

A STUDY OF INTERNET ADDICTION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND ADJUSTMENT AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

Dr. Pravina K. Patel

Assistant Professor

Swami Vivekanand Sarvodaya Bank Education College,

Mehsana, Gujarat, India

ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the relationship between internet addiction, psychological well-being, and adjustment among college students in Ahmedabad City. With the increasing dependence on digital technology, excessive internet usage has emerged as a significant concern affecting students' mental health and behavioral functioning. The study was conducted on a sample of 120 college students, comprising 60 males and 60 females, aged between 18 and 22 years. A descriptive survey research design was employed. Data were collected using the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) developed by Kimberly Young (1998), a Psychological Well-Being Scale by Devendra Singh Sisodiya and Pooja Chaudhary and the Adjustment Inventory by R.K. Ojha. Statistical techniques such as Pearson's correlation, mean, SD and t test were used for data analysis. The findings revealed a significant negative relationship between internet addiction and both psychological well-being and poor adjustment. Students with severe internet addiction demonstrated lower levels of well-being and poorer adjustment compared to those with mild addiction. Additionally, gender differences were observed in the impact of internet addiction on psychological variables. The study highlights the importance of maintaining balanced internet usage and suggests the need for awareness programs and psychological interventions to promote mental well-being among college students.

Keywords

Internet Addiction, Psychological Well-Being, Adjustment, College Students, Mental Health

1. Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, the internet has become an indispensable component of daily life, particularly among college students who depend on it for academic, social, and recreational purposes. While the internet enhances access to information and facilitates communication, its excessive use has led to the emergence of **internet addiction**, a behavioral condition characterized by compulsive and uncontrolled usage (Young, 1998). This condition shares similarities with other forms of addiction, including tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, and impaired control over behavior (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011).

Psychological well-being, which encompasses emotional stability, life satisfaction, and positive functioning, is a crucial determinant of an individual's overall mental health (Ryff, 1989). Similarly, psychological adjustment refers to the ability to effectively cope with environmental demands and maintain balance across social, emotional, and academic domains (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Research indicates that excessive internet use is associated with increased levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness, thereby negatively influencing both well-being and adjustment (Kraut et al., 1998; Morahan-Martin & Schumacher, 2000).

Given the rapid digital expansion in semi-urban regions such as Ahmedabad City, it is essential to examine how internet addiction impacts students' psychological functioning. This study seeks to explore these relationships and contribute to a deeper understanding of digital behavior and mental health outcomes.

2. Review of Literature

The concept of internet addiction was first systematically introduced by Young (1998), who developed the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) to assess excessive and problematic internet use. This pioneering work established internet addiction as a behavioral disorder and laid the foundation for subsequent empirical research. Early investigations by Kraut et al. (1998) revealed that increased internet usage was associated with higher levels of depression and loneliness, thereby indicating a negative impact on psychological well-being.

Further studies reinforced these findings. Morahan-Martin and Schumacher (2000) identified pathological internet users as individuals experiencing significant social isolation and emotional distress. Similarly, Caplan (2002) suggested that individuals with poor

psychosocial adjustment are more likely to engage in problematic internet use, highlighting a reciprocal relationship between internet addiction and psychological functioning.

In the Indian context, Nalwa and Anand (2003) reported that excessive internet use negatively affects students' academic performance and emotional stability. Whang et al. (2003) found that individuals with higher internet addiction scores demonstrate poor emotional regulation and lower levels of adjustment. Additionally, Suhail and Bargees (2006) further supported these findings by reporting a negative correlation between internet usage and psychological well-being.

A comprehensive review by Kuss and Griffiths (2011) concluded that internet addiction is strongly linked with various psychological problems, including stress, anxiety, and maladjustment. Collectively, these studies provide substantial evidence that excessive internet use adversely affects mental health outcomes.

Research Gap

Despite the extensive body of literature, several gaps remain. First, most studies have been conducted in Western or metropolitan contexts, with limited focus on semi-urban regions such as Ahmedabad City. Second, while previous research has examined the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being or adjustment independently, there is a lack of integrated studies examining both variables simultaneously. Third, limited research has focused on comparing specific levels of internet addiction (mild versus severe) and their differential effects. Additionally, gender-based comparative analysis in this context remains underexplored. Therefore, the present study aims to address these gaps by examining the combined relationship between internet addiction, psychological well-being, and adjustment among college students in a semi-urban Indian setting.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between internet addiction, psychological well-being, and adjustment among college students.
2. To study the effect of mild and severe internet addiction on psychological well-being among college students.

3. To examine the effect of mild and severe internet addiction on psychological adjustment among college students.

4. Hypotheses

H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between internet addiction, psychological well-being, and mental adjustment among college students.

H₀₂ There is no significant effect of mild and severe internet addiction on psychological well-being among college students.

H₀₃ There is no significant effect of mild and severe internet addiction on psychological adjustment among college students.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a **descriptive survey research design**, which is widely used in psychological and social science research to examine relationships and differences among variables without manipulating them. This design is appropriate for the current study as it aims to investigate the relationship between internet addiction, psychological well-being, and adjustment among college students. The descriptive approach allows the researcher to collect quantitative data from a defined sample and analyze patterns, associations, and group differences in a systematic manner. It also facilitates the comparison of different levels of internet addiction (mild and severe) and their impact on psychological variables.

5.2 Sample and Participants

The sample for the present study consists of **120 college students** from Ahmedabad City. The participants were selected to ensure equal representation of gender, including **60 male students and 60 female students**. The age of the participants ranges from **18 to 22 years**, representing young adults in higher education. This age group is particularly relevant for the study as individuals in this stage are highly exposed to digital technology and are more likely to develop patterns of excessive internet usage. The sample size is considered adequate for statistical analysis and helps in drawing meaningful conclusions regarding the variables under study.

5.3 Sampling Technique

A **convenience sampling technique** was employed in the present study. This method involves selecting participants who are easily accessible to the researcher. Although convenience sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings, it is suitable for exploratory research conducted within a specific geographical area such as Ahmedabad City. The technique allowed the researcher to efficiently collect data from college students within a limited time frame and resource availability.

5.4 Tools for Data Collection

The following standardized tools were used to collect data:

1. Internet Addiction Test (IAT)

Developed by Kimberly Young (1998), the Internet Addiction Test is a widely used instrument consisting of **20 items** measured on a **6-point Likert scale** ranging from 0 (Does not apply) to 5 (Always). It assesses the severity of internet addiction and classifies individuals into categories such as mild, moderate, and severe. For the purpose of this study, only **mild and severe categories** were considered.

2. Psychological Well-Being Scale

The Psychological Well-Being Scale by Devendra Singh Sisodiya and Pooja Chaudhary were used to assess the mental and emotional state of the participants. The scale measures aspects such as life satisfaction, emotional stability, and overall psychological functioning. Higher scores indicate better psychological well-being.

Reliability of the scale

The scale demonstrates high reliability. The test–retest reliability coefficient has been reported as $r = .87$, indicating strong temporal stability of the instrument over time. This suggests that the scale produces consistent results when administered to the same individuals under similar conditions.

Validity of the scale:

The Psychological Well-Being Scale also demonstrates high validity. The reported validity coefficient is $.94$, indicating that the instrument accurately measures the construct of

psychological well-being. This high coefficient supports the appropriateness of the scale for research purpose

Scoring and Interpretation

Each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale.

The scoring pattern is as follows:

Strongly Agree – 5, Agree – 4, Undecided – 3, Disagree – 2, Strongly Disagree – 1.

For negatively worded items, the scoring is reversed. The minimum score is 50 and the maximum score is 250. Higher scores indicate higher psychological well-being, while lower scores indicate lower psychological well-being.

3. Adjustment Inventory (R.K. Ojha)

The Adjustment Inventory developed by R.K. Ojha was used to assess students' adjustment levels. It evaluates three dimensions: emotional, social, and academic adjustment. The tool is reliable and widely used in educational and psychological research.

Reliability

The adjustment inventory possess high reliability. The reliability coefficients were determined by split-half and test-retest method. For split-half, the correlation between odd and even items ad calculated and corrected by the Spearman-Brown formula. Similarly, in case of test-retest method, the inventory was again administered on a sample of 200 students after a period of two months. The reliability coefficients are shown in Table

Method	Home	Health	Social	Emotional
Split-Half	0.84	0.81	0.87	0.89
Test-Retest	0.91	0.90	0.89	0.92

Validity

The adjustment inventory was validated against K. Kumar's Adjustment inventory. The two inventory scores yielded a positive correlations. This study was conducted on a sample of 400 scores of four educational groups. Pearson's r are given in Table 2.

Scores

Scoring of the inventory is most easy. You have to count the number of responses where the individual has encircled “Yes” only. For each encircled “Yes” response 1 score is to be given. The total number of “Yes” scores thus make total score of the individual in the part. You are not concerned to the “No” and “?” response.

The inventory is totally negative inventory. When an individual answers in “Yes”, it indicates his difficulties. If he answers in “No”, it indicates that the individual has no such difficulty. If one answers in question mark “?”, his answer is neither affirmative nor negative towards difficulties. Therefore, only “Yes” responses are scores to measure adjustment difficulty.

5.5 Variables of the Study

The study includes the following variables:

- **Independent Variable:** Internet Addiction
- **Dependent Variables:**
 - Psychological Well-being
 - Adjustment

Internet addiction is further categorized into **mild and severe levels** based on IAT scores, which are used for comparative analysis.

5.6 Procedure of Data Collection

The data collection process was carried out systematically. Initially, permission was obtained from the concerned college authorities to conduct the study. The purpose of the research was clearly explained to the participants, and their voluntary participation was ensured. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the process.

The questionnaires, including the Internet Addiction Test, Psychological Well-Being Scale, and Adjustment Inventory, were distributed to the participants. Clear instructions were provided to ensure accurate responses. The participants were requested to answer all items honestly based on their personal experiences.

After completion, the questionnaires were collected and carefully checked for completeness. The responses were then coded and prepared for statistical analysis. The entire process was conducted ethically, ensuring that participants were not subjected to any psychological harm or discomfort.

6. Statical Analysis

Statistical techniques such as Pearson’s correlation, mean, SD and t test were used for data analysis.

7. Results and Interpretation

Table 7.1: Correlation Analysis

Variables	Internet Addiction	Well-Being	Adjustment
Internet Addiction	-	-0.62	-0.58
Well-Being	-0.62	-	0.65
Adjustment	-0.58	0.65	-

Interpretation:

The results indicate a **moderate negative correlation** between internet addiction and psychological well-being ($r = -0.62$) as well as adjustment ($r = -0.58$). This suggests that higher internet addiction is associated with lower levels of well-being and adjustment. Therefore, the null hypothesis is **rejected**.

Statistical Test Used: mean ,S.D ,and t -value for Psychological Well-Being

Table 7.2: ANOVA for Psychological Well-Being

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of significance
Mild	60	73.5	6.2	19.20	0.01
Severe	60	54.8	7.5		

Interpretation:

The mean score of psychological well-being is significantly higher for the mild addiction group compared to the severe group. The obtained t-value (19.20) is significant, indicating that internet addiction level has a significant effect on psychological well-being. Hence, the null hypothesis is **rejected**.

Table 7.3: mean ,S.D and t-value for Adjustment

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of significance
Mild	60	70.2	5.9	17.85	0.01
Severe	60	52.1	6.8		

The mild internet addiction group shows significantly better adjustment compared to the severe group. The t-value (17.85) is statistically significant, indicating a strong effect of internet addiction on adjustment. Therefore, the null hypothesis is **rejected**.

7. Discussion

The findings of the present study are consistent with earlier research highlighting the negative impact of internet addiction on psychological well-being and adjustment. The significant negative relationship observed between internet addiction and psychological well-being supports the findings of Young (1998), who identified excessive internet use as a behavioral addiction affecting emotional stability. Similarly, the results align with Kraut et al. (1998), who reported that increased internet usage is associated with higher levels of depression and loneliness.

The present study also found that students with severe internet addiction exhibit poorer psychological adjustment, which is in agreement with Morahan-Martin and Schumacher (2000), who identified pathological internet users as experiencing social isolation and emotional distress. Furthermore, the findings support Caplan (2002), who suggested that problematic internet use is linked with poor psychosocial adjustment.

The observed differences between mild and severe addiction groups reinforce the conclusions of Nalwa and Anand (2003) and Suhail and Bargees (2006), who reported that excessive

internet use negatively affects emotional stability and academic functioning. Overall, the study confirms that higher levels of internet addiction are associated with lower psychological well-being and adjustment, thereby emphasizing the need for controlled and balanced internet usage among college students.

8. Findings of the Study

The present study reveals several important findings regarding the relationship between internet addiction, psychological well-being, and adjustment among college students. First, a significant negative relationship was found between internet addiction and psychological well-being, and adjustment indicating that higher levels of internet addiction are . negatively related to psychological well being ,adjustment, suggesting that excessive internet use adversely affects students' ability to cope with academic, social, and emotional demands.

Further analysis showed that students categorized under severe internet addiction scored significantly lower on psychological well-being compared to those in the mild category. A similar pattern was observed in adjustment, where severely addicted students demonstrated poorer adjustment levels. .

9. Conclusion

The study concludes that internet addiction has a significant impact on psychological well-being and adjustment among college students. Higher levels of internet addiction are associated with lower psychological well-being and poor adjustment. The findings highlight the need for balanced internet usage and increased awareness regarding its psychological consequences.

10. Suggestions and Recommendations

1. Educational institutions should organize awareness programs on healthy internet usage.
2. Counselling services should be provided to students showing signs of addiction.
3. Students should be encouraged to engage in offline activities such as sports and social interactions.
4. Time management and self-regulation strategies should be promoted.

5. Further research should be conducted with larger and more diverse samples.

11. Limitations of the Study

1. The study was limited to a sample of 120 students, which may affect generalizability.
2. Convenience sampling was used, which may introduce bias.
3. The study was confined to Ahmedabad City only.
4. Data were collected using self-report measures, which may be influenced by response bias.

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