

Understanding How Emotional Intelligence Can Influence in Problematic Internet Usage Amongst Young Adults in Metropolitan Cities

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ABSTRACT

This study Understanding how Emotional Intelligence can influence in Problematic internet usage amongst Young Adults. A sample of 146 aged 18 to 30 both male and female participants was surveyed using a Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale-10 (BEIS-10) and Problematic Internet Usage Questionnaire-9 (PIUQ-9). Analysis using Pearson correlation revealed a statistically significant highly negative relationship ($r = -0.929$, $p < 0.001$, $df = 144$) between Emotional intelligence and Problematic Internet Usage. That is if the person is highly emotional intelligent then they will have lesser issues in managing their time online. The finding highlights the need for activities that require activities to promote self-awareness and emotion regulation and also avoid obsession of internet, stop neglecting day to day activities and have control on use of internet.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Problematic Internet Usage, Metropolitan city, Young Adults, Indian population*

They feel that emotional intelligence is just more important, if not even more so than traditional intelligence, when it comes to success in life, whereas others view it as an acquired and developed ability to perceive, analyze, and regulate emotions in oneself and others. The concept developed this foundation with a 1990 academic article by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer, defining emotional intelligence as 'the ability to monitor one's and others' feelings, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions' (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Emotional intelligence thus emerged as a capacity for the deployment of emotional information for sound decision-making.

Aside from this seminal work, the concept of EI gained even much more credibility due to a book published by Daniel Goleman in 1995, where he expanded on the idea of emotional awareness with how it influences our relationships and how we feel throughout each day. He specifies emotional intelligence as a crucial skill that leads to personal or professional growth. This skill, he lists, includes the ability to recognize emotions and temper them with action. "Anyone can become angry, that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the

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right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way, this is not easy," Goleman explains (Goleman, 1995). This quote is an encapsulation of emotional intelligence and the complexities surrounding it. The structure described by Goleman contains five defining traits to emotional intelligence. Self-awareness: the ability to recognize and understand their own emotions and how one's emotions, thoughts, and actions affect other people. Self-regulation: the ability to be in control of one's feelings in a healthy manner while also adapting accordingly. Motivation: the ability to harness emotions to pursue energy and persistence with specific goals in life. Empathy: the ability to understand the feelings of another and being able to make and maintain the desired relationships. Social skills, the ability to use emotional understanding.

Problematic Internet Use refers to excessive online activity with resulting distress or interference in personal relationships, occupational well-being, and other life areas, which is characterized by the inability to control internet use, neglecting offline activities deemed important, a situation meriting concern regarding the potential or actual habit use of a given medium (Young, 1998). It can take such forms as pathological gaming, social network use, or browsing, whereby a person can thus entirely devote time to the internet at the expense of their daily commitments (Meerkerk et al., 2009).

People with PIU might preoccupy their thoughts with online activities, using the internet as a form of coping for stress or negative emotions. Withdrawal symptoms can arise when internet access is limited or absent, such as in cases of irritability or anxiousness (Young, 1998). Over time, PIU may erode social relationships because individuals now come to value online interactions more than face-to-face communication, as this may isolate the individual socially (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). In turn, this disorder was associated with depression, anxiety, and disturbances in sleep (Zhou et al., 2017).

Researchers have found that PIU shares overlapping characteristics with other forms of behavioral addiction, with individuals who exhibit PIU engaging in and compulsively act on the behavior despite all the negative consequences (Griffiths, 2010). PIU, like other addictions, can range from mild to severe and, in the most extreme cases, involve the need for clinical intervention (Young, 1998).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study was conducted by (Vihari et al., 2024). This study explores the effects that mindfulness could exert on online impulse buying with problematic internet use as a potential mediator and emotional intelligence as a moderator. Online impulse buying can be described as impulsive for a haphazard array of negative results that can at times be incorporated with guilt, financial distress, and nonetheless the increase in returns for e-commerce firms. The theory on self-regulation has shown that mindfulness has a negative relationship with online impulsive buying since mindfulness creates more changes in self-regulation. Thus, PIU serves as a mediator in the connection between mindfulness and online impulse buying-meaning that higher levels of Internet use may further trigger impulsive buying. It has been found in the study that emotional intelligence is a moderator in that it weakens the influence of PIU on impulsive buying by lowering its effect.

Data were obtained from 598 people from a broad swath of service-based industries, with multiple regression and moderated mediation analyses of the final data performed through SPSS and AMOS. Key insights from this research emphasize the importance of the role of

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mindfulness as a deterrent to undesirable online purchases while providing further evidence of the paramount importance ascribed to emotional intelligence for buffering the impact. The proposed incorporation of emotion regulation and emotional factors into self-regulation theory gives a wide body of support for marketers to boost mindfulness and emotional intelligence development in consumers to mitigate impulsive buying tendencies and thereby reduce return rates and dissatisfaction in customers. Contributions ranged from managerial implications for e-commerce to proposed theoretical means by which cognitive behavior can be normalized within e-commerce reflections.

(Yudes et al., 2021), conducted research to examine the relationship between problematic internet use (PIU) and cyberbullying perpetration, placing emphasis on emotional intelligence as a candidate moderator. Much literature has reported that PIU is a factor that increases the risk of engaging in cyberbullying. However, limited is the research on those factors that protect adolescents engendered, to a certain extent, by PIU and lead to cyberbullying. The participants were composed of 2,039 adolescents aged from 12 to 18 years. Self-report questionnaires were administered to assess each of these variables. The positive association between the perpetration of cyberbullying and PIU and the negative relationship between the perpetration and emotional intelligence were congruent with the thought among the respondents. Also, PIU was resumed to take on emotional intelligence with the said relationships being more pronounced during the participants' composition in girls' responses. Thus, emotional intelligence appeared to moderate the impact of PIU on cyberbullying perpetration for boys, indicating that lower emotional intelligence was built to serve as a stronger buffer. These findings thus imply that emotional intelligence is indeed a personal resource that has protective qualities against the negative influence of PIU on involvement in cyberbullying. This study provides an outline of how emotional intelligence could be used as a target for any interventions of interest in addressing and preventing cyberbullying perpetration.

In a study by (Huang et al., 2024), showed the necessity of fostering Emotional Intelligence (EI) in children aged seven to nine through toy design is explored, leveraging the potential of the Internet of Things (IoT). Interviews with UK parents and teachers reveal diverse perceptions of EI, with a particular emphasis on empathy and social skills as essential components. Both groups stress the importance of creating inclusive environments and addressing problematic behaviors, such as accepting failure and managing anger, in the development of EI. The study highlights that children in this age group often struggle with emotion regulation, reflecting the ongoing developmental process. The researchers suggest that designers of IoT-based toys (IoToys) should prioritize empathy, social skills, and behavior regulation in their designs to effectively support EI. Additionally, the study points out that managing emotions remains a significant challenge for children, requiring ongoing support from parents and peers. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating these factors into IoToys design to enhance children's emotional competence.

The recent study by (Guarnaccia et al., 2024) shows the good and bad sides of social media on young adulthood. The study was conducted on 442 participants aged between 18 and 30, extracting emotional intelligence, empathy, internet use, and FoMO with the help of various psychometric tools. It was reported that these subjects had a low emotional intelligence and empathy level, a high FoMO score, and significant problematic social media use. They found that high FoMO scores correlated positively with negative internet experiences,

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emphasizing the complexities entangled with social networks, emotional skills, and mental health. Gender differences were analyzed.

A study by (Fernandez et al., 2023) aimed to investigate the associative properties of Internet addiction, emotional intelligence, and the sociodemographic variables among 532 nursing students. These two elements have always shown different views concerning the possible association of EI with Internet Addiction-attributed development. Eleven percent of the students reported some degree of Internet addiction, with higher rates among some younger students, first-year students, and students who often engage in leisure activities. While females scored higher on attention and males higher on repair, it would indicate that older students showed greater clarity and repair. A negative correlation was established between emotional regulation (clarity and repair) and Internet Addiction, meaning students showing some ability for emotional regulation reported lower scores on addiction. Emotional perception and regulation thus appear to contribute to lower Internet Addiction among these nursing students. Also, the amount of time spent online directly correlated to the scores on the Internet Addiction scale. This is a pointer for an increased need to institute programs for fostering the development of EI as a possible means to regulate Internet addiction among nursing students.

A study made by (Naidu et al., 2023) presented evidence for the important of emotional intelligence, fear of negative evaluation, and both problematic internet and social networking site use. The sample size comprised 1,067 young adults with the mean age of 18-25, where 44.6% are male, while 55.4% are female, who filled up self-administered questionnaires. The results showed that social anxiety and low self-esteem contribute to increased fear of negative evaluation in social settings and mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and problematic internet use and problematic social network site use. In addition, moderation analysis found that the relationship between emotional intelligence and problematic internet and social network site use is conditional on the level of fear of negative evaluation. Heightened social anxiety and low self-esteem lead to excessive internet use and social network site use due to fear of negative evaluation from the people around.

Research Objectives

- To study the correlation between Emotional intelligence and problematic internet usage.
- To study the impact of Emotional Intelligence on Problematic Internet Usage amongst young adults living in metropolitan city like Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chennai.
- To identify psychological and behavioural effect of Problematic Internet Usage.
- To explore potential strategies to understand Problematic Internet Usage.
- To provide different ways to develop Emotional Intelligence to moderate internet usage.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

In this study Non-experimental cross-sectional survey design was used to measure the Emotional Intelligence and how it plays a role in influence in Problematic internet usage amongst Young Adults. The non-experimental method of the study means that there is no

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manipulation of variables instead the study focuses on observing and measuring naturally occurring variables within the population.

Data were collected at a single point in time using an online survey format to gather responses from students. Using a cross-sectional approach helps us in understanding how Emotional Intelligence can influence in Problematic internet usage amongst Young Adults in this study. Participants fill out a survey on their own time, which encourages more people to join in and helps ensure their answers are honest.

In this study the 'Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale' was used in young adults to measure how emotionally intelligent they are, alongside with Problematic Internet Usage Questionnaire as an indicator for Internet Usage. The survey was distributed to various people in the age range of 18 to 30, who are living in metropolitan cities like Bengaluru, Chennai and Mumbai so that we can have an understanding of people that are from different region.

Hypotheses

H₁: There is a significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Problematic internet usage.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and problematic internet usage.

Population

This study was conducted on young adults from metropolitan city like Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru, aiming to assess the prevalence of Emotional Intelligence and its impact on Problematic Internet Usage. I got 146 participants comprising both male and female with age of between 18 to 30 years who were living in a house that have Internet Connection.

The different living situations and backgrounds in the sample allowed for a better understanding of how Problematic internet usage can show up in various ways for different people. To collect data, a survey was created using Google Forms which included 10 item Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale and 9 items Problematic Internet Usage Questionnaire.

The survey link was distributed to people via WhatsApp and social media platforms like in Instagram, Facebook and Reddit, the survey was also filled offline in malls. It took me 1 month to collect the responses and carefully reviewed to ensure that each submission met the study's inclusion criteria.

Sample

The sample consisted of 146 students with a gender distribution of 53.4% females and 46.6% Male. Among them 48 % are in Bangalore, 32% are in Mumbai and 18% of them are from Chennai. In terms of age 54% are in the age range of 18 to 24 and 46% are in the range of 25 to 30.

Inclusion criteria

- Participants must be one of the metropolitan cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai and Chennai.
- Participants must be living in house with internet connection.

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- Participants must be voluntarily agree to participate in the study by providing informed consent.
- Participant should be in between the age gap of 18 to 30 to fill this form.

Exclusion criteria

- Participants who were not living in Metropolitan City.
- Participants living in houses without internet connection.
- Participants who are under the age of 18 and people who are above the age of 30.
- Participants with incomplete and inappropriate responses especially on key measurements.

Instruments

- **Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale-10 (BEIS-10)** is used in this study. This scale was developed by researchers to assess emotional intelligence using a concise and efficient tool. The specific scale was made by Davies, Stankov, and Roberts, who contributed foundational work in emotional intelligence assessment, but the BEIS-10 was adapted later by other researchers aiming to refine the brevity and usability of emotional intelligence measurement tools. This scale consists of 10 questions. All of them are marked positively, this scale measures Appraisal of their own emotions, Appraisal of others' emotions, Regulation of their own emotions, Regulation of others' emotions, Utilization of emotions. The participants have to answer from 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly agrees and 5 is strongly disagrees. (Davies et al., 2010).
- The **Problematic Internet Use Questionnaire (PIUQ-9)** is a shortened version of the original Problematic Internet Use Questionnaire, designed to assess problematic internet use. The original PIUQ was developed by Ágnes Demetrovics, Zsuzsanna Szeredi, and Árpád Rózsa in 2008 (Demetrovics et al., 2008). The PIUQ-9, the brief version, was later created by researchers who refined the scale to focus on key aspects of problematic internet use in a more concise format. The PIUQ-9 consists of nine items rated on a Likert scale, addressing three primary dimensions that are Obsession, which captures preoccupation with internet use. Neglect, which reflects the disregard for daily responsibilities and Control disorder, indicating difficulty in regulating internet use (Laconi et al., 2019).

Data analysis

The study include Quantitative method in my study for that descriptive statistics were used to summarize characteristics of the sample including central tendency and variability for both total score of BEIS and PIUQ. The mean, median, mode, range, and standard deviation were calculated to provide an overview of the data distribution. The Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted on both the BEIS and PIUQ data to check if they followed a normal distribution.

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between BEIS and PIUQ. All analyses were conducted using software Jamovi to ensure accurate and efficient statistical testing.

RESULTS

Total Score of BEIS-10

The analysis of total score of BEIS-10 revealed a mean of 38.3 with a median of 39 and a mode of 37. This analysis suggests a comparatively symmetrical distribution of scores

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around the central tendency supported by a standard deviation of 5.39 indicating moderate variability. Scores ranged from a minimum of 21 to a maximum of 50.

The Shapiro-Wilk test for normality provided a W statistic of 0.971 and a p-value of 0.125 which suggests that the total score of scale distribution does not significantly deviate from normality ($p > 0.05$).

Descriptive

	Total score of BEIS-10	Total score of PIUQ-9
N	146	146
Mean	38.3	24.0
Median	39.0	24.0
Standard deviation	5.39	6.93
Minimum	21	9
Maximum	50	44
Shapiro-Wilk W	0.971	0.959
Shapiro-Wilk p	0.125	< .001

Total Score of PIUQ-9

The Total Score of PIUQ data had a mean of 24 with a median of 24 and a mode of 20 showing a no skewness. The standard deviation is 6.93 indicating some spread in the data with scores ranging from 9 to 44.

The Shapiro-Wilk test for total score of PIUQ-9 returned a W statistic of 0.959 and a p-value less than 0.001 indicating a significant exit from normality ($p < 0.05$).

Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between total score of BEIS-10 and PIUQ-9. The analysis revealed a statistically significant high negative correlation ($r = -0.939$, $p < 0.001$, $df = 144$) indicating an inverse relationship between the two variables. In other words, higher total scores of Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale-10 are associated with lower total scores of Problematic Internet Usage Questionnaire values and this relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Correlation Matrix

		Total score of BEIS-10	Total score of PIUQ-9
Total score of BEIS-10	Pearson's r	—	
	df	—	
	p-value	—	
	N	—	
Total score of PIUQ-9	Pearson's r	-0.929	—
	df	144	—
	p-value	< .001	—
	N	146	—

(r = -0.939, p < 0.001, df = 144)

DISCUSSION

Objective 1: To study the correlation between Emotional intelligence and problematic internet usage.

The analysis using Pearson correlation shows a significant negative relationship ($r = -0.929$, $p < 0.001$, $df = 144$) between the total score of BEIS-10 and total score of PIUQ-9. This finding is significant for understanding how emotional intelligence affects usage of internet. People between the ages 18 to 30 who are highly emotionally intelligent generally have lower chances to develop Problematic Internet Usage. This relationship is statistically significant and it suggests that the connection between these two factors are not just a random coincidence.

While emotional intelligence cannot be the only one reason for changes that impact in how we use the internet, however it clearly plays a fundamental role. Emotional Intelligence can help one overcome stress, loneliness and they have the ability to understand themselves more than others which can improve a person's ability to use internet responsibly and live a better life. Those who are emotionally intelligent may not struggle to focus, a lot time for internet usage as well as perform day to day activities.

Objective 2: To study the impact of Emotional Intelligence on Problematic Internet Usage amongst young adults living in metropolitan city like Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chennai.

The study aimed to analyze the impact of emotional intelligence on problematic internet usage amongst young adults who are living in Metropolitan city as they are having more access to get high speed internet and they use internet more frequently than other cities in India. The finding shows that people who are in the lower side of emotional intelligence are having more difficulty in finding a way to separate themselves from internet activities and concentrate on their day to day activities. This will cause the person to not complete their day to day task like completing chores. They also have issues in work life, they find it difficult to meet with deadlines. They are also not able to disconnect themselves from the internet forming a sort of addiction.

Objective 3: To identify psychological and behavioural effect of Problematic Internet Usage.

This study looked into how Problematic Internet Usage affects the life of people living in metro cities. People dealing with Problematic Internet Usage mostly have difficulty in maintaining their life balance. The scale used for Problematic Internet Usage has a lot of subscales like obsession, neglect and control disorder which makes it hard for them to go through their daily lives. These feelings are sometimes signs of addiction like unable to disconnect, not being active offline, not being able to prioritize task and concentrate on other things apart from internet activities which causes a major hindrance in their work. Many people who have problematic internet usage also felt cut off from their friends which made their emotional struggles even worse and sometimes left them feeling powerless.

On the behavioral side, problematic internet had a big impact on how people performed in their work and social life. A lot of people who have problematic internet usage get away from socializing and activities, and held back from being part of big events like family outings, which only make them feel their sense of loneliness. The person who has been

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having trouble in managing their time on the internet often struggled procrastinated, missed deadlines and participate less in offline activities like outing, sports which are offline this could lead to poor performance and health.

Objective 4: To explore potential strategies to understand Problematic Internet Usage.

The research looked into how people deal with problematic internet usage and found different ways that worked for them. One popular method was keeping in touch with family and friends. Talking to them face to face, having weekly meeting where you perform activities that needs physical moments can make the person feel connected, hence making it easier to manage their internet usage.

Another helpful approach was getting involved in social and outside activities around the society. Joining clubs, playing sports or being part of groups gave people chances to make new friends that make them fit in better with their surroundings. Many people shared that by focusing on building friendships and participating in events they were able to move their attention away from their phone and enjoy their offline time more.

Objective 5: To provide different ways to develop Emotional Intelligence to moderate internet usage.

To help people who have issues in moderating there internet usage we can implement special programs. Some helpful are peer mentoring, better counselling services, and regular orientation activities to help people connect and feel like they belong. Workshops that teach self-care along with support groups can give people better tools to handle their feelings and develop the ability to make priority.

Limitations

This study has a sample size of 144, which is a limitation as it generalises the findings. These results are taken from young adults aged 18 to 30 years, from metro cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chennai. This finding cannot be applied to older adults, adolescents and rural population.

Self-report questionnaires, such as BEIS-10 and PIUQ-9, were used to ascertain emotional intelligence and problematic internet usage. Self-reports often bring in some biases, such as social-desirability bias or inaccurate self-assessment. Participants sometimes overestimate their emotional intelligence or minimize their use of the Internet. The report fails to mention any controlled confounding factors such as personality traits, mental health conditions, and environmental effects. Such factors would reasonably be expected to skew usage trends of the Internet and sample emotional intelligence and could slant findings. They point to young adults living in towns and cities of India. Cultural and environmental contexts could moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence and Internet use across other countries or regions. {Examples might include society expectations, peer pressure, or meaningful technology infrastructure variations.

CONCLUSION

This paper thus tends to explore the relations of emotional intelligence with problematic internet use and its psychological and behavioural impact, particularly among the youth in cities. The results of the study reflect the interface between emotional intelligence and given

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modes of internet use and the problems faced by the internet users in regulating their online behaviour. The first goal showed a strong negative correlation between emotional intelligence and problematic internet usage, with a Pearson correlation of -0.929. Such findings reveal that the addiction potential is lower for those who have higher emotional intelligence. The relation deals with the management of everyday stress, loneliness, and the onslaught of online distractions; therefore, emotionally intelligent people are in a better position to balance their online and offline lives and are less likely to suffer from addiction and interruptions in their everyday activities due to internet use. Hence emotional intelligence provides a buffer against the dynamics that facilitate PIU, empirically among the ages of 18-30. The second goal explored the impact of emotional intelligence on the development of PIU in metropolitan cities such as Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chennai. Results indicated a higher susceptibility to addictive internet behaviours among lower emotional intelligence users who have difficulty detaching themselves from online engagements and time management. This has adverse repercussions in the personal and professional arenas—a struggle in executing daily tasks and hitting deadlines. Besides, the metropolitan cities have a large penetration of internet access, which creates a substantial challenge for responsive interventions. The last objective was aimed at understanding the psychological and behavioral ramifications of PIU. The challenge with the user base under PIU is that they have to battle life balance, for which symptoms of obsession, neglect, and control disorder apply. The above-mentioned behavioural issues are bound to disrupt work performance and social interactions of the users with emotional distress, loneliness, and isolation.

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Conflict of Interest

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