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A STUDY ON INTERNET ADDICTION AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Abstract

Internet addiction is increasingly a topic of concern especially among students since when abused extensively, mental health would be adversely affected. The quantitative methodology was applied with the help of the structured questionnaire that included demographic information and usage patterns of the internet. To establish the effects of gender, age, residential status, and device use on internet addiction and mental health, statistical tests, such as t-tests, one-way ANOVA and correlation analysis, were performed. The results indicate that there is no significant correlation between the gender, residential status and the level of internet addiction. Nonetheless, the hostelers and students in their younger years showed greater addiction. This paper emphasizes the necessity of raising awareness in order to encourage the use of the internet in moderation and protect the psychological health of students.

Keywords: *Internet addiction, mental health, psychological well-being, digital dependence*

Introduction

In the wake of the growing infiltration of digital technology, internet penetration has turned into a part of the lives of students. Although the internet has improved the educational system and contact with others, overuse also leads to addiction, causing negative psychological consequences. This paper explores how internet addiction affects the mental health of MSW students, studying the most significant demographic variables affecting the addiction trends.

Literature Review

A number of studies have been done on the connection between internet addiction and mental health. Young (1998) identified internet addiction as a behavioral disorder in the international scene, which has a detrimental effect on academic achievement, interpersonal relationship, and general well-being. Kuss et al. (2014) noted that overuse of the internet may cause social isolation, anxiety and psychological trauma especially in adolescents and young adults. The results were also supported by Montag et al. (2016), who found the connection between problematic internet use and poor emotional well-being as well as increased levels of stress. Sharma et al. (2019) noted the increasing rates of internet addiction among university students in the Indian context, which is attributed to sleep disorders and depression.

Gupta et al. (2020) discovered that overuse of social media adversely affected the academic performance and psychological well-being of students and contributed to the development of stress and the decrease of self-esteem. The study of internet addiction in young Indian adolescents by Kumar and Mondal (2021) correlated it with attention deficit, poor social interactions, and emotional instability. As well, studies using the PWB Scale by Indian researchers have discovered that highly internet-dependent people possess low environmental mastery and low levels of life satisfaction (Rana and Singh, 2022).

Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design, using a structured questionnaire to collect data from MSW students of a reputed college. Due to confidentiality and research publication terms, the name of the college is not disclosed. The study aims to analyse patterns of internet addiction among students, ensuring ethical considerations and anonymity of participants.

Data Collection: A self-administered questionnaire was distributed among the participants. The questionnaire covered demographic details and internet usage habits

Data Analysis: The collected data were analyzed using statistical tools, including crosstabulation, t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Karl Pearson's correlation analysis.

Table 1: Gender * Addiction Level (Cross Tabulation)

Gender	Overall Addiction			Total
	Low Addicted	Moderately Addicted	Highly Addicted	
Male	20(52.6) (54.1)	8(21.1) (42.1)	10(26.3) (55.6)	38(100.0) (51.4)
Female	17(47.2) (45.9)	11(30.6) (57.9)	8(22.2) (44.4)	36(100.0) (48.6)
Total	**37(50.0) (100.0)**	**19(25.7) (100.0)**	**18(24.3) (100.0)**	**74(100.0) (100.0)**

The data shows the relationship between gender and mobile/internet addiction. Among the respondents, more males (More than Half at 53%) have low addiction compared to females (Less than Half at 47%). This means that slightly more men use their phones or the internet in a controlled way. However, when it comes to moderate addiction, more females (More than Two Fifth at 31%) fall into this category than males (More than Two Fifth at 21%), indicating that women are more likely to be in the middle range of addiction. On the other hand, in the highly addicted category, males (More than One Fourth at 26%) are slightly more than females (More than One Fourth at 22%), showing that men are more likely to have a strong dependency on mobile and internet usage. Overall, males are more likely to fall into the extreme categories either low addiction or high addiction while females are more commonly found in the moderately addicted group.

Table 2: Age * Addiction Level (Cross Tabulation)

Age	Overall Addiction			Total
	Low Addicted	Moderately Addicted	Highly Addicted	
20 – 22	28(53.8) (75.7)	12(23.1) (63.2)	12(23.1) (66.7)	52(100.0) (70.3)
23 – 25	8(40.0) (21.6)	7(35.5) (36.8)	5(25.0) (27.8)	20(100.0) (27.0)
25 & above	1(50.0) (2.7)	0(0.0) (0.0)	1(50.0) (5.6)	2(100.0) (2.7)
Total	**37(50.0) (100.0)**	**19(25.7) (100.0)**	**18(24.3) (100.0)**	**74(100.0) (100.0)**

The data shows how mobile and internet addiction varies by age. The 20-22 age group is the largest, with More than Half (53.8%) being low addicted, less than One Third (23.1%) being moderately addicted, and another Less than One Third (23.1%) being highly addicted. This group makes up More than Half (70.3%) of all respondents. The 23-25 age group has More than Two Fifth (40%) in the low addiction category, more than One Third (35.5%) moderately addicted, and One Fourth (25%) highly addicted. This group contributes Less than One Third (27%) to the total sample. The 25 and above age group is much smaller, with Exactly half (50%) in the low addiction category and again exactly half (50%) in the highly addicted category, but no one in the moderately addicted group. This group represents only Less than One Tenth (2.7%) of all respondents.

To conclude younger individuals (20-22) make up the largest group and are more likely to show either low or moderate addiction. Older age groups (23-25 and 25 & above) have fewer respondents and tend to show a wider variety of addiction levels, with a slight decrease in overall addiction as age increases.

Table 3: Residential * Addiction Level (Cross Tabulation)

Residential	Overall Addiction			Total
	Low Addicted	Moderately Addicted	Highly Addicted	
Hostel	16(45.7) (43.2)	11(31.4) (57.9)	8(22.9) (44.4)	35(100.0) (47.3)
Day scholars not with parents	20(24.1) (21.6)	7(35.5) (36.8)	5(25.0) (27.8)	20(100.0) (27.0)
Day scholars with parents	1(50.0) (2.7)	1(50.0) (5.3)	0(0.0) (0.0)	2(100.0) (2.7)
Total	**37(50.0) (100.0)**	**19(25.7) (100.0)**	**18(24.3) (100.0)**	**74(100.0) (100.0)**

The data shows how mobile and internet addiction varies based on residential status. Among Hostel residents, less than Half (45.7%) have low addiction, more than One Third (31.4%) are moderately addicted, and Less than One Fourth (22.9%) are highly addicted. This group makes up Less than Half (47.3%) of all respondents. For Day scholars not with parents, less than One Fourth (24.1%) are low addicted, more than One Third (35.5%) are moderately addicted, and More than One Fourth (25%) are highly addicted, contributing Less than One Third (27%) to the total sample. In the Day scholars with parents' category, Exactly Half (50%) are low addicted and Exactly Half (50%) are moderately addicted, with no one in the highly addicted group. This group represents only Less than One Tenth (2.7%) of the total respondents.

To conclude Hostel residents, have the highest overall addiction levels, with a balance of low, moderate, and high addiction. Day scholars, especially those not living with parents, have a higher proportion of moderate addiction compared to other groups. Those living with parents show less addiction overall, with a more even split between low and moderate addiction.

Gender and various dimensions of Internet Addiction

Gender is a significant demographic factor influencing the psychological well-being of students. It has a considerable impact on mental health, and patterns of internet usage and social interactions play important roles as determinants. The online environment, access to supportive resources, and cultural perceptions of gender significantly affect how students perceive and manage their mental well-being. While excessive or negative internet usage can lead to increased stress, anxiety, or isolation, positive interactions in supportive online spaces can enhance coping skills and resilience. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing strategies to foster a balanced and healthy psychological state among students.

Table 4: 't' test between Gender and various dimensions of Internet Addiction

SI. No	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	StatisticalInference
1	**Internet Usage** Male (38) Diploma (36)	 57.50 55.17	 12.825 15.689	t = 2.200 p = 0.142 p > 0.05 Not Significant

The table show no significant differences in psychological well-being between males and females or in internet usage between males, as both p-values are greater than 0.05. This indicates that gender does not significantly affect these variables.

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference between the gender of the students and the various dimensions like psychological well-being and internet usage.

Research Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant difference between the gender of the students and the various dimensions like psychological well-being and internet usage.

Result: Since p > 0.05 for both factors, there is no significant difference between the gender of the students and the dimensions like psychological well-being and internet usage. This means that gender does not significantly influence these dimensions. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted, and the research hypothesis is rejected.

Residential Status and Various dimensions of Internet Addiction

Residential status is a significant demographic factor influencing the psychological well-being of students. It has a notable impact on mental health, where access to the internet and a supportive environment play important roles. The physical living conditions, available resources, and social atmosphere significantly affect students' overall well-being. While poor residential conditions or excessive internet usage can lead to stress, isolation, and decreased academic performance, a supportive environment with balanced internet use can enhance mental health and productivity. Understanding these interactions is crucial in developing strategies to promote a positive living and learning environment for students.

Table 5: One Way Analysis among the Residential Status and Various dimensions of Internet Addiction

SI. No	Source	SS	DF	MS	Mean	Statistical Inference
1	**Internet usage** Between Groups Within Groups	 72.806 1036.176	 2 52	 573.088 192.324	G1= 52.49 G2= 60.30 G3= 51.50	F = 2.980 P = 0.057 P > 0.05 Not Significant

The table reveals that none of the psychological well-being and internet usage factors show significant differences between the groups. Therefore, the results suggest that psychological well-being and internet usage remain consistent across the groups, with no notable variations based on the factors analysed.

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference among the residential status of the students and the various dimensions like psychological well-being and internet usage.

Research Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant difference among the residential status of the students and the various dimensions like psychological well-being and internet usage.

Result: Since p > 0.05 for both factors, there is no significant difference among the residential status of the students and the dimensions like psychological well-being and internet usage. This means that residential status does not significantly influence these dimensions. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted, and the research hypothesis is rejected.

Device usage and Overall Internet Addiction

Device usage plays a major role as a variable that helps in classifying the respondents. The table shows the correlation coefficient between device usage and several aspects of internet addiction, such as frequency of use, influencing factors, impact on social life, emotional well-being, and work/study performance, as determined by Karl Pearson. It allows researchers to distribute data based on respondents' device usage and provides insights into overall internet addiction.

Table 6: Karl's Pearson's Co- efficient of correlation between Device usage and Overall Internet Addiction

Sl. No	Variable	Correlation value	Statistical Inference
1.	Internet Addiction	0.194	P > 0.098 **Not Significant**

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant relationship between various device used by the respondents and Internet addiction.

Research Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant relationship between Various device used by the respondents and Internet addiction.

Result: Since P > 0.05, the correlation is not statistically significant. Therefore, Device usage does not have a meaningful impact on overall internet addiction.

Results and Discussion

Gender and Internet Addiction Crosstabulation analysis revealed that males were more likely to fall into extreme addiction categories (low or high), whereas females exhibited moderate addiction levels.

Age and Internet Addiction The 20-22 age group exhibited higher addiction levels compared to older groups.

Residential Status and Internet Addiction Hostel residents reported higher addiction levels than day scholars.

Device Usage and Internet Addiction Correlation analysis using Karl Pearson's coefficient (r = 0.194, p > 0.05) showed no significant relationship between the type of device used and overall internet addiction.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that while internet addiction is prevalent among students, demographic factors such as gender, age, and residential status do not significantly influence addiction levels. However, younger students and hostel residents exhibited slightly higher addiction tendencies. It is recommended that colleges and universities can implement digital detox programs like designated no-screen zones, promote awareness campaigns to encourage responsible internet use, encourage healthy alternative activities like sports and recreational activities, creative clubs and hobbies, volunteering and community Engagement. Integrate responsible internet use, time management, and the impact of digital media on mental health in skill courses

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