

## The Effect of Insecurity and Inferiority Feeling on Internet Addiction among Adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

In contemporary society, Internet addiction is a growing concern among adolescents with various factors contributing to its emergence and prevalence. The Present study focuses on understanding the effect of insecurity and inferiority feeling on Internet addiction among adolescents from age 11 to 19 years. The study comprised of 202 participants (99= females, 101= males, and 2 others) recruited from snowball sampling method to get a vast sample ranging from different socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and states. Insecurity and inferiority questionnaires (Dr. G.C. Pati), and Internet addiction scale (Dr. Kimberly young, 1998) were administered. To formulate inferences from the data collected multiple regression analysis were done to unveil the effect of insecurity feeling and inferiority feeling on internet addiction. Results suggested a significant effect of insecurity and inferiority on internet addiction with insecurity being a slightly better predictor. Positive correlation was found between insecurity and inferiority feeling among adolescents.

**Keywords:** *Internet Addiction, Adolescents, Insecurity, Inferiority, Psychological Factors*

In recent times when there has been increasing engagement of adolescents on social media and general internet use. Do you think these feelings could increase their chances of relying on internet for various reasons, such as seeking validation or maintaining their self-esteem? As stated by WHO, “adolescence is the phase of life between childhood and adulthood, from ages 10 to 19.” It is one of the unique stages of human development marked by major physical, emotional, cognitive, and psychosocial changes. At this stage, they are exposed to various risk factors, such as tobacco, alcohol consumption, peer pressure to engage in risky behaviours, and psychological stressors. Contemporaneously, the internet emerges as a formidable force, offering a vast geography for connection, inquisition, and information access. Yet, this digital expansion introduces its own set of challenges, including cyberbullying, social comparison, and exposure to potentially noxious content.

Adolescent insecurity is the constant sense of instability, insecurity, and lack of confidence that many people go through in their early adolescence. It encompasses social, emotional, and educational dimensions. Their mental health, interpersonal relationships, and educational outcomes can be significantly impacted by this pervasive unease. To foster

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positive growth and provide adequate support during this crucial developmental stage, it is crucial to recognize the multifaceted nature of teenage insecurity.

Adolescence, a transformative phase characterized by physical, emotional, and psychological upheavals, is often fraught with the nuanced complexities of inferiority. Inferiority complex emerges from individuals' perception of inadequacy in comparison to others. Acknowledging the long-term consequences of unresolved inferiority feelings in adolescents underlines the importance of constructing early interventions to mitigate the potential impact on adult wellbeing. The concept of internet addiction, initially termed as "dependence" by Goldberg (1992), is defined by American Psychological Association (Caplan, 2002), as a two-month period during which the use of the internet results in functional difficulties and an unpleasant interior mood. Through examination it is emphasized the importance to understand the underlying psychological vulnerabilities that could lead to internet addiction. Liu, et al. (2021) Studied the relationship between teenage problematic internet usage (PIU) and perceived school climate, they also examined the psychological insecurity and negative peer association as mediators, based on two functions of perceived school atmosphere. The results suggested that PIU is associated with perceived school climate, with psychological insecurity and negative peer affiliation acting as independent mediators. To understand the impact of insecurity and inferiority on adjustment among university students, Jaiswal (2023) conducted a study showing a negative association between insecurity and adjustment, as well as a negative association between inferiority and adjustment. To understand the sources of psychological vulnerabilities like insecurity and inferiority in adolescents O'Hara, et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between interparental conflict and adolescent emotional security across different family structures. Results revealed that different types of family structures (married vs. divorced/separated) were associated with interparental conflict affecting emotional security (family, interparental, parent-child). Studies like these underlines the importance of addressing emotional security while formulating youth mental health interventions. In summary, this study will bridge the gaps from prior research addressing the stated issue by understanding the relationship between insecurity and inferiority feeling in adolescents and their impact on internet addiction among adolescents.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### ***Statement of the problem:***

To study the effect of insecurity and inferiority feeling on internet addiction among Adolescents.

#### ***Variables***

- **Independent variables:** insecurity, inferiority
- **Dependent variable:** internet addiction

#### ***Objectives***

- To measure the level of inferiority among adolescents using INF questionnaire by Dr. G. C. Pati
- To measure the level of insecurity among adolescents using INS questionnaire by Dr. G.C. Pati
- To investigate the correlation between the feeling of inferiority and insecurity among adolescents.

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- To examine the effect of feeling of inferiority and insecurity on internet addiction among adolescents.
- To identify the prevalence of internet addiction among teenagers in Indian population using internet addiction scale by Kimberly young.
- To provide recommendations for interventions aiming to address feelings of inferiority and insecurity in adolescents' population to prevent or reduce internet addiction.

### ***Hypothesis:***

- There is no significant relationship between feeling of insecurity and inferiority among adolescents of age 11-19 years.
- There is a significant relationship between feeling of insecurity and inferiority among adolescents of age 11-19 years.
- There is no significant effect of feeling of insecurity and inferiority on internet addiction among adolescents of age 11 to 19 years.
- There is a significant effect of feeling of insecurity and inferiority on internet addiction among adolescents of age 11-19 years.

### ***Sample:***

The study employs the sample of adolescents of age range 11- 19 years that were recruited through snowball sampling method. The total number of participants includes 202 (99 females, 101 males, 2 others).

### ***Research design:***

Study employs correlational and multiple regression analysis to understand the relationship between insecurity and inferiority and its effect on Internet addiction.

### ***Tools:***

- Insecurity questionnaire by Dr. G.C. Pati (1976) was used to measure insecurity. It is a 20- item scale. In insecurity questionnaire questions 2,6 and 15 are scored according to the schedule for negative answers only. Other questions are scored for positive answers. The validity and test- retest reliability for insecurity questionnaire is .713 and .936 respectively.
- Inferiority questionnaire by Dr. G.C. Pati (1976) was used to measure inferiority. It is a 20- item scale. Questions 1,3,5,6 &7 in inferiority questionnaire are scored to the negative answers only. Other questions are scored for positive answers. The validity and test- retest reliability for inferiority questionnaire is .717 and .920 respectively.
- Internet addiction scale Developed by Dr. Kimberly young in (1998). It is a five-point rating scale which consist of 20 items and the participants are asked to respond them by selecting any one option from number one to five.

### ***Statistical analysis:***

Multiple regression analysis was used examine the quantitative data collected from all the three scales (Insecurity and inferiority questionnaires, and Internet addiction scale).

**RESULTS**

*Table 4.1 descriptive statistics for insecurity, inferiority, and internet addiction*

VARIABLE	N	MEAN	SD
Insecurity	202	46.35	20.7
Inferiority	202	53.73	17.87
Internet addiction	202	40.03	16.09

Note: Results from descriptive statistics reveal the mean and standard deviation in sample with insecurity and inferiority as (independent variables) and internet addiction as (dependent variable).

*Table 4.2 correlation matrix of insecurity questionnaire and inferiority questionnaire among adolescents.*

VARIABLE	insecurity	inferiority
Insecurity		.627***
inferiority	-	

Note: These findings show a strong positive correlation between insecurity (variable A) and inferiority (variable B) with ( $r=.627, p<.01$ ).

*Table 4.3 model summary of regression analysis*

MODEL	R	Adjusted R SQ.	SE
1	.394 <sup>a</sup>	.147	14.859

Note: predictors (constant), inferiority and insecurity

R square (.156) states the overall prediction of model as predictor for dependent variable (internet addiction). Whereas adjusted r- square= .147 (table 4.3), penalizes the addition of unnecessary variables and hence, considered more accurate fit as a prediction value.

*Table 4.4 ANOVA results for regression model*

MODEL	SUM OF SQ.	DF	MEAN SQ.	F	SIGNIFICANCE
Regression	8094.871	2	4047.436	18.330	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	43940.950	191	220.809	-	-
Total	52035.822	202	-	-	-

Note: significant at  $p < .05$

The present (table 4.4) signifies the outcome of ANOVA analysis assessing the relationship between dependent variable= internet addiction, constant= insecurity and inferiority. The regression SS is (8094.871) and total SS is (52035.822) which means the regression model explains about 8094.871/52035.822 variability in datasheet. Residual SS is the total variation on the independent variables (insecurity and inferiority) that is left unexplained by regression model. The significance level of (.000b) shows a strong significant relationship between independent variable (constant), insecurity and inferiority and dependent variable: internet addiction.

*Table 4.5 results of multiple linear regression with insecurity and inferiority as predictors of internet addiction among adolescents.*

VARIABLE	STANDARDISED COEFFICIENTS (BETA)	t	P
Insecurity	.264	3.152	.002
Inferiority	.171	2.050	.042

Note: constant SE= 3.354, dependent variable= internet addiction

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The beta coefficient value of (.264), and (.171) from (table 4.5), which is a positive beta value indicating that increase in predictors variables (insecurity, inferiority) are associated with an increase in the dependent variable (internet addiction). The variable with higher beta values i.e. (.264) indicates as slightly better predictor for internet addiction. ( $P = .002$ ) for insecurity and ( $p = .042$ ) for inferiority, ( $p < .05$ ) hence, insecurity and inferiority both show a significant relationship with internet addiction.

### DISCUSSION

The aim of the study is to examine the effect of insecurity and inferiority feeling on internet addiction among Adolescents aged from 11-19 years, utilizing INS questionnaire and INF questionnaire by Dr. G.C. Pati and internet addiction scale by Dr. Kimberly young. As discussed above, adolescence is a period of growth and development where they can scuffle from different negative feeling including feelings of inferiority and insecurity. Therefore, we sought to understand the intricate relationship between these variables and their significant contributions in leading to internet addiction among teenagers in this digital era. There has been prior research for instance, (Jaiswal) in 2023 conducted research to investigate the impact of inferiority and insecurity on academic achievement in 60 college students where 10 percent had severe inferiority and 5 percent had severe insecurity feeling and showcased a negative correlation ( $r = -0.40$ ) between feeling inferiority and adjustment, as well as a negative correlation ( $r = -0.66$ ) between feeling insecure and adjustment.

In 2021, (Liu) Examining the mediating role of school climate and psychological insecurity on problematic internet use. Results of the study revealed students those who evaluate their school climate are more psychologically secure and in turn lowering the risk for problematic internet use and influences their peer relationships. Research like these show the growing prevalence of internet addiction among teenagers and how psychological factors like insecurity and inferiority impact their overall development.

Insecurity holds various dimensions such as social security, psychological security and educational security feeling that have shown to have short term as well as long term impact on children. Feeling of insecurity can disrupt adolescent emotional integration. There are various causal factors in contributing this feeling such as family dynamics, social media, peer influence, stress, academic pressure etc. Studies indicate that transactional relationship between interparental conflict, emotional insecurity and other psychological problems among children and adolescents. Research conducted on 232 families with multiple methods show bio directionality relationship between interparental and child functioning, and child psychological problems predicted increased interparental issues in adolescence, and with greater insecurity in adolescence. (Davies, et al. 2016).

Feeling of inferiority is complex phenomenon of interpersonal, and societal factors, intrapersonal, all of which are essential in determining how they view themselves and if nor not, they are able to effectively handle their emotions. Notably, there is a positive correlation between inferiority complex in adolescents and frustration resulting in aggression in adolescents. When 100 pre-college students were studied using anova and regression analysis it revealed positive correlation with frustration as whole ( $r = 0.511$ ), aggression ( $r = .516$ ). it was also shown a two-way relationship showing frustration as a predictor for inferiority complex. (Kenchappanavar, 2012).

From table 4.1 it can be inferred that sample size for the present study is 202 (99 = females; 101 males; and 2 others) with mean = 46.35 and standard deviation = 20.7 for feeling of

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insecurity (variable A), mean = 53.7 and standard deviation = 17.87 for feeling of inferiority (variable B) and mean = 40.03 and standard deviation = 16.09 for internet addiction (variable C) among adolescents.

### **“There is a significant relationship between feeling of insecurity and inferiority among adolescents”.**

First alternative hypothesis stating that “there is significant relationship between feeling of insecurity and inferiority among adolescents of age 11-19 years.” Was supported. The results of correlational analysis (table no. 4.2) revealed a positive correlation between feeling of insecurity (variable A) and feeling of inferiority (variable B) with correlation coefficient of .627 which at the  $p < 0.01$  level indicates a strong positive link. Also supported by studies done to investigate whether inferiority feelings act as a mediator between insecure attachment and loneliness, as well as the extent to which insecure attachment and inferiority feelings predict the experience of loneliness. A total of 422 randomly selected individuals were included in the study. The results show insecure attachment and inferiority complex significantly impacting loneliness and that inferiority can function as a partial mediator between the two. (Akdoğan, 2017).

### **“There is a significant effect of feeling of insecurity and inferiority on internet addiction among adolescents of age 11-19 years”.**

Alternative Hypothesis number two stating that “significant effect of feeling of insecurity and inferiority on internet addiction among adolescents of age 11-19 years.” Is accurate with insecurity as slightly better predictor of internet addiction. The results of (table no. 4.3) showcasing through ( $p = .002$ ) for insecurity, and ( $p = .042$ ) for inferiority as predictors for internet addiction. (maghfiroh, 2020), studied the psychological dynamic processes of teenagers who are addicted to Internet. Thematic analysis was conducted, finding out that Internet usage satisfies the need for affiliation as well as the curiosity of outside world. Adolescents struggled to cut down on their Internet usage despite being bored from it. Findings like these show the significant need in research background to investigate on understanding the psychological factors behind Internet addiction that has been a growing concern around the adolescence age, with being the crucial face for further development of feelings of security and self-esteem in young adults. Although, Internet addiction also includes various other psychological factors and family dynamics that could impact its usage.

In summary, through the interpretation of results and supporting research it can be concluded the prevailing psychological factors behind Internet addiction and the increasing prevalence of Internet addiction in Indian adolescents. However, the limitations of the study must be considered for future research in contributing holistic mental health.

## **CONCLUSION**

In digital era it is critical to treat the psychological vulnerabilities that facilitate emergence and persistence of Internet addiction, as well as the symptoms that accompany them, is presented. The aim of the present study is in acknowledging the effect of challenging feelings of inferiority and insecurity on Internet addiction. It lays the groundwork for possible tailored solutions that can be utilised for strengthening the scent resilience and overall mental health. It promotes constructive improvement and growth at early age.

Research indicates a positive correlation between the feeling of inferiority and insecurity through Pearson correlation method as well as through the utilisation of multiple regression

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model there has been positively established effect of feeling of inferiority and insecurity on Internet addiction with insecurity being a slightly better predictor of dependent variable (internet addiction).

These findings help us to understand the underlying psychological factors of increasing Internet usage in teenagers and the emotional difficulties that they have to go through that form these feelings such as family dynamics, school environment, peer pressure, physiological changes, etc.

In conclusion it is important to address the psychological vulnerabilities of children at early age with the intention of limiting these difficulties and formulating better growth environment at home as well as in social world. In a way that we are able to resist the growing Internet usage as a unhealthy way of coping with these feelings and vice-versa.

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### Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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