Original Research Paper

Psychology

INTERNET ADDICTION AND SOCIAL ANXIETY AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT The internet is one of the most widely used means of communication, connecting people all over the world, in association with the rapid escalation of consumed internet content and the wider availability of smartphones and tablets with internet access, is providing a new challenge for classical addictology which requires immediate solutions. High comorbidity of internet addiction with psychiatric disorders has been reported particularly anxiety disorders (generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder). Internet addiction and social anxiety in puberty are linked to significant illness that lasts into adulthood. The objectives of this study were to find out the level of internet addiction and social anxiety among male and female young adults and to study the relationship between internet addiction and social anxiety. The research was conducted on 100 male and female college going students. The data was collected through the purposive sampling method. Young's Internet Addiction Test was used to assess internet addiction, and Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale was used to assess social anxiety. The scores were calculated, and the data were analyzed using SPSS. The study found a correlation between internet addiction and social anxiety among male and female young adults (r =.018, P=.236). And found no significant difference between males and females on the level of internet addiction and social anxiety. The results of the current study support prior evidence for the co-occurrence of internet addiction and social anxiety, while further studies need to clarify this association.

KEYWORDS : Internet addiction, Social anxiety, Young adults.

INTRODUCTION
The internet has become an increasingly important part of many people's lives all over the world. In India, there were about 7 million internet users in 2001, 40 million in 2006, and 700 million by 2019 (Sulania et al., 2015). Despite the internet's many advantages in terms of new applications and facilities, it has also spawned a new phenomenon known as "problematic internet use" or "internet addiction," in which people experience interpersonal, educational, or work-related problems as a result of excessive internet use (Lee et al., 2015). Excessive internet use is defined as when people's internet usage becomes excessive, unregulated, and time-consuming to the point of timelessness and severely interrupting people's lives (Kraut et al., 1998). The term "internet addiction" refers to a maladaptive internet usage pattern that results in clinically significant damage or discomfort (Weinstein & Lejoyeux, 2010). Withdrawal, impairment of control, preoccupation, poor planning abilities, tolerance, and excessive online time were described as core symptoms by Young et al. in their diagnostic criteria for internet addiction(Young, 1998). A new feature of internet addiction is the evaluation of intrapersonal and interpersonal components. It is possible to distinguish between an intrapersonal addiction and interpersonal elements. Intrapersonal addiction includes increased tolerance, negative consequences, decreased activities, loss of control, avoidance of other activities, and the urgency or need to be online. While interpersonal addiction includes interpersonal contacts on the internet and the drive to establish friendships online, the ease with which they can establish online relationships (Torrente et al., 2014).

Social anxiety is characterized by an irrational fear of performing activities in other people or interacting with others that involve interaction, observation, and performance. These include meeting people, including strangers, starting conversations, talking to authority figures, working, talking in meetings or groups, going to school, eating or drinking while being observed, shopping, using public toilets, being seen in public, public performance, including speaking. People with social anxiety fear that they will say or do something they think will be humiliating or embarrassing such as blushing, stumbling of words, shaking, looking anxious, sweating, or appearing dull, stupid, or incompetent. Many individuals with social anxiety also have intense physical symptoms such a racing heart, nausea, and sweating, and they may have full-fledged panic attacks when confronted with a frightening circumstance. People with social anxiety disorder often feel powerless in the face of their anxiety, despite realizing their fear is excessive and illogical. As a result, people with a social anxiety disorder may attempt to avoid their most feared situations whenever possible. The disorder usually results in significant impairment in education, employment, family, romantic relationships, friendships, social networks, quality of life, and other areas of life (Connor et al.,

1999; Shah & Kataria, 2010). Unfortunately, despite being the world's third most common mental condition in adults, social anxiety disorder is frequently underdiagnosed and under-treated (Priyamvada et al., 2009; Veale, 2003).

Individuals may become reliant on online activities to cope with unpleasant affective states (e.g., depression or anxiety) when alternative coping responses (e.g., social support, health-promoting behavior) are limited, potentially leading to internet addiction (Müller et al., 2014). Adolescents perceive less social anxiety on the internet than in social contexts, and the internet may cause addiction in people with social anxiety (Yen et al., 2012). Specifically, to reduce social anxiety, people with social anxiety go for online communication over face-to-face interaction because they believe that it carries a reduced risk and manage less favorable features of their behavior and appearance (Huan et al., 2014). Individuals addicted to the internet grow more reclusive, withdraw from family and friends, and have increased social anxiety (Bilal, 2018; Çardak, 2013). As a result, internet addiction can exacerbate the fear and anxiety of unfavorable social judgment while also delaying face-to-face interaction (Esfandiari et al., 2013). Social anxiety does not only accept people's evaluations of social surroundings. Users may develop anxiety about evaluation in the internet environment as well. In addition to this, internet users do not become more socially active; internet use may impair interpersonal communications and interactions (Nie, 2001). Furthermore, it has been revealed that students who are addicted to the internet have higher levels of social anxiety (Yücens & Üzer, 2018).

METHODOLOGY
Aim
To study the relationship between internet addiction and social anxiety among male and female young adults.

Objectives
1. To find out the level of internet addiction among males and females.
2. To find out the level of social anxiety among males and females.
3. To study the relationship between internet addiction and social anxiety

Hypotheses
- There is no significant difference in the level of internet addiction among males and females.
- There is no significant difference in the level of social anxiety among males and females.
- There is no significant relationship between internet addiction and social anxiety.

Variables
Independent Variable: Male and female young adults.
Dependent Variable: Internet addiction and social anxiety

Research Design
Research is exploratory and adopts a sample survey research design.

Sample
The sample for the study consisted of 100 young adults, 50 males, and 50 females within the age range of 18-24 years. The subjects were chosen through purposive sampling. The sample was selected from various colleges in Udupi and Dakshina Kannada district.

Inclusion criteria:
Aged between 18 to 24 years
College going adults

Exclusion criteria:
The adults who are inability to comprehend the english language.

Tools:
Internet Addiction Test (IAT):
The IAT is one of the most reliable scales use for evaluating the level of internet addiction which is developed by Dr. Kimberly Young. The IAT questionnaire assesses compulsivity, escapism, dependency, and other qualities and behaviors linked to internet use. It has 20 items with a five-point Likert scale for scoring, which was rated from 0-5. The IAT total score ranges from 0 to 100, with a higher score reflecting a higher level of internet addiction and compulsivity. The scales have accepted levels of validity and reliability. The Spearman-Brown value for the scale was 0.86. Guttmann's Split Half value for the scale was 0.85.

The Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS):
The LSAS is a self-rating scale created by Dr. Michael Liebowitz to assess fear/anxiety and avoidance regarding 24 commonly feared performance or social situations. The scale has 24 items in two subscales. It has 13 items related to performance and 11 items related to social circumstances rated from 0-3. The total score is obtained by adding the scores obtained on both subscales. A higher score indicates a higher level of social anxiety. The research found that LSAS has excellent internal consistency and evaluates the severity of fear and avoidance in everyday social situations.

Procedure
Each of the tools used for the study was entered into the google forms exactly as it is in the paper version along with the responses. The first section collected the socio-demographic details of the participants along with the mail Ids, the second section comprised of the IAT items, and the third section included the LSAS items along with the instructions. Each subject received both questionnaires. The obtained data were analyzed and interpreted using the norms. The total scores were transferred to SPSS (IBM version) for analysis of the data.

Analysis
- Independent Samples t-test: The Independent Sample t-test was used to determine the difference in the level of internet addiction and social anxiety among males and females.
- Karl Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation: The relationship between internet addiction and social anxiety was found using Karl Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Table 1:
Mean, standard deviation, t- value, and significance for internet addiction young among male and female adults.

Internet addiction	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig
	Males	50	40.20	21.053	.628	.532
	Females	50	42.96	22.891		

The hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in internet addiction among males and females was tested using an independent samples t-test. The obtained mean value for male and female young adults are 40.20 and 42.96 respectively. The mean score indicates that internet addiction is seen more among females than males. The obtained t value is .628, which is not significant.

Hence, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the level of internet addiction among males and females is accepted.

Table 2:
Mean, standard deviation, t value, and significance for social anxiety among young male and female adults.

Social Anxiety	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig
	Males	50	29.52	16.688	1.800	.075
	Females	50	36.08	19.639		

The hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in social anxiety among males and females was tested using an independent sample t-test. The obtained mean value for male and female young adults are 29.52 and 36.08 respectively. The mean score indicates that social anxiety is seen more in females than males. The obtained t value is 1.800, which is not significant. Thus, the obtained result indicates that there is no difference in social anxiety between both genders. Hence, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the level of social anxiety among males and females is accepted.

Table 3:
Coefficient of correlation between internet addiction and social anxiety among young male and female adults.

Variable	r	P
Internet addiction Social anxiety	.018	.236

The hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between internet addiction and social anxiety was tested using Pearson Correlation. The obtained r value for the study is .018. The Pearson correlation between internet addiction and social anxiety is .236. The results show that there is a highly significant correlation between the 0.01 and 0.05 levels. The analysis findings indicate a relationship between internet addiction and social anxiety, which is significant. Thus, the result indicates that the increase in the level of Internet addiction does have a significant effect on social anxiety, and also the increase in the level of social anxiety does have a significant effect on internet addiction. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted, which states a significant relationship between internet addiction and social anxiety.

CONCLUSION
The obtained result indicates that there is a significant relationship between internet addiction and social anxiety. There is no gender difference in the level of internet addiction and social anxiety among young adults. The more real-life relationships, the less need to use the internet for social connection. It allows one to interact with one another and allows natural relationships to grow. This study suggests young adults utilize their energy more in a worthy manner than subjecting them to any social anxiety due to the large use of the internet. Parents, schools, and governmental authorities can be informed about the dangers of internet addiction and social anxiety through public awareness campaigns. The media can play a critical role in raising public awareness about the causes and consequences of internet addiction and social anxiety. Early detection and treatment can help to mitigate the negative consequences.

Limitations of the Study
- The study includes a smaller sample size.
- The sample was drawn from two areas, hence generalization is limited in its scope.
- In this present study, the data about internet addiction and social anxiety was collected using a psychological tool, and self-report measures only indicate internet addiction and social anxiety; which cannot diagnose internet addiction and social anxiety.
- In addition to quantitative techniques, qualitative data collection techniques such as semi-structured interview forms, focus group interviews would have provided more information.

Implication
- These findings highlight more concerted efforts in academic institutions to recognize and treat internet addiction and social anxiety.
- The results of this study can be used to design prevention programs targeting maladaptive coping by clinicians.
- Our findings also assist media psychologists to understand how the media influences human behavior, investigate how technological advancements change social relationships. And to formulate internet-based interventions.

Scope for further study:
- To shed further light on causal pathways, the study can be

extended using longitudinal research and qualitative research methods.

• In future studies and interventions, it is critical to include family, peer, and school interactions.

• More studies are needed to fully understand the reciprocal relationship between internet addiction and social anxiety that dominates society today.

• There is also a need for more studies of young adults/late adolescents who visit psychiatric clinics and seek professional help.

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