

**INTERNET ADDICTION, SELF-ESTEEM AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL- BEING AMONG
COLLEGE STUDENTS: ROLE OF GENDER DIFFERENCES**

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Abstract

The current study explored the relationship between internet addiction, self-esteem and psychological well-being among college students. The study involved 100 students (50 males and 50 females) from in and around district Patiala (Punjab). The students were evaluated using Internet Addiction Test (IAT), Rosenberg Self-esteem scale and Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being (SPWB). The result indicated a significant correlation exists between internet addiction, self-esteem and psychological well-being. Males were high on internet addiction as compared to females. No significant gender differences were found in self-esteem and psychological well-being.

Keywords: *Internet addiction, Self-esteem, Psychological well-being, Gender difference*

Internet has become an integral part in people's lives. With revolution in technology internet is now available to everybody irrespective of their age. It not only serves as the largest source of information but it is also a medium for social interaction and entertainment across the world. Internet has successfully abolished all the human geographical barriers. In today's world life without internet is unimaginable. There is no doubt that internet has played a dominant role in transforming the life of people, but at the same time its uncontrolled usage can have serious repercussions. This obstreperous use of internet has led to the inception of concept of internet addiction. (Liu and Potenza, 2007). Internet addiction involves preoccupation with internet, spending excess amount of time to achieve satisfaction, inability to cut down internet use, intense nervousness and aggression in the event of deprivation, and progressive deterioration of social and family life (Young, 2004). It has been observed that spending long hours on internet stimulates the reward circuit in brain thus shooting a neurotransmitter in the brain called dopamine. This further produces the experience of euphoria which is tantamount to drug induced state thus serving as an impetus for developing symptoms of internet addiction. (Liu & Luo, 2015). Though internet addiction has not been officially recognized as a mental disorder, but this addiction is particularly concerning for children and adolescence. Young minds are pliable; it's difficult for them to handle the amount of information available on internet. Moreover, their cognitive and emotional immaturity impedes their objective judgment. So, the effects of uncontrolled use of internet manifests in variety of pathological psycho-physical and social effects such as anger, lack of patience, social withdrawal, depression, disappointment, low self-esteem and thus jeopardizing one's mental health.

Self-esteem too is considered as an important factor in problematic internet use. Self-esteem is a person's overall sense of self-worth, it encompasses beliefs about oneself along with emotional states. Self-esteem plays a remarkable role in a person's

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motivation and success. Low self-esteem can restrain a person from success whereas a healthy self-esteem can help him/her achieve goals. There have been numerous studies that assessed the relationship between self-esteem and internet addiction. According to Aydm& San (2011) there exists a negative correlation between self-esteem and internet addiction. Another study also found a significant and negative correlation between self-esteem and internet addiction (Bahrainian et al., 2014). Armstrong et al., (2000) found that poorer self-esteem is a reliable predictor of internet addiction as compared to impulsivity.

Pathological use of internet has devastating effects on one's mental health. Internet addiction causes impairment in people's social and cognitive functioning. Spending excessive time on internet reduces the average amount of time a person spend with his/her family and friends, reduction in social circle and affecting an individual's ability to interact face to face. This further leads to feeling of loneliness and depression (Kraut et al., 1998). This can be catastrophic for an individual's psychological well-being. According to six factor model, psychological well-being is comprised of six components, positive relations with others, personal mastery, autonomy, purpose and meaning in life and personal growth and development. The impact on emotions triggered by internet addiction has a direct correlation with psychological well-being (Cabral et al., 2016). Previous studies have also found a positive correlation between internet addiction and depression (Orsal et al.,2013; Young 1998). Loneliness, depression, anxiety and other psychological problems are a big stumbling block in one's psychological well-being. The purpose of the study is to discover the relationship between internet addiction, self-esteem and psychological well-being in light of gender differences.

Objectives

The present study has following objectives: To investigate the relationship between internet addiction and self -esteem among college students; To investigate the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well- being among college students; To investigate the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among college students; To study the gender difference in internet addiction, self -esteem and psychological well- being among college students.

Hypotheses

H₁ There exists no a correlation between internet addiction and self-esteem among college students; H₂ There exists no correlation between internet addiction and psychological well- being among college students; H₃ There exists no correlation between self-esteem and psychological well- being among college students; H₄ There exists no significant gender differences in self-esteem, psychological well- being and internet addiction among college students.

Methodology

The sample constitutes 100 college students (50 males and 50 females) between the age group of 19-24 years of age. The sample was drawn from Fatehgarh Sahib with convenience sampling method.

Measures: The following questionnaires were administered for the present study - Internet Addiction Test (Kimberley and Young 1998): It is a 20 item scale to measures the presence and severity of internet dependence among adults. It is a 5 point Likert Scale ranging from 0 to 5 with a maximum score of 100. According to IAT the score of 0 to 30 reflects normal usage, whereas a score ranging from 31 to 49 mild; 50 to 79 moderate; and a score of 80 to 100 reflects severe dependence on internet. IAT has a strong internal consistency ranging from 0.90- 0.93.

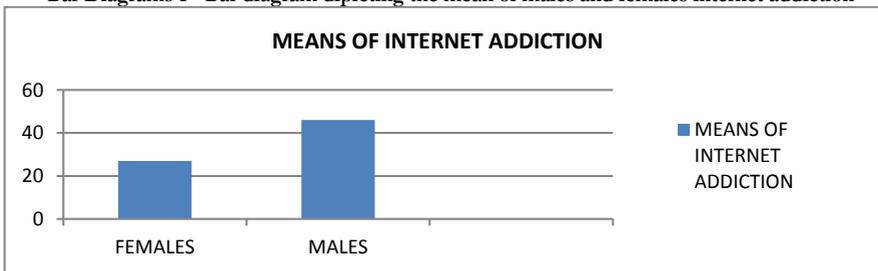
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965): It is a 10 item scale that access overall self-worth by measuring positive and negative feelings about self. The scale constitutes 4 point Likert format with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Higher score on the test indicates higher self-esteem. Rosenberg Self- Esteem scale has an internal consistency ranging from 0.77 to 0.88.

Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being (SPWB) (1995): This scale measures six aspects of psychological well- being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. The present study was conducted using the shortest version of SPWB that consist of 1to 8 items. It is a six point scale with responses ranging from 1(strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

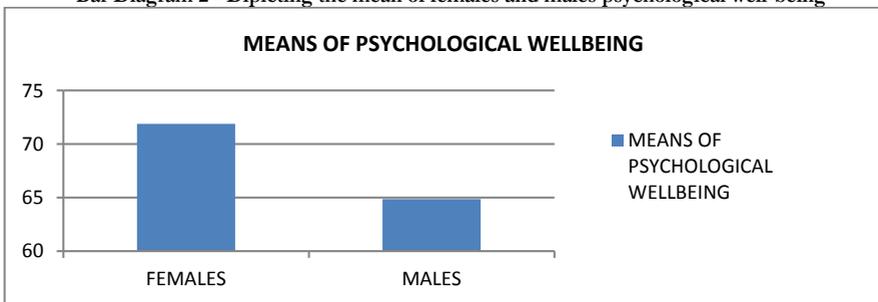
Results:

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between internet addiction, self-esteem and psychological well- being in light of the gender differences among college students. The score obtained on measures of internet addiction, self-esteem and psychological well- being were analysed using various statistical techniques.

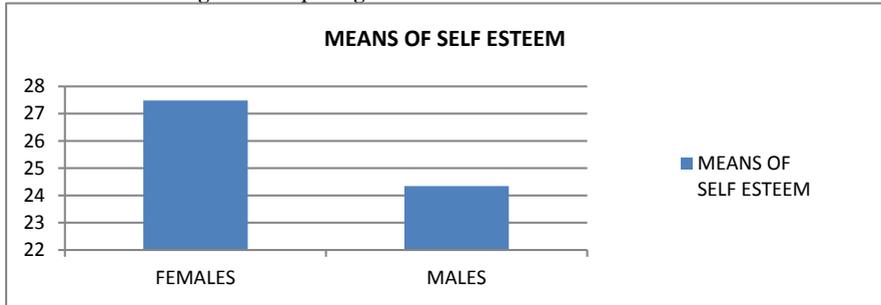
Bar Diagrams 1 - Bar diagram depicting the mean of males and females internet addiction



Bar Diagram 2 - Depicting the mean of females and males psychological well-being



Bar Diagram 3 - Depicting the mean of females and males self-esteem



Correlation

Table No 2.1 - Displaying The Correlation between Internet Addiction and Self-Esteem among College Student (N=100)

Variables	IA	SE
IA	-	-.772**
SE	-	-

p<0.01** *Note: IA: Internet addiction; SE: Self-esteem

Table 2.2 - Showing The Correlation Between Internet Addiction and Psychological Well-Being Among College Students (N=100)

Variables	IA	PSW
IA	-	-.800
SE	-	-

p<0.01** *Note: IA: Internet addiction; PSW: Psychological well- being

Table 2.3 - Showing The Correlation Between Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-Being Among College Students (N=100)

Variables	PSW	SE
PSW	-	.749
SE	-	-

p<0.01** *Note: SE: Self-esteem; PSW: Psychological well- being

T-Test:

Table 3.1 - Showing The Gender Differences in Internet Addiction Among College Students (N=100)

Gender	N	MEAN	SD	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig
Females	50	38.72	21.290	3.011	-5.460	.000
Males	50	46.02	21.424	3.030		

Table 3.2 - Showing The Gender Differences in Self-Esteem Among College Students (N=100)

Gender	N	MEAN	SD	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig
Females	50	27.48	7.089	1.003	2.350	.021
Males	50	24.34	6.245	.883		

Table 3.3 - Showing The Gender Differences in Psychological Well-Being Among College Students (N=100)

Gender	N	MEAN	SD	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig
Females	50	71.88	14.378	2.033	2.179	.032
Males	50	64.86	17.672	2.499		

Discussion

The Present study was designed to investigate the relationship between internet addiction, self-esteem and psychological well-being in light of gender differences. The results of the study rejected (H₁) there exists no correlation between internet addiction and self-esteem. It was seen that internet addiction is negatively related to self-esteem among college students. The present results are consistent with the previous researches. Bahrainian et al., (2014) found a significant and negative correlation between self-esteem and internet addiction. They argued that self-esteem can be a strong predictor of internet addiction. Students who score high on internet addiction are more likely to have low self-esteem. According to a cross-cultural study done by Blachnio et al., (2016) people with low self-esteem often have a problem of excessive internet use. This uncontrolled usage of internet is an attempt to compensate for their low self-esteem. These results could be due the reason that more a student would spend time on internet lesser would be his/her social interactions. Self-esteem and social interaction have a reciprocal link (Harris and Orth, 2019). A person with high self-esteem would like to interact with others and make friends whereas the one with low self-esteem would be more withdrawn and prefer to stay alone. Low self-esteem individuals experience high distress due to interpersonal problems in various domains of their lives (Paz et al, 2016). Moreover, individuals who spend more time on social media and internet are more likely to compare themselves with others. Social media is a platform where everyone tries to portray a perfect life which is often not true. Usually people compare their offline self to the perfect online self of others, and this social comparison has devastating effects on their mental health. This social comparison can instigate disappointment and dissatisfaction in their lives hence directly affecting their self-esteem.

The results rejected (H₂) there exists no correlation between Internet addiction and psychological well-being. It is evident from the results that there exists a strong negative correlation between internet addiction and psychological well-being. A student who scores high on internet addiction will have low psychological well-being. Internet addiction is a negative predictor of Psychological well-being (Sharma et al., 2018). According to a study higher the pathological use of internet, lower is the Psychological well-being. Psychological well-being was predicted negatively by diminished impulse control, loneliness/depression, social comfort, and distraction (Cardak, 2013). As we have seen that internet addiction has devastating effects on self-esteem so an individual with low self-esteem would think negative of themselves and believe that they are not worthy of love and happiness. This would further affect their psychological well-being. Moreover, someone who is addicted to internet would avoid any social interacting with others. Their interest in virtual world is an escape from reality. Such individual would be more withdrawn and isolated which make them prone to depression and loneliness; this would further lower their psychological well-being.

The results rejected (H₃) there exists no correlation between self-esteem and psychological well-being. According to the results there exists a strong positive

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correlation between Psychological well-being and self-esteem. The results are in line with previous researches. High self-esteem is associated with higher psychological well-being. Higher the scores on autonomy, purpose in life and environmental mastery greater would be the self-esteem (Paradise and Kernis, 2002). An individual who has high psychological well-being would lead a happy and satisfied life; such individual would embrace the changes that life has to offer and would accept challenges in life with a positive attitude. This optimistic attitude would help them to navigate life and achieve their goals and, hence boosting their self-esteem. This relationship is vice-versa. i.e. an individual with high self-esteem would be more confident and have positive relationship with others. So they tend to create positive experience in their life and hence have good psychological well-being.

There exists a significant gender differences in internet addiction among college students. The results depicted that males are high on internet addiction than females. The results are consistent with previous researches. According to a study boys spend more time on internet than girls. Girls made more use of social networking sites whereas boys used the internet for online role playing games and adult sites (Dufouret al., 2016). Indian culture is male dominated, so males have more freedom than females, so the pathological use of internet is seen more in males than females (Barmola, 2015). The male predominance on internet addiction rate among adolescence and young adult is seen globally even though the internet usage is observed to be equal in both the genders (Kannan et al., 2019). One of the reasons of this difference could be conventional social roles. In Indian society females are expected to do household chores and take care of the family whereas males have more freedom to utilize their time the way they want. Moreover, the desire to succeed in females pushes them to study hard and stay focused on their career. So, in such scenarios uninhibited use of internet would be a distraction that they like to avoid, whereas males are more autonomous and have the luxury of being a preferred child. So, they resort to internet in their leisure time. Online games are the culprit that satisfies their aggressive instinct. Hence internet addiction is high in males.

The results showed no significant gender differences among college students in self-esteem. The present results are in contradiction with the previous studies. According to a study done by Gosling et al., in 2015 there exists a significant gender difference in self-esteem and men had higher levels of self-esteem than women. The obtained results could be due to change in women's position in the country. Present day woman is empowered, independent and confident. The reliance on men is decreasing and women are flourishing in their career going against the conventional societal roles. The present results showed no significant gender differences in psychological well-being. The results are inconsistent with the previous findings. Statistically significant differences were found in some of the psychological dimensions, such as men scored high on self-acceptance and autonomy whereas women scored high on personal growth and positive relations with others (Matud, 2019). The present results could be justified with the changing social structure. Women are more aware, outgoing and becoming more autonomous in various life domains. They are better off today and

have good careers. They fulfill various social roles with strength and poise. Hence have better psychological well-being

Conclusion

We can draw following conclusions from the present study: The present study revealed that there exists a negative correlation between internet addiction and self-esteem; There exists an inverse relationship exists between internet addiction and psychological well-being; Self-esteem and psychological well-being are directly linked. Higher the self-esteem higher would be psychological well-being; There is a significant gender differences in internet addiction among college students. Scores revealed that males are higher on internet addiction than females; No significant gender differences were found in self-esteem and psychological well-being among college students.

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