

## A Study on Internet Dependency and its Impact on Loneliness among College Students

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### ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is to examine the impact of internet dependency on loneliness among college students. A sample of 300 college students was selected by applying selective sampling, consisting of 150 males and 150 females from Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. “Compulsive Internet Use Scale” and the “Differential Loneliness Scale” were used as data collection instruments. The findings showed that there is a link between loneliness and excessive usage of the internet. Internet dependency has a significant influence on loneliness and this indicates that the college students who spend majority of their time on the internet feel greater amount of loneliness. These results were discussed and accordingly some conclusions were made through this study.

**Keywords:** *Internet dependency, Loneliness, Compulsive, Psychological Well Being, Social Connection*

In today’s time, the people are very much dependent on the internet. Though internet has numerous favorable advantages, but it also has several negative consequences as well. A number of studies have shown that the compulsive usage of the internet causes problems such as anxiety, melancholy and other psychological issues. Feelings of emptiness leads to a decline in the emotional support in the family, and the people with such feelings avoid accountability to the family members. If we talk about the teenagers and adults studying in colleges and universities, their grades have suffered due to their compulsive usage of the internet. Such individuals generally remain absent from the class, and instead they spend most of their time conversing on the internet.

According to (Widyanto and Griffiths, 2006), the internet is an exciting new medium that is quickly becoming a vital component of the daily life all around the globe. For the transmission of the information, academic study, entertainment, communication and business; internet is a medium which is widely accepted (Widyanto and Griffiths, 2006; Douglas et al., 2009).

Although the positive aspects of the internet have been widely appreciated, but there is a growing amount of research on the negative consequences of its excessive and diseased usage (Beard, 2005; Frangos and Frangos, 2009). Excessive and improper internet usage,

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according to some research, leads to withdrawal from friends and family, as well as behavioral or personal troubles. (Yellowlees and Marks, 2007; Kim et al., 2005; Amiel and Sargent, 2004; Nie and Erbring, 2002). Internet is the perfect word to describe adolescents in today's time. This is understandable considering how easily this group of teenagers is pulled to media. There was a study which found that 90.6 percent of teenagers use the internet, this figure is much higher when compared to the percentage among those users who are in their 30s. According to the research study done by The Korea Network Information Center (KNIC), the students studying in college are becoming more regular users of the internet. (Korea Network Information Center, 2002).

Adolescents are frequently exposed to technology, despite their incapacity to judge its positive and negative aspects. The media reports about the growing negative implications of internet usage, easy access to pornography and even criminal activity have caused the parents to fear. One of the key causes of this addiction is a desire for social support, companionship, and joy, which causes interactional, occupational, family, and marriage issues (Ridings and Gefen 2004). Feeling lonely is an unsettling experience of being different from others, which may result into a number of behavioral problems such as sadness, anger, despair and isolation. Loneliness, according to Perlman (2004), is a psychiatric disease characterized by a qualitative and quantitative absence of social relationships. A person feels lonely at any age when he does not experience enough intimacy or enthusiasm in his relationships. According to Young and Rodgers (1998), Loneliness is linked to a reduction in real-life social contacts as a result of the high internet usage. Internet usage diminishes family and local interactions (Kraut et al., 1998). The internet is synonymous with getting away from the real life. Sanders and others (2000) found that, the more youth used the internet, the greater despair and social estrangement they experienced. According to Anderson (2001), in order to avoid dealing with real life difficulties and feelings such as boredom, helplessness, concern and sorrow people use the internet. Because of the internet's relevance nowadays, it is vital to work on it.

Adolescents who have grown up with cell phones are particularly sensitive to its harmful repercussions. Loneliness, according to research, plays a key part in internet addiction. There are three related theories: loneliness results into internet addiction, internet addiction results into loneliness, and there happens an interaction between both loneliness and internet addiction. People having the first point of view believe that prolonged internet use isolates internet users from the actual world (Demir and Kutlu, 2016). At the cost of real-life encounters, such users construct a hypocritical and fragile network of links. Hence, loneliness is a result of excessive internet usage. Excessive internet use promotes loneliness and despair while lowering the quantity of social connections and psychological well-being (Kraut et al., 2002).

People experiencing loneliness are more likely to turn to the internet (Demir and Kutlu, 2016; Sharifpoor et al., 2017). Excessive internet use occurs in response of the internet's capacity to provide a bigger social network and therefore a variety of online communication methods. Lonely individuals are lured to internet-enabled interactive social activities that provide a sense of connection, camaraderie, and communication. This position is consistent with Shapira and others (2000) according to which too much time is spent online by the lonely people. Scholars like Koyuncu et al., 2014, Tian et al., 2017 have supported the third point of view. They contend that bidirectional connections exist between loneliness and

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internet addiction, with internet addiction and loneliness favorably impacting one another over time.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between internet addiction and loneliness. The study includes 26 papers with a total sample size of 16496 participants. Internet addiction and loneliness were shown to have a somewhat favorable relationship. Individuals with internet addiction reported considerably increased levels of loneliness. According to the findings of this meta-analysis, its need closer attention to the early indications of loneliness in people with internet addiction (Saadati et al., 2021).

#### *Internet Dependency among College Students*

College students may be influenced by internet addiction due to psychological and environmental aspects in their life (Hall and Parsons, 2001). Because college students may confront a range of life issues or problems such as satisfying their needs such as housing, nutrition, health, participation in a social group, self-confidence, adapting to and creating intimate connections with their surroundings (Ceyhan, 2011). Furthermore, in terms of their everyday life, student schedules give them with a lot of flexibility and free time, allowing them to spend lengthy periods of time on various internet apps. Furthermore, students have direct internet connectivity in their dorms, libraries, and computer laboratories (Kandell, 1998).

#### *Loneliness, College Students and Internet Dependency*

Events that might influence a student, such as leaving family and friends for college, the breaking up of a love relationship, troubles with friends and roommates, and difficulty with academics, can create a gap between real and desired interpersonal interactions, leading to loneliness (Cutrona, 1984). In keeping with this viewpoint, Weiss (1973) asserted that loneliness is caused by the absence of a certain set of connections that are plainly required. It means that there may be a lack of close relationships, friendships, or other social ties. Loneliness is typically seen as phenomena distinct from being alone, as well as an unexplainable dread, trouble, or hopelessness that might be observed at times. Similarly, loneliness is expressed as an unwanted and unpleasant experience accompanied by feelings to be distinctive as well as anxiety, anger, and sadness (Russell et al., 1980) it appears to be more intense in adolescence and young adulthood, but it exists as a feeling which can be seen in almost every period of human life. Loneliness appears to be more widespread among college students, according to McWhirter (1990). According to McWhirter's research (1990), an estimated 30% of college students identify loneliness as an issue. In the survey including the college freshman, during the first two weeks of the school about 75% reported feeling lonely, with 47% experiencing moderate to severe loneliness. After 7 months, 25% of those polled still reported feelings of loneliness (Cutrona, 1984). Spending long hours on the internet became one of the defensive mechanisms developed to deal with constant loneliness, such as constantly and excessively eating, purchasing things senselessly and continuously, continuously watching TV without making a choice, and continuously watching storefronts without purpose (Cutrona, 1984).

The numerous factors which make the internet appealing, include being able to establish relationships that would not be possible in real life, being able to communicate risk free with other people, freely expressing one's thoughts and feelings while masking, showing one's identity how one wants to be seen, hiding one's true identity, and being able to contact whomever one wishes (King et al., 1996). It is more likely for the lonely people to use the

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internet (Yellowlees and Marks 2007; Young and Rodgers 1998), and as a result such people feel that they are able to alleviate their loneliness by establishing social connections (Ando and Sakamoto, 2008; Sum et al., 2008). The research finding have also revealed that (Kelleci and Nal, 2010), loneliness is a key factor of internet addiction.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### *Sample and Data Collection*

The present study sample 300 was selected from college students. The effective sampling consisted of 150 males and 150 females. The sample was collected from different colleges of Ghaziabad city.

#### *Tools Used*

Two measures were used in this study,

- 1. Compulsive Internet Use Scale:** As per Meerkerk and others, (2009), the Compulsive Internet Use Scale (CIUS) was originally devised to measure pathological internet use. This scale is made up of 14 items with a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 0 =‘never’ upto 4 =‘very often’). Reliability: Cronbach’s alpha = .89.
- 2. Different Loneliness Scale:** Different Loneliness Scale (DLS, Schmidt and Scrmat, 1983) a brief student version aimed to determine one's personal approach to loneliness as well as one's approach to social segregation. The measure assesses loneliness in four types of relationships: (1) romantic-sexual relationships (R/S), (2) friendships (Fr), (3) family relationships (Fam), and (4) interactions with bigger groups (Gr). The scale, in particular, assesses the gap between the sort of connection one aspires to have and the type of relationship one presently has. It is a four-dimensional 20-item scale created specifically for kids (young adults). The scale's reliability is strong; with Kuder-Richardson-20 coefficients ranging from.90 to.92 and test-retest coefficients ranging from.85 to.97.

#### *Procedure*

Once the submission of the written consent was done, the participants were requested to fill the form which included the personal information about the participants. The Compulsive internet use scale was used in order to study about the internet dependency and behavioral addiction. Also, the Differential Loneliness Scale was used to study the subjective emotions of loneliness. All two measures were scored according to the scoring procedures outlined in the questionnaires.

### RESULT

Table 1.1 shows the mean and SD of the variables under discussion. It is also clear from the table that mean scores of internet dependency comes under moderate range, whereas loneliness is low in range.

*Table 1.1 Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables*

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internet Addiction	300	23.17	9.177
Loneliness	300	7.76	2.72

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**Table 1.2 Pearson's Correlations among Internet Addiction, Loneliness, Self Esteem and Life Satisfaction of College Students**

	<b>Internet Addiction</b>	<b>Loneliness</b>	<b>Self Esteem</b>	<b>Satisfaction with Life</b>
Internet Addiction				
Loneliness	.127*			

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level*

### **Analysis**

As shown in Table 1.2. Loneliness substantially corresponds to the internet dependency at the .05 level, while internet addiction scores are strongly and adversely associated to self-esteem at the .01 level. It indicates that the college students, who spend majority of their time on the internet, feel a greater amount of loneliness.

## **DISCUSSION**

The study sought to evaluate the internet dependency's impact on loneliness among college students. According to the hypothesis, internet dependency causes significant levels of loneliness among college students. In tables 1.1 and 1.2, it is indicated that the dependency and the addiction to the internet considerably results into loneliness. Loneliness was the most crucial factor that influences addiction to the internet. Many researchers have confirmed these findings (Ando and Sakamoto, 2008). In some of the findings, it has been found that the lonely people are more likely to excessively use the internet. Also, in this study a link has been found between loneliness and excessive usage of the internet. Furthermore, Self-esteem was also shown to impact the addiction to the internet in this study, a conclusion similar to that of Aydm and San (2011). Individuals with poor self-esteem are more likely to show the signs of internet addiction (Kim and Davis, 2009), and those with low self-esteem also spend majority of their time on the internet (Armstrong, Phillips and Saling, 2000; Douglas et al., 2009). Bozoglan et al., 2013 discovered that the giving time on the internet has its impact on loneliness and low satisfaction of life.

Many people use the internet to achieve further in their careers or for the betterment of their education. It is very vital to understand the distinction between the intensive internet usage and typical use of the internet, for which simple measurements like the amount of time utilized on the internet in a particular period have been observed. The practice of compulsions for the usage of the internet is the technique of distinguishing the general from problematic internet usage. When a family member becomes an internet addict and begins to spend more amount of his/her time on using the internet than with their family, it is assumed that the internet has gained control of their loved ones. It was discovered a favorable association between the problematic use of the internet and the happiness of life in research involving college students. This is in contrast to previous research in which internet use was shown to be adversely associated with life satisfaction; in other words, internet dependency or addiction has a negative impact on the satisfaction of life (Akin, 2012; Leung and Lee, 2004). It has been discovered by Kraut et al., 1998 and Moody (2001) that persons who were hooked to the internet were less happy or satisfied with their lives.

Thus, according to the current study, those who have a great amount of loneliness and a low level of self-esteem, face difficulty in the time management and the management of their social life. Such people also tend to ignore their health problems. In terms of the connection between life satisfaction and addiction to the internet, life satisfaction was solely connected

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with interpersonal and physical difficulties, as well as loneliness and self-esteem. As a consequence, impact of internet addiction was strongly there on loneliness among college students. Self-esteem and life satisfaction were shown to be connected to the time management issues, along with the interpersonal and health issues.

### CONCLUSION

The research findings of this study convey that there is a considerable positive association between internet dependency and loneliness. As a result, in order to prevent the usage of internet by the college students and its bad consequences in other aspects of life, a thorough monitoring on the amount of behavioral reliance of students on the internet is required.

### Recommendations

- Keep a track of internet usage: College students must restrict themselves and keep a track of their internet usage. Set usage time limitations. They must try to keep their internet sessions as brief as possible. On their PC and phone, they should use external shutdown devices. They must utilize applications that can limit their online time.
- Develop additional interests: The college students must participate in college clubs and organizations. They should take up activities such as exercises, go to events and meet new people. Their participation in such activities can help boost their brain's dopamine levels.
- Take proper care of self: The college students must take proper care of their selves. They should eat regularly and get enough sleep. They must be aware of their moods and habits which can cause them to use the internet. The occurrence of such things must be avoided by the students as far as possible.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

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