

Influence of Internet Gaming on Social Isolation and Mental Health Among College Students

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ABSTRACT

The study on influence of Internet Gaming on social isolation, mental health among college students, using a sample of 50 students from Trichy. Tools like the UCLA Loneliness Scale, PHQ-9 for depression, and IGDS9-SF were used to measure levels of social isolation, gaming behavior, and mental health conditions. Results showed that higher levels of social isolation correlated with increased internet gaming, suggesting it serves as a coping mechanism for loneliness. However, excessive gaming was also associated with poorer mental health outcomes, such as heightened anxiety and depression. Gender differences were significant, with males showing greater susceptibility to gaming-related mental health issues, though gender difference did not affect the gaming frequency. The study highlights the need for interventions that address social isolation and promote healthier coping strategies, advocating for further research with larger, diverse populations to deepen understanding and enhance student well-being.

Keywords: *Mental Health, Gaming Addiction, Social Isolation*

Internet Gaming

Definition:

According to Griffiths, M. D., 2010, Internet gaming refers to playing digital games over the internet, allowing users to interact in virtual environments, either competitively or socially."

Causes and Risk factors:

The causes and risk factors for internet gaming addiction are multifaceted, involving psychological, social, and biological components. Psychologically, individuals with underlying mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, or ADHD are more susceptible, as gaming can offer a form of escapism or a way to manage stress and negative emotions. Socially, a lack of strong, supportive relationships or social skills can drive individuals to seek connection and validation through online gaming communities. Adolescents and young adults are particularly at risk, given their developmental stage and the appeal of gaming as a

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source of entertainment and peer interaction. Biologically, some research suggests that certain individuals may have a predisposition to addictive behaviours due to genetic factors or neurochemical imbalances. The design of many games also plays a significant role, as they are often created to be highly engaging and rewarding, using mechanisms like variable rewards and social competition to keep players hooked. Environmental factors, such as easy access to technology and cultural norms that promote gaming as a popular pastime, further contribute to the risk. Together, these factors create a complex web that can lead to the development of internet gaming addiction.

Social Isolation

Definition:

Julianne Holt Lunstads (2017) defines social isolation as a state in which an individual lacks a sense of belonging, does not engage in social interactions, and has a limited number of social contacts and relationships, leading to a reduction in social networks and perceived support.”

Cause and Risk factors:

Online gaming addiction can be attributed to various causes and risk factors, involving a complex interplay of psychological, social, and environmental factors.

Martin Price defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. Psychologically, individuals who experience low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, or stress are more prone to developing an addiction. They may use gaming as a coping mechanism to escape from real-life problems or to alleviate negative emotions. The immersive and rewarding nature of games, with their achievements, social interactions, and sense of progression, can provide a temporary reprieve from these issues, reinforcing the habit and leading to addiction.

Mental health

Definition:

Martin Price (2023) defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work prudently and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

Symptoms and signs:

Symptoms of mental health disorders can vary widely depending on the specific condition but generally include a range of emotional, cognitive, and behavioural changes. Common symptoms include persistent sadness or feelings of hopelessness, excessive fears or worries, extreme mood swings, and withdrawal from social activities. Individuals may also experience significant changes in their sleep patterns, such as insomnia or oversleeping, as well as appetite changes leading to weight loss or gain. Difficulty concentrating, making decisions, or remembering things is often reported. Physical symptoms such as unexplained aches and pains, frequent headaches, and fatigue are also common. Additionally, individuals might exhibit behaviours like substance abuse, self-harm, or suicidal thoughts and behaviours. Recognizing these symptoms early and seeking professional help is crucial for effective treatment and management.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Daria J. Kiss's (2013) review on Internet gaming addiction explores its prevalence, neurobiological similarities to other addictions, and the impact of cultural and personal

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contexts. The study supports viewing Internet gaming addiction as a disease, which aids in reliable diagnosis, reduces stigma, and promotes the development of effective treatments. The holistic approach taken emphasizes the importance of understanding the broad.

The 2017 Paediatrics paper reviews findings from the IGD Working Group, noting that the American Psychiatric Association recognized Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) as a potential diagnosis. The prevalence of IGD ranges from 1% to 9%, varying by age, country, and sample characteristic.

METHODOLOGY

Overview:

This topic focuses on the systematic procedure and techniques used to collect the data, store, analyse and present information.

Research problem:

The aim of the study find the association between internet gaming effects on mental health.

Research design:

Convenient –Evaluation research design is implemented in this study.

Population:

The population for this study including college students in various department at Trichy district.

Sample:

Stratified random samples techniques was use to collect data about 50 students were chosen (sample size was determined based on the internet gaming users) the average range of participant's male female among college students.

Instrumentation:

Social isolation:

The UCLA Loneliness Scale is a tool for measuring feelings of loneliness and isolation. It was originally developed in 1978 and has been revised multiple times. The scale is designed to be self-administered, and typically uses a four-point response scale of “never,” “rarely,” “sometimes,” and “often”.

- *Scoring:* A 20-item scale designed to measure one's subjective feelings of loneliness as well as feelings of social isolation. Participants rate each item as either O (“I often feel this way”), S (“I sometimes feel this way”), R (“I rarely feel this way”), N (“I never feel this way”). The measure has been revised two times since its first publication; once to create reverse scored items, and once to simplify the wording.
- *Reliability:* The UCLA loneliness scale (version 3) has been shown to be reliable, both in terms of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.89 to 0.94) and test-retest reliability over a one-year period ($r = 0.73$). Convergent validity was shown by significant correlations with other measures of loneliness.

Mental Health:

The Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) is a self-administered screening tool for depression that has been shown to be a reliable and valid tool for assessing depression.

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- Scoring: Each response category is assigned a score of 0, 1, 2, or 3, depending on whether the response is “not at all”, “several days”, “more than half the days”, or “nearly every day”. The total score is calculated by adding up the scores for all nine questions.
- Reliability: The internal reliability of the PHQ-9 was excellent, with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.89 in the PHQ Primary Care Study and 0.86 in the PHQ Ob-Gyn Study. Test-retest reliability of the PHQ-9 was also excellent.

Internet Gaming:

The Internet Gaming Disorder Scale-Short- Form (IGDS9-SF) is a 9-item questionnaire that assesses the presence of Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) in a person. The scale was developed by Pontes and Griffiths in 2015 and is based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) criteria.

- Scoring: Total scores can be obtained by summing up all responses given to all nine items of the IGDS9-SF and can range from a minimum of 9 to a maximum of 45 points, with higher scores being indicative of a higher degree of Internet Gaming Disorder. In order to differentiate disordered gamers from non-disordered gamers, researchers should check if participants have endorsed at least five criteria out of the nine by taking into account answers as „S: Very Often, which translates as endorsement of the criterion.
- Reliability: Reliability and Criterion Validity of the Internet Gaming Disorder Short-Form 9. Among Sri Lankan students, the IGDS9-SF expressed adequate internal consistency (coefficient alpha = 0.81), item-total correlations ranging between 0.341 and 0.611, and alpha if item deleted ranging between 0.779 and 0.816.

Classification of Variables:

Independent variable:

Social isolation;

Definition: Julianne Holt Lunstaden (2017) defines social isolation

A state in which an individual lacks a sense of belonging, does not engage in social interactions, and has a limited number of social contacts and relationships, leading to a reduction in social networks and perceived support.”

Internet gaming:

In the context of internet gaming, D L King (2014) is not a widely recognized term or name. If it refers to a specific figure, concept or term in gaming that you’re thinking of, could you provide more context? There might be different interpretations or specific meanings depending on the context.

Dependent Variable:

Mental health

Martin Price (2023) defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work prudently and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

Demographical variables:

- Gender
- Area of the college

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- Parents Qualification
- Parents Occupation

Hypotheses:

- There is a relationship between mental health and internet gaming among students.
- There is a relationship between social isolation and internet gaming among college students.
- There is a relationship between mental health and internet gaming among college students.
- There is a relationship between Gender difference and mental health among college students.
- There is a relationship between Gender difference and internet gaming among college students.
- Statistics to be employed:
- The collected data were coded for statistical analysis. The statistical analyses were performed Using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 16.0. Specific statistical analysis Like Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation were employed to analyse the collected quantitative.

RESULT

Table no: 1 shows the relationship between social isolation and mental health.

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	R	Significant/Not Significant
Social isolation	1.44	.501		
Mental health	1.52	.505	.126	Not significant

The Mean value of social 1.44 in mental health 1.52 Standard Deviation of social isolation and mental health are .501 and .505 the Mean difference between social isolation and mental health is .126. The results defines that there is no significant relationships between the social isolation and mental health of college students the hypothesis for social isolation and mental health is not accepted.

Table no: 2 shows the relationship between social isolation and internet gaming.

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	R	Significant/Not Significant
Social isolation	1.44	.501		
Internet gaming	1.68	.471	.349*(0.05)	Significant

The Mean of social isolation 1.44 internet gaming 1.68 Standard Deviation of social and internet gaming is .501 and .471 the mean difference between social isolation and internet gaming .349* this result indicates that there is a sign relationship between social isolation and internet gaming among college students the hypothesis for social isolation and internet gaming is accepted at 0.05 level.

Table no: 3 shows the relationship between mental health and internet gaming

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	R	Significant/Not Significant
Mental health	1.52	.505		
Internet gaming	1.68	.471	.542**(0.01)	Significant

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The Mean of mental health is 1.52 internet gaming is 1.68 Standard Deviation of mental health and internet gaming. 505 and .471 the mean difference between mental health and internet gaming .542** this result indicates that there is a significant relationships between mental health and internet gaming among college students the hypothesis for mental health and internet gaming is accepted at 0.05 level.

Table no 4: shows the relationship between gender difference and mental health.

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	T	P
Male	25	1.68	0.476		
Female	25	1.36	0.490	2.342	0.023

A t-test was conducted to examine the gender difference in mental health scores. The t-value was found to be 2.342, indicating a moderate difference between the two groups. The corresponding p-value of 0.023 is less than the significance level of 0.05 leave, suggesting that the difference is statistically significant. This means that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that gender has a significant impact on mental health scores in this sample

Table no: 5 show the difference between gender and internet gaming

IGINP	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	p
Male	25	1.76	0.436		
Female	25	1.06	0.500	1.206	0.234

A t-test was performed to investigate the gender difference in mental health scores. The value was 1.206, indicating a small difference between the two groups. However, the corresponding p-value of 0.234 is greater than the significance level of 0.05, suggesting that the difference is not statistically significant. This means there is insufficient evidence to conclude that gender has a significant impact on mental health scores in this sample.

DISCUSSION

Study was conducted in the topic of influence of internet gaming social isolation and mental health among college student. The sample size was 50 college students. Tool used in this research is social isolation scale and mental health scale and internet gaming scale.

The discussion about influence of internet gaming social isolation and mental health among college student is a complex process. Studies on this topic often provide mixed result and suggestions relation to this study.

In this study the young adults were assessed as sample from various department from one college the results show that there is significant between social isolation and internet and is hypothesis accepted. The results show that there is significant between mental health and internet gaming and is hypothesis accepted. The results show that there is significant gender difference and mental health and the hypothesis is accepted.

SUMMARY

Implications of this Study:

- Young adult's college students were implied as population in this study.
- Thus, study was conducted in various department students in one college the descriptive research design is implied in this study.

Limitations:

- Population size is only 50 it would be better if large samples in used.
- Only young adults were chosen as sample size population.
- This study was done only in Trichy district and generalization of results could not be done effective.

CONCLUSION

- The study found that there is significant accepted relationships between social isolation, internet gaming and mental health.
- The results indicates that social isolation and internet gaming were correlated at 0.05 level of significant and this indicates that mental health and internet gaming were correlated at 0.01 level of significant.
- There is significant were found between gender difference and mental health were correlated at 0.05 the hypothesis accepted.
- The Father qualification, Father Occupation, mother qualifications, father occupation did not show any significant influence of internet gaming social isolation and mental health among college student.
- The finding of the study indicates to complexity influence of internet gaming social isolation and mental health among college student highlights the need further research.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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