yield more sustainable results and improve overall well-being for individuals struggling with Internet Addiction.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Berte, D. Z. et al. (2021) looked at the connection between Internet addiction and university students' perceived self-efficacy. In Palestine, a nation with one of the highest rates of online addiction, The goal of the current study is to ascertain if social media addiction and university-aged students' perceived self-efficacy are related. Perceived self-efficacy was found to be significantly correlated negatively with excessive and/or compulsive internet use behaviors. Perceived self-efficacy and internet addiction did not significantly differ according to academic level, gender, age, or subject of study.

Zhun Gong, Liyun Wang, and Haijiao Wang (2021) looked into the connection between Chinese college students' perceptions of stress and internet addiction. They examined the moderating effect of flow experience and the mediating effect of procrastination. In a 446-student study, they found that while flow decreased the relationship between stress and addiction, procrastination mediated it. These studies shed light on the ways in which students' internet use might be impacted by stress, procrastination, and online experiences.

Lutz Wartberg et colleagues. conducted the first study in 2021 to investigate the relationships between emotion management, procrastination, perceived stress, and problematic social media usage (PSMU) in children and adolescents. The study, which surveyed 1221 people aged 10 to 17, discovered strong associations between PSMU and lower age, difficulty with emotion management, procrastination, and felt stress. According to multivariable regression research, PSMU is connected with younger age, impulse control difficulties, trouble with goal-directed behaviour, procrastination, and greater perceived level stress. These results emphasize the need of treating procrastination, emotional control deficits, and stress in young people's PSMU preventative measures.

Juganu Bharti et al. carried out a cross-sectional study in 2021 on addiction of internet, stress, & strategies of coping between Indian high school & college going students. Male students in particular were more prone to become Internet addicts than younger students.

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Additionally, those who used inadequate stress management techniques were more vulnerable. A semi-structured questionnaire comprising the Internet Addiction Test (IAT), the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-4), and a coping skills questionnaire was used to survey the participants. The findings showed that respondents under the age of 20 had a higher prevalence of internet addiction (41%), with men showing a higher rate of addiction (71.1%) than women (50.9%). There were notable correlations ( $p < 0.05$ ) found between internet addiction and sociodemographic variables such as family income and gender. This shows that teaching students effective coping mechanisms and stress management techniques may be crucial to lowering internet addiction in pupils.

In a recent study, Gioia et al. (2021) reviewed literature from the preceding ten years about the likelihood of social media or internet abuse among young individuals who experience emotional dysregulation. The study found that there was a particularly substantial correlation for boys. The study indicates that young individuals who have stable family dynamics and strong social support are less likely to struggle with this issue.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### *Aim*

To study the links between internet addiction, perceived stress, and emotional control in young adults.

#### *Hypotheses*

- Males will have higher internet addiction than females
- Young adults with increased internet addiction will have higher perceived stress.
- Young adults with increased internet addiction will have lower emotional regulation.

#### *Sample details:*

##### **Sample location & size**

The sample had 150 participants. The responses were collected through a survey and were distributed around the university campus and nearby places such as Noida, Delhi and Gurugram.

##### **Sampling method**

Probability sampling is a sampling technique that picks samples from a larger population using a probability theory-based methodology. To be considered a probability sample, a participant must be selected at random.

#### *Tools used*

- Consent form
- Demographic details
- IAT (Internet Addiction Test)
- PSS (Perceived Stress Scale)
- Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)

### **METHOD**

Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the data, and inferential statistics such as regression analysis will be employed to examine the relationships between variables.

## Statistical Analysis

SPSS version 26 will be used to conduct descriptive statistics, t-test and regression analysis

## RESULTS

### *T-test of Analysis*

T-tests are statistical procedures for comparing two groups' means and evaluating whether the observed difference is due to chance or a real effect.

*Table 1: t-test for Gender and Internet Addiction*

Gender		t-value	Df	Sig.
Female	Internet	35.79	44	0.01
Male	Addiction	53.23	57	0.01
Prefer not to say		45.69	47	0.01

### *Regression Test of Analysis*

A statistical technique for simulating the relationship between a dependent variable (predicted) and one or more independent variables (predictors) is regression analysis.

*Table 2: Regression Analysis for Internet Addiction, Perceived Stress and Emotional Regulation Strategies*

Particulars	T	F	Df	Sig.
Perceived Stress	-0.83	0.68		0.04
Cognitive Reappraisal	0.71	0.51	149	0.04
Emotional Suppression	-0.33	0.11		0.74

## DISCUSSION

This study took a gander at the connections between web habit (IA), saw pressure, and profound guideline systems in an example of 151 individuals matured 18 to 25. Normalized polls were utilized in the review, including the Web Dependence Test (IAT) to survey IA, the Apparent Pressure Scale (PSS) to quantify apparent feelings of anxiety, and the Close to home Guideline Survey (ERQ) to evaluate profound guideline systems. The review looked to examine the conceivable effect of IA on pressure and close to home guideline, as well as any fundamental components that might add to this dynamic.

### **H1 - Males will have higher levels of internet addiction than females.**

In the results, it was seen that the t-value for men was higher than that of the females (t-value: 53.2 and 35.7 respectively, both significant at 0.01 level) indicating that men had a higher internet addiction than females. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted: men are more addicted to the internet than women.

### **H2 - Young adults with increased internet addiction will have higher perceived stress.**

Table 2 in the results section indicates that there is a positive correlation between perceived stress and internet addiction. This suggests that increased internet addiction might result in greater levels of felt stress. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted: persons with increasing internet addiction have higher levels of perceived stress.

### **H3 - Young adults with increased internet addiction will have lower emotional regulation.**

In Table 2, regression analysis was done for internet addiction, perceived stress and emotional regulation strategies. Out of the two strategies, i.e. cognitive reappraisal and emotional suppression, it was found that cognitive reappraisal was positively related to internet addiction. IA did not predict changes in issues with emotion control. Thus, the null hypothesis was partially supported.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study investigated how internet addiction (IA) relates to perceived stress and emotional regulation in 151 young adults (18-25 years old). Questionnaires assessed IA severity, perceived stress levels, and emotional regulation strategies (cognitive reappraisal and emotional suppression). While males exhibited higher IA than females (supporting hypothesis H1), there was null association that is significant among IA & perceived stress (hypothesis H2 not supported). Interestingly, none of the emotional regulation strategies showed a significant relationship with IA (partial support for hypothesis H3). These findings suggest a need for further research to explore the complex interplay between IA, stress, emotional regulation, and specific online activities.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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