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Research Paper

# Emotional Intelligence as a Correlate to Internet Addiction Among Adolescents: A Correlational Study

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## ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a life skill of emotional competence that lays the foundation for success in diverse aspects of life, at both interpersonal and intrapersonal levels. EI leads to emotional stability and effective decision-making. Previously, several research studies have tried to explore EI as a correlate to internet addiction (IA). Dysregulation of emotions can be one of the reasons for addiction and vice versa, among adolescents. Moreover, it profoundly impacts an individual's growth and capabilities in the formative period. This study investigates how frequently adolescents experience internet addiction and its association with emotional intelligence, treating emotional intelligence as a related factor in developing internet dependency. The research examines the relationship between the two variables across genders. A cross-sectional study was performed on 677 participants, aged 12 to 19, who were randomly sampled from the student population in Lucknow, India. Data was gathered from participants through self-reported questionnaires, including the Internet Addiction Test (Dr. Young, 1996) and the Emotional Intelligence Test (Dr. Schutte, 1998). Analysis using Spearman's rank correlation demonstrated an inverse relationship between EI and IA. A statistically significant correlation exists in the two components of Emotional Intelligence, i.e. (i) Managing own emotions (ii) Utilisation of emotions. While the other two components (iii) Perception of emotions and (iv) Managing Others' Emotions show a weak relationship with IA. Based on the study findings, it is helpful to design and implement effective interventions to mitigate IA and improve EI among adolescents.

***Keywords:*** *Emotional Intelligence, Adolescents, Internet Addiction, Internet dependency*

Emotional Intelligence and Internet addiction have emerged as significant concepts in today's world. These issues significantly impact adolescents and young adults, and this has become an increasingly acknowledged reality among educators, psychologists, and policymakers. Numerous research efforts have explored the connection between the two variables, aiming to understand their coexistence or identify predictive factors.

***Emotional intelligence (EI)*** is a complex yet increasingly recognised concept. Emotional Intelligence (EI) has attracted immense attention, as it has profound ramifications for human development and well-being. Essentially, EI is the capability to effectively discern,

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apprehend, manage, and contrive own emotions. This ability demonstrably linked to diverse life areas such as academic achievement, mental health, and the quality of interpersonal relationships.

Essentially, emotional intelligence is the skillful competence of perception, comprehension, and regulation of own emotions as well as that of others. This involves distinguishing between various feelings and strategically applying that emotional awareness to inform your choices and actions (Mayer *et al.,* 2004).

EI as a concept has two main theoretical approaches, one is Trait EI, which describes an individual's natural inclination to manage their emotions. The second approach measures the mental capability, referring to one's ability to manipulate emotions to direct their thoughts and behaviour in a socially acceptable way (Petrides, 2007). The theory of EI suggests that individuals who effectively control their emotions are less prone to psychological issues and generally experience better mental health compared to those who struggle to understand or manage their emotions (Mayer *et al*., 2008).

***Adolescence*** is a stage defined by intense emotional upheaval and challenging experiences**.** It is a crucial stage characterised by significant emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Beginning with puberty (roughly 10-12 years old) and extending to physiological maturity (approximately 19 years). During this period, individuals experience significant transformations in their physical appearance, sexual characteristics, and psychological and social development.

The all levels developments in an adolescents contribute to the formation of an individual's concept of their image on their body, their self-concept along with the self-esteem. Alongside these physical and also psychological shifts, significant cognitive and social developments also occur. During this time, peer exposure plays a significant role, as peer interactions and peer collaborations heavily influence adolescents. A key characteristic of adolescence is the strong desire for social approval and the pursuit of autonomy and independence (American Psychological Association, 2018).

A defining feature of this time is the pronounced escalation of risk-taking behaviours coupled with a sharp rise in emotional responses to various situations (Casey BJ et al, 2008).
Thus, understanding the dynamic interplay between emotional intelligence and internet dependency in adolescents is of paramount importance.

***Internet Addiction, or Problematic Internet Use*****,** describes compulsive online activity that impedes normal functioning and severely strains relationships with family, friends, and one's professional life (Dr. Young, 1998). Internet addiction, the term coined and popularised by Dr. Ivan Goldberg in 1995, is known by other names as well, such as net addiction, dysfunctional internet use, digital addiction, Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) and cyber syndrome. Excessive online engagement can seriously interfere with an individual's interpersonal, occupational, and social life (Beard & Wolf, 2001). While internet use encompasses a broad spectrum which includes videos, social media platforms, online shopping sites, gaming, and pornography, excessive engagement can disrupt an individual's social, academic and occupational well-being (Moreno et al., 2013). The rise of technology has made digital tools, especially the internet, indispensable. Prolonged use significantly influences psychological well-being, formation of one’s identity and academic performance

(Chen, 2019; Partala, 2011; Raiziene et al., 2022). People who are internet dependent often experience physical ailments like strain in back, carpal tunnel syndrome, sleep disorders and eye related problems. Beyond physical symptoms, excessive internet use also leads to academic challenges, including absenteeism and lower grades, ultimately harming students' overall school performance (Chundawat et al., 2022).

The DSM-V now recognizes Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) as a legitimate illness stemming from excessive gaming, which has spurred further research into other problems caused by extensive internet use. Notably, Asian nations show high rates of internet addiction. Deficits in emotional regulation have often been linked to other behavioural addictions in numerous studies. As a result, there's increased curiosity about the possible influence of emotional intelligence, which crucially includes emotional regulation. Our study aims to lay the groundwork for practical strategies to focus on wise internet usage and fostering emotional intelligence.

## METHOD

### *Aim and Objectives*

The primary objective of this study is to determine the link between emotional intelligence and internet addiction among adolescent populations.

- To investigate the association between emotional intelligence and internet addiction.
- To determine the association between Internet Addiction and the different components of emotional intelligence: Perception of Emotions, Managing Own Emotions, Managing Others' Emotions, and Utilisation of Emotions.

### *Hypotheses*

- There is a notable link between emotional intelligence (EI) and internet addiction (IA) among adolescents.
- Internet addiction (IA) is significantly associated with the perception of emotions.
- A significant relationship exists between an individual's ability to manage their own emotions and internet addiction.
- Internet addiction (IA) is significantly associated with the ability to manage others' emotions.
- Internet addiction (IA) is significantly related to the effective use of emotions.

### Variables

- Emotional Intelligence (EI).
- Emotional intelligence: perceiving emotions, managing personal emotions, managing others' emotions and leveraging emotions effectively.
- Internet Addiction (IA).

### *Sample*

A total of 677 adolescents (ages 12-19) participated, with 297 males and 380 females being categorised by gender for subsequent analysis.

### *Measures for assessment*

- **Socio-demographic Questionnaire**: A self-reporting questionnaire, which was semi structured was designed to collect candidates' socio-demographic variables, such as age, level of class, gender, siblings, timings for bed, sleep (hours), eating habits while on internet, outdoor or indoor games activities and parents' details with contacts etc.

- **Internet Addiction Test (IAT)**: Questionnaire of 20 statements with a Likert scale of 5- point, in a self-reporting format. Where each item is scoring between 1 to 5 value. For the scoring purposes, signifies 'rarely' and means 'always'. The problematic internet use or behaviour is measured by summing the response scores of the scale. While scoring of the scale totals for minimum 20 to maximum 100 points. On the basis of the scoring the participants, they are categorised under mild (31-49 score), moderate (50-79 score) and severely addicted (80-100) users on the internet. Factor analysis identified 6 components of excessive Use, neglecting work, anticipation, lack of Control, salience and neglecting social life. The scale has good internal consistency and concurrent validity with good reliability, and the test-retest reliability is r=0.82. The internal consistency is α=0.91. Whereas, the scale is also considered to have high face validity

- **The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)**: SSEIT, a self-reporting questionnaire with 33 items, was developed by Dr. N Schutte in 1998. The scale is used to measure general emotional intelligence (EI). The 4 components of EI are Perception of emotions, utilising emotions, managing self-relevant emotions and managing others' emotions. The questions are based on the Likert scale, where score (1) denotes strongly agree, whereas score (5) means strongly disagree, as a response. The scale is reliable with internal consistency of α = 0.87 and test–retest reliability of r = 0.78. The test has shown evidence of validity. This test exhibits predictive validity and discriminant validity, indicating it's a separate construct from cognitive ability (as measured by the SAT).

***Procedure***

Collecting data for the research involved the administration of self-reporting questionnaires to a randomly selected sample of 677 school and college-going adolescents. The study population has a mean age of 15.7 years, with the age criteria of 12 to 19 years of adolescents. The participants were from English-medium educational institutions and completed the questionnaires at their discretion. Consent was obtained from parents for participants under 18, and directly from participants aged 18 and above.

Spearman's correlation was employed for data analysis and inferential statistics to assess correlation between the variables across different genders and defined age categories. A descriptive analysis and a graphical depiction of the results provide additional support for the conclusions.

**Inclusion Criteria**

- Adolescents aged 12 to 19 years.
- Both Males and Females are a part of the study.
- The participants are students from Lucknow City, Uttar Pradesh, India.
- All participants are from English-medium institutions.

**Exclusion Criteria**

- This study only included participants between the ages of 12 and 19, excluding anyone younger than 12 or older than 19.
- Other category of gender, except male and female.
- Excluding other mental debilitating conditions.
- The study excludes students from institutions other than English medium institutions.

***Research design and Statistical method***

The study utilized a cross-sectional design, applying Spearman's rank correlation test to establish the statistical significance of the correlation between the variables of Emotional Intelligence and Internet Addiction. Additionally, means and medians were compared to examine variance.

## RESULTS

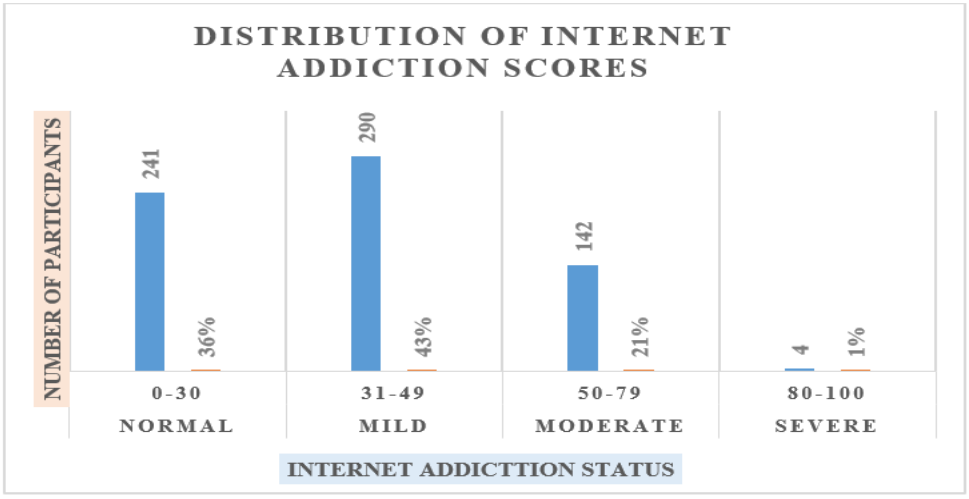


***Figure 1**: A graphical display of the distribution of Internet Addiction scores among the 677 study participants.*

The diagram visually represents the results of the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) for the sample of 677 adolescents. A significant 64% of participants exhibited some form of internet addiction, with 43% categorised as mildly addicted, 21% as moderately addicted, and 1% as severely affected. In contrast, 36% were identified as normal internet users. This indicates a high prevalence of excessive internet use among the participants.

Furthermore, participants counted in this category have high probability to encounter physical and mental health related issues.

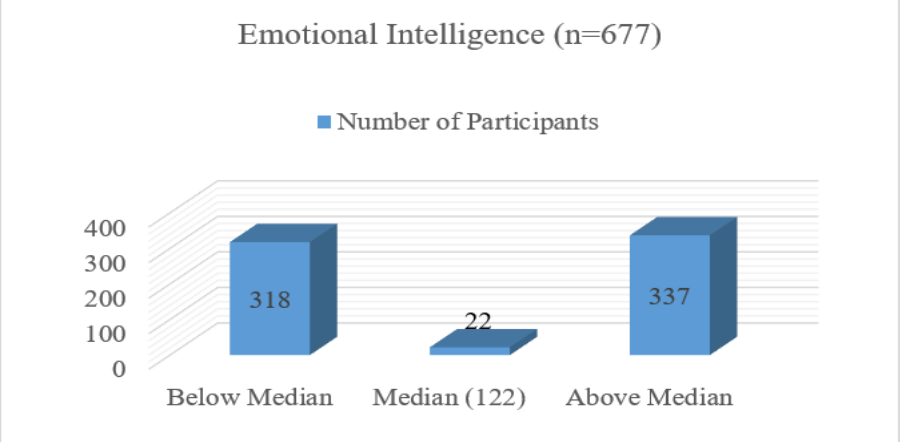


***Figure 2**: A graphical illustration showing Emotional Intelligence* **scores of the** *sample (n=677)*

The graph above illustrates the distribution of Emotional Intelligence (EI) scores for the 677 adolescent participants. The study found the population median EI score to be 122. Specifically, 318 adolescents scored above the median, 22 scored at the median, and 337 scored below it.

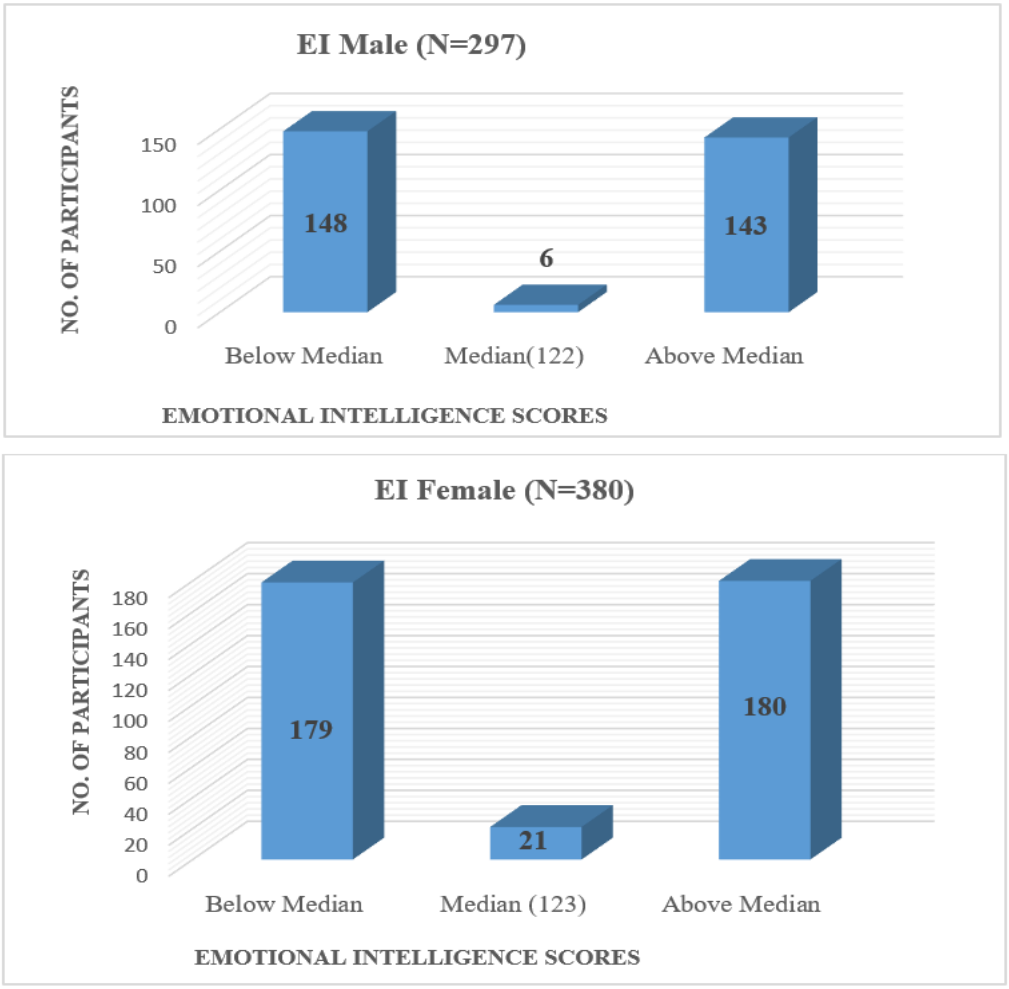


***Figure 3**: Graphical representation showing the sample Male and Female population and the Median value of the Emotional Intelligence score.*

The bar graph distinctly demonstrates that the median Emotional Intelligence score among females is 123, exceeding that of males, which stands at 122.

***Table 1. Summary of Correlations: Internet Addiction, Emotional Intelligence, and Gender.***

| **Variables** | **IA** | **EI** |
|---|---|---|
| Mean | 36.95 | 121.16 |
| Variance | 249.07 | 223.69 |
| SD | 15.78 | 14.96 |
| Observations | 677 | 677 |
| df | 676 | |
| p value | 0.01735 | |
| rho | -0.091 | |

**Significance level 0.05*

A significant finding emerged from the analysis (p = 0.01735), as its p-value was less than the 0.05 threshold. This allows for the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis and thereby rejects the null hypothesis. In addition, Spearman's rank correlation indicated that as one variable increases, the other tends to consistently change, either increase or decrease, confirming that

the relationship is significant. This implies that their values tend to move in a consistent direction together (either both increasing or one increasing as the other decreases), but not necessarily in a linear way.

The Spearman correlation coefficient (rho = -0.091) quantifies the monotonic relationship between the variables. The negative rho value indicates an inverse trend, that of, as one variable increases, the other generally decreases. However, given that the absolute value of rho is close to zero**,** this relationship is considered weak**.**
A statistically significant but weak relationship was found between the variables (Spearman's rho = -0.091, p=0.017). This indicates that while a correlation exists, its practical strength is limited.

***Table 2. A Summary Table showing the correlation between Internet Addiction and Perception of Emotion (subset of Emotional Intelligence) among adolescents.***

| | ***IA*** | ***Perception of Emotion*** |
|---|---|---|
| Mean | 36.95 | 121.16 |
| Variance | 249.07 | 223.69 |
| SD | 15.78 | 5.56 |
| Observations | 677 | 677 |
| df | 676 | |
| p value | 0.523 | |
| rho | -0.025 | |

**Significance level 0.05*

The table indicates that the p-value exceeds 0.05, signifying that the result is not statistically significant. Consequently, the alternate hypothesis is rejected in favour of the null hypothesis. A negative rho value points to a weak negative correlation. Hence, we can conclude that the subset of Perception of own emotions is not correlated with the Internet addiction variable among the adolescents.

***Table 3. A Summary Table showing a correlation between Internet Addiction and Managing Own Emotions (subset of Emotional Intelligence) among adolescents.***

| | ***IA*** | ***Managing Own Emotions*** |
|---|---|---|
| Mean | 36.95 | 33.87 |
| Variance | 249.07 | 27.31 |
| SD | 15.78 | 5.23 |
| Observations | 677 | 677 |
| df | 676 | |
| p value | 3.107e – 05 | |
| rho | -0.16 | |

**Significance level 0.01*

Internet Addiction showed a strong, statistically significant link with the "Managing Own Emotions" subscale of EI ($p<0.01$). Hence, the alternate hypothesis is accepted and null is rejected. A negative monotonic relationship is established by the negative rho value indicates, suggesting that as one variable increases, the other tends to decrease.

***Table 4. The Summary Table shows correlation between Internet Addiction and Managing Others' Emotions (subset of Emotional Intelligence) among adolescents.***

| | ***IA*** | ***Managing Others' Emotions*** |
|---|---|---|
| Mean | 36.95 | 28.93 |
| Variance | 249.07 | 19.72 |
| SD | 15.78 | 4.44 |
| Observations | 677 | 677 |
| df | 676 | |
| p value | 0.372 | |
| rho | 0.034 | |

**Significance level 0.05*

The "managing others' emotions" subscale of emotional intelligence showed no significant link with Internet Addiction in Spearman's rank correlation analysis. The rho value indicated a weak positive correlation, leading us to accept the null hypothesis. Hence, we are unable to establish a correlation between the variables.

***Table 5. A Summary Table showing a correlation between Internet Addiction and Utilisation of Emotions (subset of Emotional Intelligence) among adolescents.***

| | ***IA*** | ***Utilisation of Emotions*** |
|---|---|---|
| Mean | 36.95 | 22.87 |
| Variance | 249.07 | 15.06 |
| SD | 15.78 | 3.88 |
| Observations | 677 | 677 |
| Df | 676 | |
| p value | 0.0426 | |
| Rho | -0.078 | |

**Significance level 0.05*

There is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis as the p value is less than 0.05 level of significance. Additionally, the rho value (Spearman correlation coefficient) indicates a negative monotonic relationship between Internet Addiction and the "utilization of emotions" subset of EI, meaning that as one variable increases, the other generally decreases.

### *Ethical Considerations*

The Participants were comprehensively apprised with the research aim, objectives and methodology, and they had an unconditional right to withdraw. The research strictly followed the ethical standards established by the Institutional Ethics Committee. Consent of the participants was duly attained.

## DISCUSSIONS

A study showed that emotional intelligence is inversely correlated with addictive behaviours and other detrimental symptoms of suicidal thoughts, depression, seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and decreased sleep and good quality of life (Biolcati et al., 2025 & Vadher et al., 2019). India holds the second-highest internet usage rate globally, with particularly rapid expansion in urban areas. In many metropolitan households, it's common for each family member to own multiple devices for internet access. The internet has solidified its position as an integral part of daily life for people across the country, driven by its growing popularity

and convenience. Another study involving college-going students demonstrated the severe repercussions of internet addiction affecting the mental well-being of an individual (Chauhan et al., 2022).

Emotional intelligence (EI) acts as a protective shield for managing the emotional strain we face across almost all age groups. EI is the ability which can significantly influence the interplay between internet addiction and the mental health of adolescents. The undesirable impact of internet addiction on both EI and mental wellness highlights the detrimental effects on adolescents' overall well-being. The inevitable excessive exposure to the digital world is making adolescents susceptible to heavy reliance on online platforms. They are dependent on technology for academic, communicative and recreational reasons.

Another study conducted on young adults aged 18 to 30 years observed a negative correlation between variables of emotional intelligence and problematic internet use. This suggests that higher EI co-occur with effective time management when online (Kappan & Bhuyan, 2025).

Our research suggests an inverse association between emotional intelligence and internet addiction among adolescents. Specifically, females had a slightly higher median EI score (123) compared to males (122).

Notably, 64% of the participants exhibited some form of internet addiction, with 43% showing mild addiction, 21% moderate, and 1% severe. Only 36% were classified as normal internet users. The above findings highlight the fact of high prevalence of excessive internet use among adolescents, making them vulnerable to internet dependency and the related physical and mental health issues. At its core, the study aimed to determine the correlational relationship between the variables.

In addition, this research explored the connection between internet addiction and the four distinct aspects of emotional intelligence: how individuals perceive emotions, manage their emotions, manage the emotions felt by others, and use their emotions effectively.

The present study revealed that the components of EI, i.e., managing one's own emotions and the utilisation of emotions, are inversely correlated with Problematic Internet Use (PIU) or Internet addiction. This fact implies that as PIU increases, the mentioned components of emotional intelligence tend to decrease. In contrast, perception of emotions and managing others' emotions did not show a statistically significant correlation with PIU. Therefore, it is suggested that there be an unwavering motivation to develop and enhance emotional intelligence among adolescents to prevent behavioural addictions. Preventive and proactive strategies should be implemented to foster emotional intelligence in the early stages of children's development and to mitigate the negative impacts arising from Internet addiction.

## CONCLUSIONS

The research indicates a consistent pattern: higher emotional intelligence is associated with lower internet addiction among adolescents. This trend suggests that as EI increases, it brings IA down. Furthermore, female adolescents demonstrated marginally greater emotional intelligence compared to their male counterparts. The findings establish the importance of preventive interventions for IA and their effective usage to mitigate excessive internet usage. Psycho-education for adolescents and their family members or caregivers on problematic internet usage or internet addiction should be advocated. Imparting skills to differentiate

between constructive and non-constructive internet use is crucial for understanding internet addiction. Awareness campaigns and workshops are valuable tools for evaluating and enhancing emotional intelligence in adolescents.

Understanding the importance of the relationship between IA and EI, these measures will help adolescents improve their interpersonal skills, empathy towards others, effectively utilise their emotions for beneficial purposes, and make adaptable adjustments. Developing emotional competency helps adolescents to effectively manage stress, build resilience, and cultivate a positive mindset. These skills, in turn, contribute to improved overall mental health and well-being. Singularly focusing on screen time falls short of comprehensively predicting Internet addiction, especially given the rapid expansion of digital technology and its usage.

Hence, it is advisable to study and explore other correlating factors of emotional intelligence, self-esteem, stress, personality and many others. Various workshops should be designed for age-specific groups. Keeping in consideration the emotional requirements of the developmental trajectory. The workshops are designed to cultivate emotional intelligence, respectfully integrating various cultural perspectives.

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***Conflict of Interest***

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