Research Article

Internet Overuse and Psychological Well-Being Among Young Adult Women

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A B S T R A C T

Introduction: Young adulthood is a period of development and healthy women are the cornerstone of a healthy society. Technology fulfils many human needs, but its overuse is a risk. Being addicted to technology has its effects on the psychological and physical well-being of an individual. For a brighter and healthier future, it is essential to ensure the well-being of young adult women. The study was conducted to find out the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being among young adult women between the ages of 20 and 24 years.

Method: The research design used was an ex post facto design. The study was conducted in an engineering college and an arts and science college in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. Sixty postgraduate female students from professional and non-professional disciplines (30 in each group), using the internet (at least for the past six months) were included in the study. Young's internet addiction scale and Riff's psychological well-being scale were used to measure internet addiction and psychological well-being respectively. Statistical analysis was done using independent t test, correlation coefficient and regression analysis.

Results: In this study, it was found that professional young adult women significantly differed in psychological well-being as compared to non-professional young adult women with a p value of 0.001. A negative correlation was found between internet addiction and psychological well-being. It was observed that demographic variables such as birth status, family type, working status of the mother and purpose of internet usage did not significantly predict internet addiction.

Conclusion: Psychological well-being is significantly higher in non-professional students than professional in the young adult women population. Internet usage does not affect the psychological well-being of this age group.

Keywords: Young Adulthood, Psychological Well-Being, Internet, Internet Addiction, Overuse, Professional, Non-Professional

Introduction

There has been a steep increase in the rate of internet browsing since the 1990s. In the last twenty years, our way of living and working style has undergone a drastic change due to the development of communication and information technologies. Asia is found to have the highest number of internet users in the world. In Asia, there are approximately 922.3 million who make up around 40% of the world's internet-using population, according to the data by Internet World Status. Studies done earlier showed that 83.4% of frequent internet users fall in the age group between 20 and 40 years.

Young adulthood is a period of development comprised of health-improving and impairing lifestyles. They become more independent, explore different life possibilities, and come across career decisions and life decisions during this phase. Healthy women are the cornerstone of a healthy society. Factors favouring psychological well-being in men are stronger in adolescence than women but women improve their well-being from adolescence to young adulthood.[1] Advancing technology has made internet usage an integral part of life which is developing into a major factor affecting the psychological well-being of the general population, especially the youth. For a brighter and healthier future, it is essential to ensure the well-being of young adult women.

Generally, internet is used for education, entertainment, social networking and information sharing.[2] However, uncontrolled and excessive use by some individuals results in internet addiction. Internet users between 18 and 24 years of age are more at risk of developing internet addiction than older adults.[3] Internet addiction is an impulse-control disorder that does not involve an intoxicant.[4] Some studies have apparently concluded that young adults are the most active internet users and they spend around 3 hours a day connected to the internet.[5] The statement of the problem is to find out if family plays a pivotal role in straightening this maladjustment in this age group in the Indian context.

The internet can bring the whole world closer through its positive aspects like business transactions and communications, access to journals and other educational materials, connecting different social groups, maintaining relationships etc. The negative effects of the internet include psychological problems, behavioural changes, impact on interpersonal relationships, physical problems like migraine, headaches, sleep pattern disturbance etc.

Psychology being the science of mind and behaviour, can be affected by internet indulgence. It can cause restlessness, irritability, anxiety and low mood in persons who are staying for a long time on it. It has been predicted that internet addiction will become a serious health-related problem in the near future. Psychological well-being enables a person to approach other people and situations with confidence and optimism. For the enormous amount of transition they undergo, maintaining an optimal level of well-being can be a protective factor for young adults.

The aims and objectives of the present study were to measure internet overuse and psychological well-being, their relationship and the demographic factors that influence internet addiction among young adult women.

Methodology

Design and Sample

Ex post facto design was used in this study. The study was conducted for the duration of ten days in the month of April 2019 in an engineering college and an arts and science college in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. A total of 60 women (30 from professional and 30 from non-professional disciplines) who had been using the internet for at least the past six months were selected through purposive sampling method. The sample size (n) was calculated using power analysis. The students were explained about the nature and purpose of the study and informed consent to participate in the study was obtained. They were assured that the data would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. They were asked to choose the option which they felt was applicable to them. All the ethical guidelines were followed in the selection of samples and data collection, analysis and interpretation.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Postgraduate students
2. Professional and non-professional students
3. Female students
4. Age between 20 and 25 years
5. Students using the internet at least for the past 6 months
6. Students having their own smartphones

Exclusion Criteria

1. Non-students
2. Male students
3. Age above 25 years and below 20 years
4. Students who did not own a smartphone
5. Students not using the internet or using it for less than 6 months

Tools Used

Demographic details like the age, family type, working status of the mother, and purpose of using the internet were collected.

Internet Addiction Test (IAT)

Developed by Dr Kimberly Young, it consists of 20 items, with a five-point Likert scale. Total internet addiction scores range from 0 to 100; the higher the scores, higher is the

dependence on the internet. A score between 20 and 49 means an average online user. A score between 50 and 79 means you are experiencing occasional or frequent problems because of using the internet. More than 79 implies a strong addiction which needs intervention. It is a highly reliable and valid scale.[6] Cronbach's alpha was 0.889.

Ryff's Scale of Psychological Well-Being (PWB)

The 42-item version of Ryff's psychological well-being scale with 6 dimensions has 20 positively worded items and 22 negatively worded, which were reverse scored. The series of statements reflects six areas of psychological well-being. The areas are autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. High values indicate higher well-being. The students were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement, 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale was 0.817, indicating good internal consistency.[7,8]

Statistical Analysis

Independent t test was done to find the significant difference in internet addiction and well-being with regard to demographic variables. Pearson's product-moment correlation was done to find out the relationship between internet addiction and well-being. Regression analysis was done to find out the predictors of internet addiction.

Results

The various sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents such as birth status, family time spent, etc. are shown in Table 1.

The independent t test conducted to compare internet addiction and psychological well-being among young adult women of professional and non-professional disciplines showed a significant difference in the scores of psychological well-being between professional (M = 151.50, SD = 22.42) and non-professional (M = 169.26, SD = 15.81) students (t = 3.545, p = 0.001) and no significant difference in internet addiction between the participants of professional and non-professional disciplines (Table 2). The results suggested that non-professional students have better psychological well-being than professional students.

Table 1.Sociodemographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Sociodemographic Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Birth status	Single	8	11.4
	More than one	62	88.6
Family type	Nuclear	60	85.7
	Joint	10	14.3
Working status of mother	Working	17	24.3
	Not working	53	75.7
Purpose of internet usage	Education	5	7.1
	Entertainment	4	5.7
	Both	61	87.1
Regularity of exercise	Regular	33	47.1
	Irregular	37	52.9
Quality time with family (in hours)	2	11	15.7
	3	23	32.9
	4	18	25.7
	5	14	20.0
	6	4	5.7

Table 2.Mean, Standard Deviation, t Value and Level of Significance of Internet Addiction and Psychological Well-Being Among Young Adult Women of Professional and Non-Professional Disciplines

Variable	Discipline	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t Value	df	p Value
Internet addiction	Professional	30	65.06	9.95	0.359	58	0.721
	Non-professional	30	64.20	8.70			
Well-being	Professional	30	151.50	22.42	3.545	58	0.001
	Non-professional	30	169.26	15.81			

As presented in Table 3, the independent t test to compare the scores of internet addiction and psychological well-being among young adult women on the basis of birth status showed no significant difference in the scores of internet addiction of a single child (M = 64.90, SD = 8.013) and those of others (M = 64.32, SD = 10.69) with t = 0.237 and p = 0.814 and in the scores of psychological wellbeing of single child (M = 159.15, SD = 21.16) and others (M = 161.78, SD = 21.47) with t = 0.475 and p = 0.636. The results suggested that there was no difference in internet addiction and psychological well-being on the basis of birth status among young adult women. Birth order may not be associated with mental well-being and psychological distress for men or women.

Table 4 shows that the independent t test to compare the scores of internet addiction and psychological well-being among young adult women on the basis of family type revealed no significant difference in internet addiction in nuclear family (M = 65.23, SD = 8.72) and joint family (M = 63.59, SD = 10.29) with t = 0.630 and p = 0.532 as well as in psychological well-being of nuclear family (M = 157.52, SD = 21.26) joint family (M = 165.31, SD = 21.47) with t = 0.630 and p = 0.194. The results suggested that there was no difference in internet addiction and psychological well-being on the basis of family type among young adult women.

The independent t test to compare the scores of internet addiction and psychological well-being among young adult women on the basis of the working status of the mother showed no significant difference in internet addiction in children of working mothers (M = 64.92, SD = 10.55) and those of non-working mothers (M = 64.92, SD = 7.34) with t = 0.213 and p = 0.832) (Table 5). Similarly, no significant difference was observed in the psychological well-being of children of working mothers (M = 159.91, SD = 22.25) and those of non-working mothers (M = 161.04, SD = 20.13) with t = 0.204 and p = 0.839. The results suggested that there was no difference in internet addiction and psychological well-being of young adult women on the basis of the working status of the mother.

Table 3.Mean, Standard Deviation, 't' Value and Level of Significance on Internet Addiction and Psychological Well-Being Among Young Adult Women with Regard to Birth Status

Variable	Birth Status (Single Child)	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t Value	df	p Value
Internet addiction	Yes	32	64.90	8.013	0.237	58	0.814
	No	28	64.32	10.69			
Well-being	Yes	32	159.15	21.26	0.475	58	0.636
	No	28	161.78	21.47			

Table 4.Mean, Standard Deviation, 't' Value and Level of Significance on Internet Addiction and Psychological Well-Being Among Young Adult Women with Regard to Family Type

Variable	Family Type	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t Value	df	p Value
Internet addiction	Nuclear	38	65.23	8.72	0.630	58	0.532
	Joint	22	63.59	10.29			
Well-being	Nuclear	38	157.52	21.26	1.322	58	0.194
	Joint	22	165.31	21.47			

Table 5.Mean, Standard Deviation, 't' Value and Level of Significance on Internet Addiction and Psychological Well-Being Among Young Adult Women with Regard to Working Status of Mother

Variable	Working Status of Mother	N	M	Standard Deviation	t Value	df	p Value
Internet addiction	Working	35	64.42	10.55	0.213	58	0.832
	Not working	25	64.92	7.34			
Well-being	Working	35	159.91	22.25	0.204	58	0.839
	Not working	25	161.04	20.13			

As seen in Table 6, the scores of internet addiction and psychological well-being among young adult women showed no significant difference in internet addiction developed due to usage for education (M = 64.17, SD = 8.71) and that for other purposes (M = 64.91, SD = 9.72) with t = 0.308 and p = 0.759. Their psychological well-being also showed no significant difference in the case of purpose being education (M = 163.47, SD = 22.49) and that being others (M = 158.45, SD = 20.47) with t = 1.869 and p = 0.398. The results suggested that there was no difference in internet addiction and psychological well-being on the basis of the purpose of internet usage.

Table 7 shows a significant negative correlation between internet addiction and psychological well-being among young adult women. As internet addiction increases, psychological well-being decreases and vice versa. Students use the internet to cope with their stress by avoiding cognitive tasks. Research suggests that high levels of internet use can lead to psychological, physical and social health effects.

In Tables 8–10, multiple regression was calculated to predict internet addiction based on birth status, family type, working status of the mother and purpose of internet usage. It showed a regression equation (f (6,53) = 0.367, p < 0.897) with R^2 of 0.040. Participants predicted internet addiction is equal to 61.092 - 588 (birth status)[9] - 436 (family type) + 217 (working status of mother) + 1.007 (purpose of internet usage) where birth status was coded as 1: single child and 2: others, family type coded as 1: nuclear and 2: joint, working status of mother was coded as 1: working and 2: not working,[10] and purpose of internet usage was coded as 1: educational and 2: others. The analysis showed that demographic factors did not significantly predict internet addiction in young adult women.

Table 6.Mean, Standard Deviation, 't' Value and Level of Significance on Internet Addiction and Psychological Well-Being Among Young Adult Women with Regard to the Purpose of Internet Usage

Variable	Purpose	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t Value	df	p Value
Internet addiction	For education	23	64.17	8.71	0.308	58	0.759
	Others	37	64.91	9.72			
Well-being	For education	23	163.47	22.49	1.869	58	0.398
	Others	37	158.45	20.47			

Table 7.Relationship Between Internet Addiction and Psychological Well-Being Among Young Adult Women

Variable	N	Correlation Coefficient	p Value
Internet addiction	60	-0.520	0.000
Well-being	60		

Table 8.Modal Summary

Variable	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	0.200	0.040	-0.069	9.59492

Predictors: (constant), purpose, birth status, working, family type

Table 9.Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p Value
Regression	202.626	6	33.771	0.367	0.897
Residual	4879.307	53	92.062	-	-
Total	5081.933	59	-	-	-

Dependent variable: internet

Predictors: (constant), purpose, birth status, working, family type

Table 10. Coefficients

Variable	B	Std Error	Beta	t Value		p Value
Constant	61.092	9.542	-	6.402		0.000
Birth	-588	2.579	-0.032	-0.228		0.821
Family	-436	2.802	-0.023	-0.155		0.877
Working	217	2.616	0.012	0.083		0.934
Purpose	1.007	2.691	0.053	0.374		0.710

Dependent variable: internet

Discussion

Irrepressible urge accompanied by loss of control is called addiction. It disrupts the neural networking system due to which people may develop associated pathologies like depression, loneliness, and social anxiety. This study showed that a significant difference exists between the psychological well-being among professional and non-professional young adult women. A significant negative correlation was found between internet addiction and psychological well-being among young adult women. It can result in difficulty maintaining relationships, dishonesty about online activity and irregular eating and sleeping patterns in young adults. It was also seen that demographic variables did not predict internet addiction among young adult women.

As the disadvantages of internet overuse outweigh the advantages, and it impacts physical and mental health leading to the possibility of lifestyle disorders, it is imperative that adolescents become mindful of the utilisation of technology in the right way. It can help them alleviate issues like sleep disturbances, reduced attention span, obesity, over-anxiety, and depression.

Implications

This study gives interesting insights that may help to assess students intermittently with the internet addiction questionnaire and thereby control addiction. It may help to improve psychological well-being among professional students. The study can be further strengthened by increasing the sample size and including male students in both categories. Longitudinal studies can help in understanding pre- and post-exposure changes in this population.

Conclusion

This study shows that limited internet usage coupled with awareness is of key essence for overall physical and psychological well-being.

Conflict of Interest: None

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