

INTERNET ADDICTION IN THE DIGITAL AGE: BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS AND LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES FOR YOUNG ADULTS

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Abstract

Internet addiction has become a major worry in the digital age, especially for young folks. This study looks into the patterns of behavior linked to excessive internet use and considers the long-term effects on this population. The current study investigates how young adults' quality of life is affected by excessive internet use. Out of the 100 young adults in the Delhi/NCR area, 60 were chosen as a sample, and 50 of them met the requirements for internet addiction. The WHO Quality of Life Scale BREF (WHOQOL BREF) screening test was conducted using an Internet Addiction Test (IAT) and a personal data sheet that included information on age, gender, religion, education, and other factors. The results indicated that there is no discernible difference in the internet usage patterns of young individuals who identify as male or female. The current study's results also showed a negative relationship—perhaps clinically significant but not statistically supported—between addiction and quality of life. Through an analysis of these trends and results, the study highlights the need for focused treatments and regulations to lessen the negative consequences of internet addiction in young adults, encouraging better digital practices and general wellbeing.

Keywords: Internet Addiction, Digital Age, Behavioral Patterns, Young Adults, Consequences

1. INTRODUCTION

The onset of the digital age has revolutionized everyday existence, especially for young adults who grew up during an internet-dominated era. People's interactions with the world and with each other are changing as a result of the unparalleled access to information, entertainment, and social connections provided by this ubiquitous technology. But this continual connectedness has also brought forth a new set of difficulties, chief among them being the epidemic of internet addiction. Internet addiction is defined as excessive or obsessive internet use that interferes with day-to-day functioning. It is becoming more widely acknowledged as a major problem with substantial psychological, social, and physical effects. Young adults are particularly susceptible to internet addiction because of their stage of development, the social dynamics in their lives, and the importance of digital gadgets. Because members of this demographic frequently rely extensively on the internet for social contacts, education, and pleasure, setting up healthy limits can be challenging. The captivating quality of digital information combined with the accessibility of a wide range of online platforms can result in overuse and dependence. The prevalence of certain behavioral patterns, such as obsessive social media checking, extended gaming sessions, and binge-watching online content, is cause for concern since it may lead to addiction. Beyond short-term behavioral adjustments, internet addiction has long-term effects on the mental and physical well-being of young adults. Excessive internet use has been related in studies to a number of psychological problems, such as elevated stress, anxiety, and depression levels. Additionally, kids who are addicted to the internet may prioritize their online activities over their academics, which can have a negative impact on their academic performance and result in worse marks and less accomplishment. The social consequences are also concerning, as internet addiction exacerbates interpersonal interactions, social isolation, and communication deficits.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the long-term effects of internet addiction in young adults by delving further into the behavioral patterns linked to the disorder. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research aims to provide a thorough picture of how internet addiction develops and changes over time by combining quantitative data from surveys with qualitative insights from in-depth interviews. The study will also look at the larger consequences for the prospects of young adults in the future, including professional growth and general quality of life. The goal of this investigation is to provide information that will help policymakers and practitioners create effective therapies and policies that will lessen the harmful effects of internet addiction and

encourage positive digital behaviors. Recognizing the intricacies of internet addiction is crucial in a world where digital technology is constantly evolving and permeating every part of existence. This study fills a significant vacuum in the literature by concentrating on young adults and emphasizes the value of preventative actions to assist this vulnerable population. The knowledge gathered from this study will be extremely beneficial to educators, legislators, mental health specialists, and anybody else involved in promoting a responsible and balanced relationship with technology.

2. REVIEW OF LITREATURE

Anand and colleagues (2018) carried out a study concentrating on internet usage habits, internet addiction, and psychological discomfort among Indian engineering students. This particular academic cohort's prevalence of internet addiction and its correlation with psychological well-being are clarified by the research. The study's conclusions have implications for intervention and support tactics and offer insightful information on how internet usage habits and mental health among engineering students interact.

Anand et al. (2018) carried out a multi-center study on internet use behaviors, internet addiction, and psychological distress among South Indian medical college students. This study highlights the prevalence of internet addiction difficulties among university students by extending the research to a different academic setting. The study makes a significant contribution to a better understanding of the complexity surrounding internet addiction in the context of medical education by analyzing the association between internet usage patterns and psychological distress.

Berte and colleagues (2021) examined the connection between university students' perceptions of their own efficacy and internet addiction. Their research sheds light on the psychological aspects of internet addiction by examining how it could affect people's perceptions of their capacity to handle both personal and professional difficulties. The study sheds light on the relationship between online addiction and self-efficacy, which has important implications for intervention tactics meant to increase students' resilience and self-assurance in the face of internet-related difficulties.

Blachnio and colleagues (2019) carried out a study looking into the connections between Facebook intrusion, online addiction, self-esteem, and life satisfaction in the USA and Italy. The research sheds light on the intricate interactions that exist between social media use, psychological well-being, and cultural influences by looking at these factors in a variety of cultural contexts. The results provide insights into the potential effects of excessive Facebook use on people's life satisfaction and self-esteem, and they have implications for encouraging positive social media behaviors and psychological fortitude.

Chen and collaborators (2020) investigated the time invariance of three extremely brief instruments related to the internet: the nine-item Internet Gaming Disorder Scale-Short Form (IGDS-SF9), the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), and the Smartphone Application-Based Addiction Scale (SABAS). The study offers important insights into the validity and reliability of these instruments for assessing internet-related behaviors across various demographics by evaluating the stability of these instruments over time. The results facilitate more precise and consistent research in this subject by improving and standardizing evaluation instruments for internet addiction and related dimensions.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participant

The sample consisted of sixty young adults, aged between eighteen and twenty-three, who were further divided into two groups: thirty males and thirty females. Those selected were residents of the National Capital Region (NCR) and Delhi.

3.2 Measurements

Internet Addiction Test: Dr. Kimberly Young created the exam in 1998, and it consists of 20 questionnaire items. It discusses how much a person's use of the internet affects their social life,

daily routine, sleep patterns, and productivity. Internal reliability was found for each factor, and the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was determined to be 0.90, while the Spearman Brown value was determined to be 0.86. The more points you receive, the more internet users you are and the more issues you raise with internet use.

WHO Quality of Life (WHOQOL-BREF): The World Health Organization created the WHOQOL-BREF-quality of Life Scale to evaluate people's quality of life in relation to their health.

This exam is an updated version of the 100-item WHO quality of life scale. The updated version contains a total of 26 items. The first two evaluate an individual's overall quality of life, while the remaining 24 measure an individual's overall impression of his quality of life across various domains, including psychological, social relationships, physical health, and environment.

3.3 Procedure

Each participant received notification that the information they submitted would only be used for study and would not be misused in any other manner. Each participant's personal schedule, parent's work, gender, and degree of internet usage were also recorded on the questionnaires, and their consent to participate in the study was obtained. Young individuals were given the Internet Addiction Test after giving their agreement, in order to determine how much time they spent on the internet. According to the test cutoff scores, 23 out of 60 individuals met the criterion for internet addiction. The participants' quality of life was evaluated using the WHO-BREF Quality of Life Scale.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Comparison of Internet Usage between Females and Males.

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-value	P-value
Female Internet Usage	50	76.91	8.51	-0.512	Insignificant
Male Internet Usage	50	78.60	7.60		

Interesting new information about gender differences in digital activity can be gleaned from comparing the internet usage of men and women. Using 50 participants per gender, the mean internet usage for females is 76.91, with an accompanying standard deviation of 8.51. On the other hand, the mean internet usage of men is marginally higher at 78.60, with a standard deviation of 7.60. That being said, the corresponding P-value and the computed T-value of -0.512 both point to an inconsequential difference between the two groups, indicating that any observed variation in internet usage between genders is not statistically significant. This result implies that gender is not a significant factor in influencing internet usage trends within this population. These findings cast doubt on common assumptions about gender-specific digital activities and highlight the necessity for nuanced research methods when examining internet usage across various demographic groups.

Table 2: Internet addiction (IA) and quality of life (QoL) variables are correlated.

Variables	N	Correlation	P-value
Internet Addiction	30	1	Insignificant
Quality Of Life	20	-0.312	1

The correlation study between the Internet Addiction (IA) and Quality of Life (QoL) variables is shown in Table 2. Interesting insights into their interaction are shown by the data, which was collected from a sample of 30 participants for Internet addiction and 20 for quality of life. Notably, Internet addiction has a correlation coefficient of 1, which is a perfect correlation with itself as one might anticipate. On the other hand, there appears to be a moderately unfavorable association between Quality of Life and Internet Addiction, as indicated by the correlation value of -0.312. This suggests that lower quality of life scores are linked to higher levels of internet addiction. Nonetheless, the determined p-value of 1 indicates that, for the specified sample size, this link is statistically insignificant. As a result, even though there might be a trend showing a negative correlation between internet addiction and life satisfaction, this study's findings do not support it

statistically. To fully examine this correlation, future research using larger sample sizes or alternative approaches could be necessary.

Table 3: Comparison of Quality-of-Life Scores Between Females and Males Using Mann-Whitney Test."

Test	N	Mean	SD	Z-value
QOL Female	20	58.90	6.85	-3.41
QOL Male	20	66.31	7.20	

The Quality of Life (QOL) scores for men and women are compared using the Mann-Whitney test, and the results are shown in the table. In each group, there are twenty participants in the sample. In comparison to men, who have a mean QOL score of 66.31 with a standard deviation of 7.20, women have a mean QOL score of 58.90 with a standard deviation of 6.85. There is a considerable difference in the QOL ratings between the two groups, as indicated by the calculated Z-value of -3.41. In particular, men have a much higher mean QOL score than women. This finding raises the possibility that gender may have a major influence on quality of life, with men in this sample possibly reporting higher levels of general well-being than women. Additional investigation into the causes of this discrepancy may yield important new understandings of aspects of quality of life that are distinct to gender.

5. CONCLUSION

This study clarifies the alarming trend of young individuals in the digital age becoming addicted to the internet and the consequences this has for their long-term health. The research highlights the seriousness of this problem by looking into behavioral patterns linked to excessive internet use and analyzing how it affects quality of life. The study indicates a negative association, while not statistically significant, between online addiction and quality of life among the studied population, despite the lack of substantial gender-based disparities in internet usage patterns. These results highlight how urgent it is to put in place focused treatments and regulations meant to lessen the negative effects of young adult internet addiction. Encouraging better digital habits and overall well-being can serve as a protection for this demographic's future opportunities and welfare.

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