



LONELINESS AND SMARTPHONE ADDICTION AMONG YOUTHS: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT In recent years, studies on behavioral addictions, commonly known as non-substance-related addictions, has increased substantially. Uncontrolled use of smartphone has now become a prominent social, emotional and mental issue because it is related to both, excessive time spent on social media as well as departure from real life to virtual world. Smartphone users are most often fascinated by the designs, features and the convenience it provides to users. Smartphone addiction is often describe by its effect on user's emotional and mental health as well as their ability to control smartphone use, its effect on different aspects of our daily lives, for ex., academic, biological effect, most probably on sleep patterns, social and interpersonal effects, effect on mental health etc. The plan of the study was to analyze the association between smartphone addiction with perceived loneliness among college going on a sample of 120 college students in the age group of 20-25years (78 male and 42 female). Statistical analysis revealed a significant highly positive relationship between total score of loneliness and smartphone addiction. Gender wise significant difference was also signified as female were found to be high on loneliness scores in comparison to their male counterparts.

KEYWORDS : Addiction, behavioral addiction, Smartphone addiction, Perceived loneliness

INTRODUCTION:

Being one of the most important dimensions of human behavior, the concept of loneliness is not easy to define (Gordan, 1976; Graham, 1969).

According to Lau & Gruen (1992), lonely person are unable to set up social connection and do not have socially desirable attributes due to lack of social ties. They further added that loneliness holds a large social stigma since it is socially unacceptable to neglect friendship and social links.

Loneliness can also be experience by an individual being in a crowd and on the other side, a person may be alone but feel socially connected (Masi et al. 2011).

Several studies reported that loneliness is linked to excessive smartphone usage (Toda et al., 2013; social science computer review, 2015; Korean society of nursing science, 2017), internet addiction (Norman and Xiaobin, 2010; Odaci and Kalkan, 2010), and loneliness and smartphone addiction has also been studied in recent years (Jin,&Park, 2012; Reid,&Reid, 2007; Takahashi,& Kitamura, 2009; Wei,&Lo, 2006).

Perlman & Peplau (1981) describes loneliness as a negative feeling that can be experienced when there is discrepancy between desired and achieved levels of social contact.

Senior at al. (2008) indicated that because they contributed to our survival as a species, feelings linked to loneliness arose. They also added that physical pain protects the individual from physical hazards, since it protected the individual from the risk of becoming alone, social pain, i.e., isolation, formed for a similar purpose.

Studies have also indicated that loneliness is an emotion experienced by a person who requires a degree of contact, unlike the one presently encountered. It does not matter the multiplicity of social ties, but their quality is essential. However, having more social contacts does not always give individuals a profit in social life (Tan et al., 2013)

Loneliness is a nuanced feeling as, despite having extensive social networks, some people feel lonely, and some others may not feel lonely even if they live alone. (Michelle H Lim Senior Lecturer & Clinical psychologist, 2020)

In 1964, a WHO advisory committee introduced the term 'dependency' to replace the words' addiction 'and' habit '. Typically, the term may be used with reference to the whole range of psychoactive substances (drug dependency, chemical dependence, drug use dependence) or with specific reference to a particular class of drugs or drugs, such as alcohol dependence, opioid dependence, etc. ("WHO | Dependence Syndrome," 2010).

In leading clinics and hospitals, cases of smart phone addiction are becoming increasingly popular as smartphone addicts in India, multiplying the growing dependency on the gadget at an alarming pace. Mobile addicts have displayed patterns similar to those suffering from opioid and cocaine abuse in MRI studies and CAT scans (Sengupta & Basu 2017).

Adolescents have comparatively lower levels of self-control due to the immaturity of cortical growth, and they are often more enthusiastic about the use of modern electronic devices, as a result they may also be more prone to compulsive use of smartphone than adults (H.Meng et al., 2020), throughout this process, tendencies to take risk, seek excitement and new experience increase dramatically, creating differences between increased vulnerability to poor regulation and reduced ability to exercise self-control. (P. Pokhrel et al. 2013)

In his paper, Patulney (2020) claimed that lonely individuals are more likely to use the internet for social connections and are less interested in interactions in real life.

Stivers (1999) criticises people's infatuation with the innovations and solutions that are provided by technology. He also makes reference to the disturbing effects of extreme reliance on technology. He further suggests that a deep sense of isolation with a rise in different psychiatric disorders from ADHD to neurosis to schizophrenia is one of the key implications of technological society. He also states that the emergence of the "aggressively cheerful, garrulous, mildly hyperactive outer personality" technological personality compensates for the lonely, fearful inner personality.

Bhardwaj & Ashok (2015) showed a major association between cell phone addiction and loneliness, but no impact on gender.

A research authored by Tan et al. (2013) on "Loneliness and Mobile Addiction" was conducted in turkey and the result showed that male students' loneliness scores were higher than female students' scores. There was also significant difference between the alienation of university students and the frequent use of cell phones. In addition, the isolation of university students was substantially correlated with problematic cell phone use.

Jin and Park (2012) found that lower levels of loneliness were associated with more face-to-face interactions; more smartphone calling, however, was associated with greater loneliness.

However smartphone offer many possibilities for everyone, the question is whether smartphone cause loneliness in individuals or feeling of loneliness leads to addiction to smartphone. In this context the purpose of the study is to examine loneliness among college students in terms of gender and smartphone addiction.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

The sample group of this study is 120 students from college going graduation students. Out of 120 students, 42 students are female, 78 of them are male and average age of students is 20-22. All of participants had smartphone. One hundred twenty (120) college going student in the age range of 18-25 years (78 male and 42female) have been selected for the present study.

Instruments

Perceived Loneliness Scale (PLS, Jha 1997):

Perceived Loneliness Scale by Dr. PraveenKumarJha (1997) was administered to the whole sample to measure their level of loneliness. The scale consists of 36 five-points scale items found to be significant indicating the degree of loneliness in human nature against each item five numbers from 5 to 1 for positively worded statements and 1 to 5 for negatively worded statement are provided. The minimum and maximum scores range from 36 to 180. The loneliness scale possesses fairly high test-retest reliabilities of .84 and .82.

Smart phone Addiction Scale (SAS, Kwon et.al): The SAS is a 33-item self-report measure associated with problematic smartphone use.

Six sub-dimensions, namely Daily-Life Disturbance, Positive Anticipation, Withdrawal, Cyberspace-Oriented Partnership, Overuse, and Tolerance compose the 33 item scale. The test uses a likert scale answer format of six points ranging from "1" (strongly disagree) to "6" (strongly agree), with a total maximum score of 198. In the initial validation analysis, the measure demonstrated very high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.967).

2.3 PROCEDURE

The purpose of the present study is to explore the relationship between addiction to smartphone and loneliness. The Subjects were purposively selected from various colleges and universities from the district of Varanasi. Following the criteria of inclusion and exclusion, questionnaires were distributed individually to each participant during the hours of college, after authorization had been obtained from the authorities.

After establishing rapport and assuring for confidentiality of their responses, each participant was asked to fill out all the scales separately. Respondents were convinced that their identity would never be exposed and that information provided by them would be kept confidential. The way the questions to be answered was also explained by the researcher to them.

3. FINDINGS

Table 1: Mean, S.D, Pearson's Correlation for variables

	1	2
1. PLS	1	
2. SAS	0.73*	1
M	131.50	115.4
S.D.	17.06	15.33

*p<.01

As seen in Table-1, the results indicated that there is a significantly high and positive correlation between Smart phone addiction and loneliness (r=.0.73).

Table 2: Mean, S.D & t significance of mean difference on loneliness of college students according to gender

Gender	Female(n= 42)		male(n= 78)		t
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	
PLS	40.8	8.4	36.5	7.2	-5.414

*p<.05

As seen in Table-2, in relation to loneliness, there is a significant difference between males and females (t=-5.414; p<.05). When these outcomes are analyzed, it is seen that female loneliness (x=40.8, S.D=8.4) is higher than male loneliness (x=36.5, S.D=7.2).

Table 3: Means, standard deviations and t values of loneliness of university students according to addiction group and non

addiction group

SMARTPHONE ADDICTION				
	Addiction group (n= 90; 75%)		Non addiction group (n= 30; 25%)	
	X	S.D	X	S.D
PLS	38.5	8.2	32.7	9.1
2.384				

*p<.05

There is a clear contrast in loneliness between addicts and non-addicts, as seen in Table-4 (t =-2.384; p<.05). When these findings are examined, the loneliness of addicted students (x = 38.5, S.D = 8.2) is higher than that of non-addicted students (x = 32.7, S.D = 9.1).

DISCUSSION:

In the current study, the loneliness of college students was explored in terms of smartphone addiction and gender. The literature has indicated that research on smartphone addiction may not have too much context when literature is reviewed. Additionally, there are quite a few reports on mobile addiction linked to loneliness. This study may be significant for literature in this context.

When college students' loneliness was examined by gender, female students' loneliness scores (x = 40.8, S.D = 8.4) were reported to be greater than male students' scores (x = 36.5, S.D = 7.2). The results of some studies are similar to the results of this study, i.e. female students' loneliness scores were higher than the scores of male students (Kutlu, 2005)

Dikec (2017) also reported similar results emitted from this study revealing that female have more loneliness in comparison to male smartphone users.

According to the results obtained from the study, 90% of college students participated in the research is addicted to smartphone. There was a significant difference between loneliness of students and smartphone addiction (t=-2.384; p<.05). Loneliness scores of students who have been addicted to smartphone (x =38.5, S.D=8.2) were found to be higher than those of non-addicts (x =32.7, S.D=9.1).

The claim by Kraut and his colleagues was supported by this result. Kraut et al. (1998) claimed that the compulsive use of technological advances reduces the community interaction of the individual in the real life and, as a consequence, his or her psychological well-being, because by connecting to the Internet, it produces the kind of isolation, loneliness and depression that the individual wants to lessen.

Excessive smartphone users are less likely to meet their families, have difficulty in expressing emotion and also had higher interpersonal anxiety (Ha et al., 2008; Chen, 2006; Jin & Park, 2012).

Another result revealed that there was significant positive correlation between the smartphone addiction and loneliness among college going students which clearly mean that as loneliness increases, smartphone addiction also increases. Similar studies also found in this context as Bhardwaj & Ashok (2015) also found in their study that there exist significant correlation between smartphone addiction and loneliness among college students.

Kiran (2019) have reported that smartphone addiction bring about negative impacts on physical and mental health as well problem in academics, interpersonal problems, health issues, depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation.

In the light of available research literature it is clear that loneliness and smartphone addiction are positively related but in Indian context a very few studies have been done. As far as studies are concern very limited studies have reported the relationship between loneliness and smartphone addiction in Indian context.

The current study seeks to contribute to the literature by analyzing the relationship between loneliness and smartphone addiction in terms of gender.

There is discrepancy in the studies on whether smartphone addiction is responsible for loneliness or loneliness cause smartphone addiction. So, there is a need of more study and researches on relationship between loneliness and smartphone addiction.

It is important to remember that smartphones are not built to provide merely connectivity. They also provide many of the features provided by the Internet and computers. In this context, our smartphone offers a great opportunity, particularly for young people who use the Internet.

Individuals who have been constantly involved themselves in smartphone may be subjected to a decrease in the time allocated to other social relationships, especially face-to-face interaction relationships. Often, this situation will make people lonely.

While smartphone and the Internet are used as communication tools, these technological tools are used unnecessarily by people and this tendency make them addicted. In order to make use of such technical resources in conjunction with their needs, persons who are in these situations should be advised to receive the support of person or community therapy.

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