



SOCIAL INTERACTION ANXIETY, SELF-ESTEEM VIS-A-VIS INTERNET USAGE – A STUDY ON YOUNG ADULTS

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Abstract

The aim of the present investigation is to study the social interaction anxiety and self-esteem of internet users between the ages 18 to 25 years. Accordingly, a group of 90 internet users (30 from internet user without addiction, 30 from internet user with mild addiction and 30 from internet user with moderate addiction) were selected as sample in this investigation. A General Information Schedule, Internet Addiction Test, Social Interaction Anxiety Scale and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale were used as tools. The findings revealed that social interaction anxiety increases with the increase of internet usage, on the other hand, self-esteem is comparatively higher among the internet users without addiction than that of the mild and moderately addicted internet users. Besides this, there is positive correlation between internet usage and social interaction anxiety. On the contrary, there is negative correlation between internet usage and self-esteem. Considering the findings of the study, it can be said that there is a dire need to develop intervention strategies for the internet addicted people to increase their self-esteem and also to reduce their problems related to social interaction anxiety.

Keywords : Social-interaction anxiety, Self-esteem and Internet usage

Internet is the new tool that is evolving into an essential part of everyday life all over the world (Nalwa & Anand, 2003). It is a global linking of computers that allows information transfer. In spite of the widely perceived merits of this tools, psychologists and educators have been aware of the negative impact of its use, especially over or misuse and the related physical and psychological problems (Greenfield, 2000). Internet addiction can be defined as a maladaptive pattern of internet usage that significantly interferes with a person's normal daily routines or activities, one's work or school environment and one's psychological well-being. In this context it can be said that social interaction anxiety refers to feelings of tension, apprehension, self-consciousness, emotional distress and increased autonomic arousal triggered in anticipated or actual social situations, particularly when a person perceives being exposed to negative evaluation by others. Research findings revealed that the higher the increase of internet usage, the higher is the social anxiety. Many studies indicate that people may develop a new lifestyle through internet activities, which may cause worsening in their actual social relationship. Chou & Hsiao (2000) indicated that internet snatches away individual from social life and limits real social relations. Suhail and Bargees (2006) identified in a study that internet use causes difficulties in maintaining interpersonal relations among the youngster. Self-esteem refers to one's sense of worth or importance and it includes both cognitive and affective elements. Murali and George (2007) mentioned that lower self-esteem triggers excessive internet use. Shotton (1991) found that internet addiction decreases self-esteem of the individuals. Considering the above, the present investigation has been designed to study the social interaction anxiety and self-esteem of a group of internet users without addiction, with mild addiction and also with moderate addiction.

Objectives

To study the social interaction anxiety of internet users without addiction, with mild addiction and with moderate addiction between the ages 18 -25 years.

To study the self-esteem of internet users without addiction,

with mild addiction and with moderate addiction between the ages 18 -25 years.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis – I : Internet user without addiction and mild addiction, mild addiction and moderate addiction and also moderate addiction and without addiction respectively differ among themselves in terms of social interaction anxiety.

Hypothesis – II : Internet user without addiction and mild addiction, mild addiction and moderate addiction and also moderate addiction and without addiction separately differ among themselves in terms of self-esteem.

Hypothesis – III : There is positive correlation between internet usage and social interaction anxiety.

Hypothesis – IV : There is positive correlation between internet usage and self-esteem.

Study Area And Sample

A group of 90 internet users (30 from without addiction, 30 from mild addiction and 30 from moderate addiction) were selected as sample from different areas of Kolkata City. They are between the ages 18 to 25 years. Equal gender ratio was followed. Their educational qualification is at least Higher Secondary.

Tools Used

General Information Schedule : It consists of items like name, address, age, gender, educational qualification etc.

Internet Addiction Test (Screening Device) : It consists of 20 items answerable in a five-point scale which measures mild, moderate and severe level of internet addiction, developed by Dr. Kimberly Young.

Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (Mattick and Clarke, 1998) : It consists of 20 items answerable in a five-point scale on which respondents rate their experiences in social situations associated with social anxiety and social phobia.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1986) : It consists of 10 items answerable in a four-point scale which measures state self-esteem by asking the respondents to reflect on their general feelings about themselves.

Administration, Scoring And Statistical Treatment

General Information Schedule, Internet addiction Test, Social

Interaction Anxiety and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale were administered to the selected group of subjects by giving proper instruction. Data were collected and properly scrutinized. Scoring was done with the help of standard scoring key. Tabulation was done for each group and for each test separately. Mean and S.D. were calculated for each test separately. Comparisons were made by applying t-test. Correlation was done between internet addiction and social interaction anxiety and also between internet addiction and self-esteem.

Results And Interpretation

Data inserted in Table – 1 reveals the comparative pictures between the three groups of internet user in terms of social interaction anxiety. From the mean score it can be said that social interaction anxiety is comparatively less among the internet user without addiction than those of the mild and moderate level addiction. Internet users who are under mild and moderate level of addiction are comparatively shy, facing difficulty to meet people in social situations, facing difficulty to communicate and convey their feelings and thoughts with other people directly that those of the other two groups. Further it can be said that although internet user with mild and moderate level of addiction do not exceed the cutoff score regarding social phobia and social anxiety still internet user with mild and moderate level of addiction shows comparatively high social interaction anxiety than that of those of the internet user without addiction. Thus, the Hypothesis – I is accepted for Group A vs B and Group A vs C but rejected for Group B vs C.

Table 1 : Comparisons between the three groups (A vs B, B vs C and C vs A) in terms of social interaction anxiety

Comparison between	Social	Interaction	Anxiety	t-test
	N	Mean	S.D.	
Internet user without addiction (A)	30	18.70	9.98	2.21* *
Internet user with mild addiction (B)	30	24.30	9.79	
Internet user with mild addiction (B)	30	24.30	9.79	0.63*
Internet user with moderate addiction (C)	30	25.97	10.73	
Internet user with moderate addiction (C)	30	25.97	10.73	2.73* **
Internet user without addiction (A)	30	18.70	9.98	

Score range : 0-60 with cutoffs of 34 or more indicative of social phobia and 43 or more indicative of social anxiety High score indicates high social interaction anxiety and vice-versa.

* Difference is insignificant, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

Comparisons were also made between the three groups of internet users separately in terms of self-esteem, no significant difference was observed between Group B vs C and Group C vs A but Group A vs B differ significantly at 0.05 level (Data inserted in Table – 2). Analysis of data further reveals that internet users without addiction have comparatively higher self-esteem than that of the other two groups but all the groups belong to the category of normal self-esteem. It can further be said that internet users without addiction have more positive attitude towards themselves in any aspects than that of the other two groups. Thus the Hypothesis – II is accepted for Group A vs B and is rejected for Group B vs C and Group C vs A.

Table 2 : Comparisons between the three groups (A vs B, B vs C and C vs A) in terms of self-esteem

Comparison between	Self	Esteem	S.D.	t-test
	N	Mean		
Internet user without addiction (A)	30	21.33	3.89	2.14**
Internet user with mild addiction (B)	30	18.67	5.61	
Internet user with mild addiction (B)	30	18.67	5.61	1.42*
Internet user with moderate addiction (C)	30	20.47	4.13	
Internet user with moderate addiction (C)	30	20.47	4.13	0.84*
Internet user without addiction (A)	30	21.33	3.89	

Score range : 0-30 where 15-20 : Normal self-esteem, <15 : Some self-esteem issues are present, < 10 : very low self esteem.

High score indicates high self-esteem and vice-versa

* Difference is insignificant, ** p < 0.05.

Data inserted in Table – 3 reveals the correlation between internet usage and social interaction anxiety. From the findings it can be said that there is positive correlation between these two. Thus the Hypothesis – III is accepted in this investigation.

Table 3 : Correlation between internet usage and social interaction anxiety

Correlation between	Correlation coefficient
Internet usage	0.67*
Social Interaction Anxiety	* Positive correlation

Data inserted in Table – 4 reveals the correlation between internet usage and self esteem. From the findings it can be said that there is negative correlation between these two. Thus the Hypothesis – III is rejected in this investigation.

Table 4 : Correlation between internet usage and self-esteem

Correlation between	Correlation coefficient
Internet usage	- 0.58*
Self-esteem	* Negative correlation

Concluding Remarks

Internet addiction has begun to be an important problem with the youngsters starting to misuse internet. There are several researches in the field of psychology that examine the psychological effect of internet addiction. The present findings reveal that internet user without addiction, internet user with mild and moderate addiction differ in connection with social interaction anxiety and also with self-esteem. Not only this there is positive correlation between internet usage and social interaction anxiety, on the contrary, there is negative correlation between internet usage and self-esteem. This study can help the individuals with internet addiction to gain a better understanding of them with direction to check their compulsive internet use and seek help in time of crisis. The data based facts and the instrument used may be utilized by psychologists to develop strategies for problem management and to develop certain awareness among people regarding the internet usage and their associate variables.

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