



Internet Addiction Among University Students in Relation to Their Personality

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ABSTRACT

Internet plays a vital role in education especially at university level. The utility of internet now turn to be a nightmare for many students and they were found to be unable to stop its usage. They become addicted with this technology and inturn, their characteristic behavior is affected to a larger extent. An attempt was made to explore the relationship between internet addiction and personality of university students. 254 students from Periyar University, Salem have been selected through simple random sampling and data is collected with the help of internet addiction scale by Armstrong and big five personality locator by McCrae and Costa. Results revealed that male students as well as students from Arts discipline have displayed higher internet addiction. A few dimensions of personality factors have significant association with internet addiction. The findings and implications are discussed in this article.

KEYWORDS : Internet Addiction, Big Five Personality Factors, University Students

BACKGROUND

The internet plays a wider role in our day to day life. It has changed our everyday experience. Many people become an addict of internet due to various factors. "Internet addiction is characterized by habits such as compulsive e-mail checking, blogging, web searching and chatting in online forums, often in an effort to escape everyday worries and chatting (Fiorino, 1997)". This involves individuals to keep thinking about internet usage increasingly in order to achieve high level of vicarious satisfaction. In due course, when an individual's attempt to stop internet use, they feel restless, moodiness, depression and irritability.

Scientific theories explained the nature of internet addiction which inturn clearly help us to plan about intervention strategies. Theories provide knowledge to understand the phenomenon related to internet addiction, like how internet addiction lead to personality problems and family problems. Schultz (2012) indicated that "Freudian perspective addressed internet addiction as the result of overly strong id which seeks immediate gratification of the desire and pleasures. The moral principle superego and the rational principle or mediating mechanism ego is weakened by the over-powering id". This view also explained that internet addiction can be seen from the perspectives of fixation i.e. when the id's drives or impulses are unfulfilled; it results in a state of fixation or stagnation. The fixed individuals will unconsciously try to fulfill void created by the fixation. From this view, it is understand that internet addiction is the way of filling the vacuum of fixation.

From the cognitive behavioral model Schultz (2012) expressed that "internet addiction is a result of excess availability of internet and beliefs associated with its use. Cognitive behaviorist believed that destruction in the process of development of identity formation, meaningful relationship or intimacy may predispose persons to access internet as a means of escaping from emotional numbing". Internet is a fit as a reinforcing, stimulating and rewarding mechanism. Since, online content is immediate, constant, uncensored and unregulated which could provide space for people to express freely their desires by posting something in the net. It also serves as a medium of interaction, online, downloading and uploading information independently. The internet provides safe zone for adults since it assures anonymity. This propels individual's behavior to utilize internet for seeking high level of arousal. From the above perspectives it is felt that the characteristic behavior (personality) of individuals should be closely related to internet addiction.

Allport viewed (1936) "Personality as a dynamic organization within an individual of those psychological systems that determine the unique adjustment to the environment". Freud viewed that "personality has been developed as a response to four main source of tensions namely physiological growth process, frustration, conflicts and threats.

When these forces increase the tension and anxiety in an individual, the person is compelled to learn new methods to decrease the tension". Freud believed that this sort of learning by an individual as 'personality'.

The internet addiction affects sizeable population especially the youth and it leads them to waste considerable amount of time in the internet. It is observed that students, especially at university level have more options to avail internet facilities and turn to be an addict of internet. It is imperative for the students to be aware of their internet usage and how it is influenced by their personality. Therefore, it is essential to explore the nature of internet addiction and its relationship with their personality among university students.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted survey method which is descriptive and associational in nature. The population of this study comprised of students studying post-graduation in Periyar University, Salem, Tamilnadu. There are 1200 students in various departments of Periyar University, out of which 300 students have been selected through simple random sampling (25% of the population). The data was collected with the help of internet addiction scale by Armstrong (2000) and big five personality locator by McCrae and Costa (1992). It was found that some of the questionnaires were incomplete and hence only 254 data were considered for analysis. The data was classified on the basis of gender and stream of study.

Hypotheses

1. The male and female students differ significantly in their internet addiction.
2. Students from science and arts disciplines differ significantly in their internet addiction.
3. There is a significant relationship between the big five personality factors and internet addiction.

RESULTS

Table 1: Internet Addiction of University Students: Gender Wise Comparison

Dimensions of Internet Addiction	Male (N=96)		Female (N=158)		't' value
	M ₁	SD ₁	M ₂	SD ₂	
Salience	8.92	2.26	8.30	2.82	1.88
Negative effects	9.48	3.14	8.60	3.78	1.90*
Mood enhancement	7.32	1.96	6.97	2.33	1.22 ^{NS}
Productivity	3.69	1.40	3.16	1.61	2.65*
Lack of control	3.44	1.39	3.30	1.43	0.76 ^{NS}
Neglect of social life	2.22	0.78	2.28	1.86	0.29 ^{NS}
Total	34.92	7.89	32.47	9.15	2.16*

*Significant at 0.05 level NS – Not Significant

From the table 1, it is found that males had significantly higher score in negative effects and productivity dimensions of internet addiction along with the total. Generally men tend to spend a lot of time in internet for unwanted aspects more than women. They tend to extensively use net for pleasurable activities which women cannot do in a normal course. Also it is a natural tendency of men to be comfortable with the materials than people. Again from the practices it was witnessed that men have higher usage of internet in personal, occupational and social dimensions, which in turn, made them to be addicted with net. It is concluded from the table 1 that male students had higher internet addiction than females.

Table 2: Internet Addiction of University Students Based on their Course of Study

Dimensions of Internet Addiction	Science (N=119)		Arts (N=135)		't' value
	M ₁	SD ₁	M ₂	SD ₂	
Saliency	8.13	3.03	8.89	2.20	2.31*
Negative effects	8.05	3.86	9.71	3.11	3.78*
Mood enhancement	6.48	2.40	7.66	1.85	4.40*
Productivity	2.92	1.64	3.75	1.37	4.39*
Lack of control	3.26	1.59	3.43	1.24	0.94 ^{NS}
Neglect of social life	2.26	2.09	2.25	.80	0.04 ^{NS}
Total	30.90	9.19	35.60	7.76	4.41*

*Significant at 0.05 level NS – Not Significant

From the table 2, it is witnessed that students from arts discipline had higher scores in saliency, negative effects, mood enhancement and productivity dimensions of internet addiction. Students studying in arts discipline rely mostly on digital resources, for their primary and secondary data as well as literature review. They spend long hours in computers which is slowly making them to be addicted with computers. Hence, they have increased desire for connecting themselves in web based activities which provide higher opportunities for them to stick with social networks. The time spent on these networks obviously kill their quality time and certainly had negative effects on their behavior. The leisure and social activities available through the internet easily prompted the mood of students. Ultimately this process would end up with decreased productivity.

On the other hand students from science discipline forced to spend a lot of time in laboratories and they have a little opportunity to utilize the internet resources frequently. Though, these students should also rely on internet for their literature but they couldn't spend their time completely on internet for social and leisure activities like the arts students. Hence, it is concluded that the wider opportunities and necessities of internet resources contributed to the higher internet addiction of arts students.

Table 3: Internet Addiction of University Students in relation to their Personality: Correlation Analysis

Big five Factors/ Internet Addiction	E	A	C	N	O
Saliency	0.009	0.015	0.096	0.124*	0.022
Negative effects	0.073	0.068	0.077	0.002	0.006
Mood enhancement	0.028	0.033	0.173*	0.111	0.021
Productivity	0.085	0.075	0.063	0.040	0.045
Lack of control	0.065	0.090	0.026	0.022	0.041
Neglect of social life	0.038	0.060	0.056	0.073	0.075
Total	0.094	0.071	0.102	0.023	0.006

*Significant at 0.05 level

E: Extroversion A: Agreeableness C: Conscientiousness
 N: Neuroticism O: Openness to Experience

From the table 3, it is found that the neuroticism factor had significant association with saliency dimension of internet addiction. People with saliency for internet were unable to control their desire to connect internet and spend time in web channels. They become highly anxious when they disconnected from internet and have stronger desire to be in the net for longer duration. The anxiety as well as induced tension would make them to be neurotic. Hence, this relationship is quick logical.

The conscientiousness factor of personality had significant positive association with mood enhancement in internet addiction. From the social perspective it is understood that people are highly conscious and they cannot commit mistakes unknowingly. Individuals with high mood enhancement use internet to make themselves feel better when they are down. This correlation clearly revealed that they become addicted to net only with their conscious awareness.

The correlation coefficients were not significant in the other dimensions of internet addiction. Extraversion, agreeableness and openness to experience factors of personality will certainly promote pro-social behavior rather than addiction. Hence, they couldn't have significant relationship with the dimensions of internet addiction.

DISCUSSION

One of the major advantages in the university system is the utilization of technology to a maximum extent. Today it is found that this advantage as turned to be an abuse and many students were addicted with technology. The findings of this study revealed that male students had higher internet addiction. This finding gives a warning sign that unless male students get rid of this problem they would tend to lose themselves with internet. This finding is supported by Chin-Chung Tsai (2006) reported that male students had higher internet addiction and indicated that female students viewed internet as technology were as male students perceived that using internet as tool, a method of collecting information or joy. Findings of Frangos et al, (2008) and Lam et al, (2009) reported that men were more likely to be addicted to the internet. Similar finding is reported by Ram et al, (2009) that male workers possess higher internet addiction. The internet addiction was higher among students of arts discipline. This finding is contradictory to the findings of Razieh et al, (2012) reported that internet addiction was higher among science and engineering students than the students from arts and humanity. The neuroticism trait had significant positive association with the saliency dimension of internet addiction. Hardieet al, (2007) reported that neuroticism is the only significant personality predictor of excessive internet usage. This finding is supported by the study of Witte (2012) indicated that internet addiction was accounted by neuroticism. Hence, necessary steps to be taken to reduce the neurotic tendency of students which in turn help themselves to recover from internet addiction.

The conscientiousness factor had significant positive association with mood enhancement. Nergus (2011) reported that personality factors significantly predicated the problematic internet usage. But this finding is contrast to the findings of Samarein et al, (2013) reported that conscientiousness was negatively correlated with internet addiction. Today many students are aware about the use and abuse of internet but consciously they lose themselves with internet. Care should be taken to modify the value orientation among students especially in universities.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of this study it is felt that sincere efforts should be taken in higher education to protect the cognitive, emotional and social well-being of students. It is the bound duty of educationists to identify the problems of students and provide suitable measures to alleviate them. The curriculum planners and policy makers should identify the problems of students and incorporate suitable modalities in curricular and co-curricular activities thereby helping them to sustain in a global competition. Counseling should be made as compulsory activity in universities to address various issues of students. It is the right time to revamp our educational and vocational activities in accordance with the pressing demands of globalization.

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