



INTERNET ADDICTION AND ITS ASSOCIATION WITH DEPRESSION, ANXIETY AND STRESS

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ABSTRACT

Background: Internet has become so essential part of human lives and it is far taken by situations like covid pandemic but when the use is unmindful and exceeds the threshold, there is a possibility of developing 'Internet addiction disorder' and poor psychological health. **Objective:** The main objective of this study is to explore the relation between internet addiction and the psychopathological features of depression, anxiety and stress. **Methodology:** A total of 401 students were selected from different colleges of Visakhapatnam city of Andhra Pradesh through random sampling and were administered the test of Young's Internet addiction and DASS-21 (Depression, anxiety and stress scale) to know their Internet usage and negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. **Results:** Internet addiction is significantly correlated with depression ($r = 0.267, p < 0.01$), anxiety ($r = 0.228, p < 0.01$) and stress ($r = 0.316, p < 0.01$). **Conclusion:** The internet addiction is positively associated with the negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. Effective strategies are to be planned and implemented to prevent internet addiction and its associated ailments in college students and professional support should be considered.

Keywords: Internet addiction, Depression, Anxiety, Stress.

INTRODUCTION

New technologies are restructuring the mental and the relational constructs of contemporary human beings and in a world which is expected to be progressive online, research should focus on investigating behaviors that are pathological considering the cultural changes that affect our modern society (Kirmayer et al., 2013). Internet has revolutionized human lives so much and it has become so essential in the professional, academic and personal spheres of people lives and the times like covid-19 outbreak have far taken the Internet usage and undoubtedly it is profiting people in a variety of ways but when the use is unmindful and beyond the threshold there is a possibility of developing "Internet addictive behaviours".

The term 'Internet addiction' is been used as an umbrella term that covers all online activities together and compulsive use of the internet beyond the accepted threshold that it interferes with individuals' productivity, health and relationships. Kimberly S. Young (1995) was the first to identify addictive internet usage as a distinct psychological disorder using comprehensive case studies of Internet users. Young (1995) mentioned the criteria for Internet addiction diagnosis as similar to substance dependence. As per DSM-V, Internet addiction is not yet recognized as a disorder but is considered as an area in need of further research. However, APA (American psychological association) has formally recognized Internet addiction as a disorder.

Young adults in the age range of 19 to 24 are more prone to develop internet addiction than older adults (Gooloman and Thatcher, 2005). Also, high-risk group for developing Internet addiction is college students (Young and Rogers, 1998) and so the present study was conducted on college students aged 18 to 24. A review study by Lei H et al.,2019 reflects that over usage of Internet is negatively affecting the subjective well-being and is often associated with mental health issues like depression, anxiety and stress. Effective evaluation of depressive disorders is required for young adults with internet addiction as it is positively associated with depression (Xiao-Shuang wu et al.,2016). Vaghela (2014) found significant difference in anxiety levels between adolescents with and without Internet addiction. Internet addiction is found to be significantly associated with anxiety among Indian students (Anku M Saikia et al.,2019; Kumar M et al.,2018). Stress had a direct effect on internet addiction (Song W J et al., 2019) and there is a significant association between Internet addiction and stress (Anku M S et al.,2019; Jamwal et al.,2016; Jafari et al.,2012). The present study is aimed at finding the relation between internet addiction and the psychological disorders like depression, anxiety and stress in students.

OBJECTIVES

To study the relationship between internet addiction and depression, anxiety, stress.

Hypothesis:

H1 - There will be a significant correlation between internet addiction and depression.

H2 - There will be a significant correlation between internet addiction and anxiety.

H3 - There will be a significant correlation between internet addiction and depression.

METHODOLOGY

Sample:

The sample consists of total 401 College Students selected from different colleges in Visakhapatnam city.

Inclusion criteria:1) Have access to internet on daily basis. Exclusion criteria: No access to internet.

Description of tools:

Young's Internet Addiction Test (Young, 1998): The Internet Addiction Test (IAT) consists of 20 self-report questions developed by Young (1998). Each item is rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 to 5 and gives information on dimensions of excessive usage, neglecting social life, salience and lack of control etc. The higher the score is, the higher is the severity of your problem. The test has good internal reliability and concurrent and cross-cultural validity.

The Depression Anxiety, Stress Scale (Lovibond, S.H. & Lovibond, P.F.,1995): The Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale - 21 Items (DASS-21) is a set of three self-report scales designed to measure the emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress and is a widely accepted tool. It is a short version, self-rated questionnaire and consists of statements referring to the past 2 weeks. Each item is scored on a 4-point scale (0 = Did not apply to me at all, to 3 = Applied to me very much or most of the time)

Statistical analysis: The data is analysed using Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS v-26) and Pearson's correlation coefficient(r) is the statistical technique used. The statistical significance value was set at $p < 0.01$.

RESULTS

Table 1 showing descriptive analysis of internet addiction, depression, anxiety and stress

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
INTERNET ADDICTION	35.16	16.455	401
DEPRESSION	7.85	4.399	401
ANXIETY	6.20	3.956	401
STRESS	8.21	4.224	401

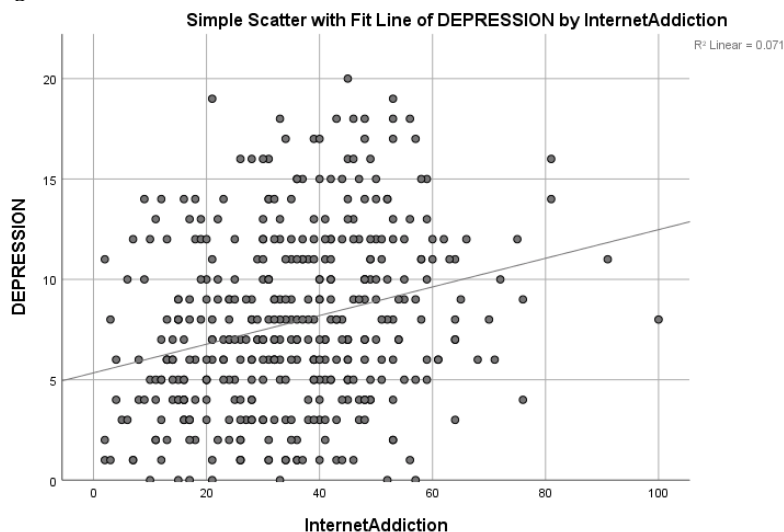
Table 2 showing correlation between internet addiction and depression, anxiety, stress

		INTERNET ADDICTION	DEPRESSION	ANXIETY	STRESS
INTERNET ADDICTION	Pearson Correlation(r)	1	.267**	.228**	.316**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

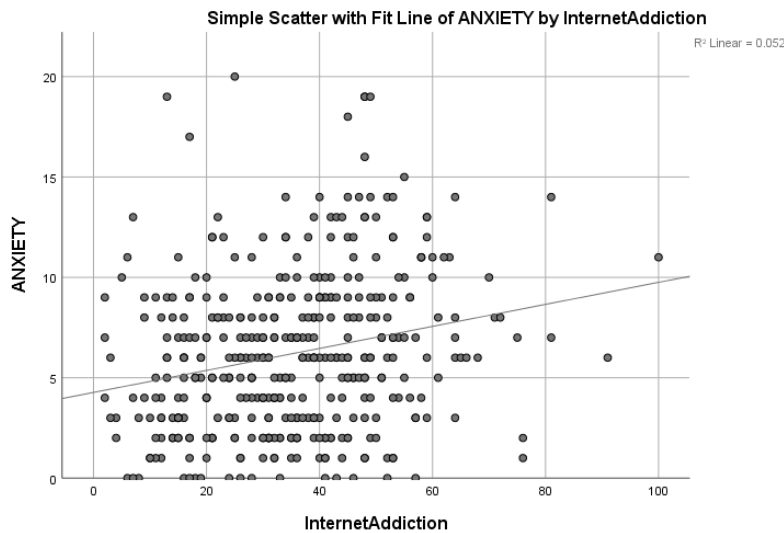
A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient(r) was computed to assess the relationship between the internet addiction and depression. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r = 0.267$, $n = 401$, $p < 0.01$. A scatterplot below summarizes the results (Figure-1). Overall, there was a strong, positive correlation between Internet addiction and depression. Increase in internet addiction is correlated with increase in depression. In the light of empirical evidence shown in Table 2, the hypothesis no. H1 which states “There is a significant relationship between internet addiction and depression” is accepted.

Figure 1



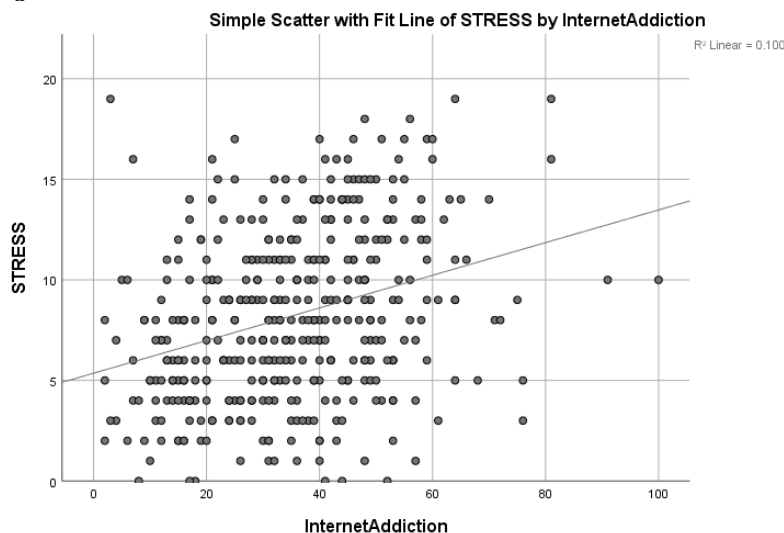
A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the internet addiction and anxiety. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r = 0.228$, $n = 401$, $p < 0.01$. A scatterplot below summarizes the results (Figure -2). Overall, there was a strong, positive correlation between Internet addiction and anxiety. Increase in internet addiction is correlated with increase in anxiety. In the light of empirical evidence shown in Table 2, the hypothesis no. H2 which states “There is a significant relationship between internet addiction and anxiety” is accepted.

Figure 2



A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the internet addiction and stress. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r = 0.316$, $n = 401$, $p < 0.01$. A scatterplot summarizes the results (Figure -3) Overall, there was a strong, positive correlation between Internet addiction and stress. Increase in internet addiction is correlated with increase in stress. In the light of empirical evidence shown in Table 2, the hypothesis no. H3 which states “There is a significant relationship between internet addiction and stress” is accepted.

Figure 3



DISCUSSION

The present study examines the relation between internet addiction and the psychological disorders like depression, anxiety and stress in Visakhapatnam city of Andhra Pradesh where it is less investigated. Excessive internet usage leads to psychological difficulties, thereby effecting the wellbeing of young students. Findings revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between internet addiction and depression. The findings are consistent with previous studies that examined the same. There is a significant association between Internet addiction and depression among college students (Anku M Saikia et al.,2019). Internet addiction is positively associated with depression (Xiao-Shuang wu et al.,2016). Results also revealed that there is a significant positive association between internet addiction and anxiety and this finding is consistent with previous studies done in the other parts of India. Internet addiction is found to be significantly associated with anxiety among Indian students (Kumar M et al.,2018). Azher (2018) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between internet addiction and anxiety level of university students and the results showed significant positive correlation between both the variables. Depression and anxiety are emotions experienced by individuals in response to stressors or stressful events which are sources of stress and so, a variable which associates positively with depression and anxiety might possibly align in the similar way with stress too. The current study findings also reveal a significant positive association internet

addiction and stress. A recent study in Haryana found that there is a significant association between the perceived stress and vulnerability of Internet addiction among the professional students in India (Singh B et al.,2020).

CONCLUSION

Internet availability at cheaper costs, unstructured blocks of time, need for recognition and forming new relationships through social networking platforms has all made youngsters more prone to develop internet addiction. As internet addiction increases, the psychopathological features like depression, anxiety and stress increase. There is also a need to differentiate between internet addiction and other comorbid psychological disorders. Interventions are needed to bring awareness to students on the mindful use of internet so that it doesn't affect their mental health negatively.

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