

INTERNET ADDICTION, PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIP: A PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE AND STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Digital technology is becoming integral in all dimensions of our life. It is indeed advantageous in so many ways; but at the same time, we cannot ignore the negative impact it creates on the well-being of individuals, families, and the larger society. The inherent addictive nature of digital technology increases the risk of individuals getting addicted to the Internet, especially the younger generation which is a serious threat to their Psychosocial wellbeing. The sustainability of development becomes a challenge when the wellbeing of individuals and families are threatened. To ascertain the relationship between Internet Addiction, Psychological Wellbeing and Family Relationship, the current study was conducted among 271 Postgraduate students of Women's college in Madurai. The findings reveal that Psychological well-being and Family Relationship are considerably different for students with addictive use and normal level of internet usage. The results are discussed from a sustainable development perspective that emphasizes healthy lives and promoting well-being of all ages, and Psychosocial strategies to enhance digital well-being are proposed to attain and sustain holistic development.

KEYWORDS: Internet Addiction, Psychological Well Being, Family Relationship, Digital Well-Being, And Sustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

Globally countries are striving towards achieving Digitalization in all sectors like health, education, communication, business and so on. Digital India is one of the initiatives of our country to create a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The aim is to ensure and sustain the development of our country. It is indeed an appreciable effort; provided that the possible negative impact is also taken into consideration and due measures are suggested and implemented. An in-depth understanding of the pros and cons of digital technology is essential to make sure that the good is not outweighed by the bad. If we are not mindful of the degree to which we rely on the Internet, we may develop a pattern of addictive use known as Internet Addiction.

BACKGROUND

The word addiction comes from the Latin word 'addictus', which means excessively devoted to something with loss of ability to choose freely or slave. The clinical features of behavioral problems that is Internet-related have been described in various terms, including Internet Addiction Disorder, Pathological Internet Use (PIU), Problematic Internet Use, Excessive Internet Use, Internet Dependence, Compulsive Computer Use and Virtual Addiction

Dr. Kimberly Young (1998) defines it as any online-or smartphone related, compulsive behavior which interferes with normal living and causes severe stress on family, friends, loved ones, and one's work environment. Internet addiction can also be described as a disorder in which individual's inability to control his or her use of the internet, causes marked distress and/or functional impairment (Tripathi, 2017). Research studies conducted in the past few years reveal that there is a substantial increase in the prevalence of Internet Addiction. Though the internet is widely used by varied age groups, the most vulnerable are found to be school and college students. With regard to the prevalence of Internet Addiction 29.9% of university students met the criterion on IAT for mild IA, 16.4% for moderately addictive use, and 0.5% for severe IA (Nitin Anand et.al.,2018). Studies of late, reveal that there is no significant difference with regard to the prevalence of IA among the genders. Research studies also reveal that IA is positively correlated with Impulsivity, Aggression(Lim et al, 2015; Yen et al, 2007), Social Anxiety (Weidman et al, 2012), Depression (Gamex-Guadix, 2014) and loneliness (Zygouris, & Fotis, 2015); and they are likely to be low in Psychological Well Being (Arvind Sharma et.al., 2017)

We can't deny the fact that lack of parental support and involvement can contribute to Internet Addiction in adolescents. For example, parents who are absent, neglectful, or over-controlling may lead their children to seek and stay online (Niedorys et.al., 2018). On the other hand, it's also worth noting that excessive use of the internet can contribute to family conflict and dysfunction. For example, when family members spend too much time online, it can interfere with communication and quality time spent together, leading to feelings of isolation and disconnection. (Akin and Iskender, 2011;Murali and George, 2007; Young, 1999a ;Griffiths, 1998)

In an attempt to find the relationship between Internet addiction, Psychological well-being, and Family relationships the current study was conducted. The results were discussed from a psychosocial perspective and strategies were proposed to promote digital well-being as a measure to prevent harmful consequences to sustain the development achieved so far.

AIM

To study whether Problematic Internet Use (Internet Addiction) affects Psychological Well Being and Family Relationships and suggest strategies to enhance Psychosocial Wellbeing

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the prevalence of Internet Addiction among the respondents
2. To assess the Psychological well-being and Family Relationship of the respondents
3. To understand the relationship between the study variables
4. To find the difference between respondents with Addictive and Non-Addictive Internet use with regard to Psychological Wellbeing and Family Relationship
5. To suggest Psychosocial strategies to reduce Internet Addiction and promote Psychological Wellbeing and Family Relationship.

METHODOLOGY

Research design: The study adopted a descriptive research design, which describes the prevalence of Internet Addiction, and the relationship between the study variables such as Internet Addiction. Psychological Well-being and Family relationships. And it also describes the difference between addictive and normal internet users with regard to their physical health, Psychological Well being and Family relationship.

Hypotheses

1. There is a significant relationship between Internet Addiction and Psychological Well Being.
2. There is a significant relationship between Internet Addiction and Family Relationship.
3. There is a significant difference between Addictive and Non-Addictive Internet users with regard to Psychological Well being and Family Relationship

Sampling: A questionnaire was sent to all Post graduate students of Women's College in Madurai and 271 students who responded were considered for the study.

TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION

1. A semi-structured questionnaire prepared by the researcher was used to collect sociodemographic details
2. The Internet Addiction Test is a 20-item scale developed by Dr. Kimberly Young (1998). The IAT measures the severity of self-reported compulsive use of the Internet that could be used in a variety of test settings for adults and adolescents. The questionnaire measures specific characteristics and behaviors associated with compulsive use of the Internet that includes compulsivity, escapism, and dependency. Questions also assess problems related to addictive use in personal, occupational, and social functioning.
3. The Psychological Well Being of the Students was assessed using Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale Developed by Psychologist Carol D. Ryff, (1995) which is a 7-point scale (1 = strongly agree; 7 = strongly disagree) with 18-items, The Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) Scale measures six aspects of wellbeing and happiness: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.
4. To measure the family relationship of the respondents, The Brief Family Relationship Scale by Carlotta Ching Ting Fok et.al., (2011) consists of 16 items was used. The BFRS is adapted from the 27-item Relationship dimension of the FES (Moos & Moos, 1994), consisting of Cohesion, Expressiveness, and Conflict subscales (9 items each). These subscales measure support, expression of opinions, and conflict within a family.

The collected data was analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistics, correlation, and t-test. Based on the key findings, strategies to enhance Psychosocial Well-being was proposed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No:1
Distribution of Sociodemographic details

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
LOCALITY		
Rural	78	28.8
Urban	193	71.2
TYPE OF FAMILY		
Nuclear	218	80.4
Joint	53	19.6

The table shows that the majority of respondents (71.2%) are from urban areas. The number of students who proceed to collegiate education are comparatively far below the students from the urban areas. From the table, it is also evident that the majority of respondents (80.4%) belong to the nuclear family system which indicates that the preference towards the nuclear family system is more than the preference for joint family system. The consequences of such preferences could also be reflected in various dimensions of the life of the respondents. The type of family system, whether joint or nuclear, can indeed have an influence on Internet addiction among children. Both family system has its own challenges, and we cannot generalize because family structure is not the sole factor that determines the development of Internet Addiction.

Table No:2

Distribution of respondents based on the level of Internet Addiction

Level of Internet Addiction	Frequency	Percentage
Normal	128	47.2
Mild	100	36.9
Moderate	42	15.5
Severe	1	0.4
Total	271	100.0

From the above table it is evident that respondents with different levels of Internet Addiction is slightly higher than the respondents with normal level of internet use, which is an issue of concern to be taken into consideration. Among the students with addictive use, the majority are in the mild level(36.9%) and subsequently the moderate (15.5%) and the severe level(0.4 %). The findings are in alignment with the number of previously conducted studies. Post-pandemic studies reveal that there is a drastic rise in the mild and moderate level of Internet Addiction.

It is crucial for families to be aware of the challenges that their children face, get involved and provide the essential support that they need; and it is of paramount importance for educational institutions to raise awareness about internet addiction, provide resources for prevention and intervention, and promote healthy online habits among students. The increasing reliance of students for everything on the internet can be slowed down by providing alternate activities and support networks, as well as by fostering an environment that promotes a balanced approach to technology.

Table No:3

Distribution of respondents based on their experience of health issues.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Do not have health issues	165	60.1
Have health issues	106	39.9
Total	271	100.0

The table shows that majority of respondents (60.1%) do not suffer from any health issue which seems to be positive indicator, but at the same time (39.9%) of the respondents who belong to the productive age group suffer from some health issues which cannot be ignored. The physical health of this productive age group is of prime importance because good health directly impacts the overall quality of life for college students. When students are healthy, they have more energy, enthusiasm, and motivation to engage in various activities. They can enjoy their college experience to the fullest, participate in hobbies, pursue personal goals, and effectively manage the demands of academic and personal life.

It is essential for colleges and universities to prioritize the health of their students by providing access to healthcare services, promoting wellness programs, and creating a supportive and inclusive campus environment. Likewise, students should be encouraged to prioritize their own health through self-care practices and seeking help when needed.

Table No:4

Table showing the relationship between study variables

	Internet Addiction	Psychological <u>Well being</u>	Family Relationship
Internet Addiction	1		
Psychological <u>Well Being</u>	-0.364(**)	1	
Family Relationship	-0.293(**)	0.392(**)	1

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

The analyses of data using Pearson's Correlation indicates that there exist statistically significant negative correlation between Internet Addiction and Psychological Wellbeing ($r = -0.364^{**}$) as well as Internet Addiction and Family Relationship ($r = -0.293^{**}$). Psychological Well being and Family relationship are found to be positively correlated.

The relationship between internet addiction, psychological well-being, and family relationships is complex and interconnected. Internet addiction has been associated with various negative effects on psychological well-being. Spending excessive time online may lead to neglect of real-world relationships and responsibilities, resulting in social isolation and a diminished sense of well-being. It can also lead to decreased communication and quality time spent with family members which may result in conflicts, as the individual's focus and attention are directed primarily towards online activities rather than engaging with their family. This can create a sense of detachment, strained relationships, and feelings of neglect or abandonment. It is important to note that the relationship between these variables can be bidirectional and influenced by various individual, familial, and contextual factors. Addressing internet addiction and promoting psychological well-being and healthy family relationships require a multi-faceted approach, including education, awareness, open communication, setting boundaries, and seeking professional help when needed.

Positive and supportive family relationships are crucial for psychological well-being. Strong family bonds, open communication, and emotional support contribute to a sense of belonging, security, and overall happiness. Healthy family relationships provide a buffer against stress and can enhance an individual's mental health.

Table No:5

Difference between the respondents from rural and urban areas with regard to the study variables

Variables	Rural (N=78)		Urban (N=193)		t-value
	M	SD	M	SD	
Internet Addiction	31.59	16.04	32.21	15.90	.291
Psychological Wellbeing	67.51	10.68	71.11	9.87	2.654***
Family Relationship	74.02	13.40	76.38	13.07	1.339

The comparison between the respondents of rural and urban areas with regard to Internet Addiction, Psychological Well being and Family relationship indicate that there is statistically significant difference with regard to Psychological Wellbeing and the difference is not statistically significant for Internet Addiction and Family Relationship. From the findings, it is evident that there is easy access of Internet in the rural areas too, and the influence of the addictive nature of the internet seems to be common, irrespective of the geographical location. The mean scores of the groups with regard to Psychological Well being indicate that the respondents of urban areas experience better Psychological Well Being than the respondents of the rural areas; Though significant, it cannot be generalized because individual experiences and circumstances can vary greatly, and there can be significant variations within both urban and rural contexts. However, factors like lifestyle, social pressures, social comparison, restricted environment, lack of autonomy and opportunities would have contributed to the lower Psychological Well being of respondents from rural areas. It is vital to have a comprehensive understanding of an individual's situation and circumstances when assessing the impact of internet addiction on psychological wellbeing.

Table No:6

Difference between Non-Addictive and Addictive Internet users with regards to Psychological Wellbeing and Family Relationship

Variables	Non-Addictive Internet users (N=228)		Addictive Internet users (N=43)		t-value
	M	SD	M	SD	
Psychological Wellbeing	71.15	9.94	64.40	9.93	4.085***
Family Relationship	76.97	12.93	68.97	12.58	3.739***

From the above table it is evident that there is a statistically significant difference between the Non-Addictive and Addictive Internet Users with regard to Psychological Well being and Family Relationships. The findings are similar to many other previously conducted research which indicate the difference between Addictive and Non-Addictive Internet Users.

Addictive internet users are more likely to report symptoms of depression, anxiety, loneliness, and low self-esteem. They also tend to neglect real-life relationships that are often displayed in a decreased level of quality time and engagement with their family members. leading to strained relationships and decreased communication within the family which could ultimately result in a diminished sense of psychological well-being. whereas the nonaddicts actively participate in family events, communicate openly, and have a sense of connection and support within their family. They are more likely to have healthy social connections and

effectively manage their time and priorities, striking a balance between online activities, academics, and other responsibilities help them experience autonomy and the sense of fulfillment of their purpose in life leading to a higher level of Psychological Wellbeing.

The major findings of the study clearly indicate that intentional efforts have to be taken to monitor our digital use. Especially to be mindful of the extent, purpose, and outcome of our digital usage and evolve strategies that would be helpful at the individual, familial and societal level. Having a clear understanding of the concept of Digital Wellbeing and various strategies are essential to personalize and put into practice. Adopting strategies for promoting digital well-being among youth has become especially important; by prioritizing it, we empower them to become responsible and healthy digital citizens, able to leverage technology's benefits while mitigating its potential risks and negative effects on their well-being. The following are some strategies that could be promoted.

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE DIGITAL WELLBEING

DIGITAL STRATEGIES (TOOLS OF DIGITAL WELLBEING)

The practice of preserving a healthy and balanced relationship with technology is referred to as digital well-being. It involves the utilization of digital tools and strategies that monitor and promote physical, mental, and emotional well-being, while minimizing the potential negative effects of excessive screen time and digital distractions. Some well-known brands include digital well-being applications within their products, and there are additional digital well-being applications available online. Screen Time Trackers, Focus Apps, Website Blockers, Digital Detox Apps, Meditation and Mindfulness Apps, Sleep Tracking Apps, Productivity and Task Management Apps, Digital Wellbeing Features, Email and Notification Management, Physical Activity Tracking Apps, etc. Digital wellness is a personal endeavor, and different tools and strategies are effective for different people. It is our individual responsibility to discover the most suitable digital tools and to develop digital habits that promote our well-being.

FAMILY STRATEGIES

Understanding the significant functions and characteristics of a healthy family would enable us to evolve effective strategies that would help us address Internet Addiction which is now becoming a serious public health concern.

Families that are most successful, functional, happy, and strong are not only balanced but

1. Committed to one another
2. Appreciate each other
3. Spend time together (both qualitatively and quantitatively)
4. Have good communication patterns
5. Have a high degree of religious/ spiritual orientation, and
6. Are able to deal with crisis in a positive manner Gladding, 2011;Stinnett, 1998; Stinnett & DeFrain, 1985).
7. Express affirmation and encouragement
8. Work through difficulties together and they look within the family for strength rather than looking to something outside

9. Equip its members to discover how to draw the line between right and wrong, between good and evil.

Broadly it can be categorized as follows

1. **Promoting Cohesion**- Promoting cohesion in families is essential for maintaining healthy relationships, fostering communication, and creating a sense of belonging. Primarily Unconditional Positive Regard, Love, Care, Support and Emotional Bonding are the key factors that could be achieved by practicing the above-mentioned and is an ongoing effort that requires active participation from all family members.
2. **Permitting Expression** - Respecting Uniqueness, Accepting differences, Open communication, Creativity and Independence are the key factors. Expressiveness in families play a crucial role in fostering healthy relationships and maintaining psychosocial well-being. It creates a safe and supportive environment where family members can connect and bond on a deeper level. It helps family members understand each other's experiences, joys, and challenges, leading to stronger emotional connections.
3. **Pacifying Conflict** - The key factors are Cooperation, Compatibility, and the 3Fs'- Fears, Faults and Failures are handled without rejection or condemnation. Conflicts are a normal part of family life, and resolving them takes time, patience, and effort. By employing the strategies such as Active Listening, Being respectful, Finding common ground, Compromise, Win-Win Solution, Apologize, Forgiveness and by maintaining open lines of communication, we can pacify conflicts and promote a more peaceful and loving family environment.

PSYCHOSOCIAL STRATEGIES

1. Mindful Digital usage
2. Personalized Digital Detox Practices
3. Promoting Digital Literacy and Independence
4. Balancing virtual/real-life experiences
5. Being personally and socially responsible tech users

MINDFUL DIGITAL USAGE

The easy access and availability of the internet all the time have increased the probability of misuse and abuse of digital technology. Hence we have to be mindful of the time, purpose, context and money spent; to safeguard ourselves from the negative impact on the bio-psychosocial dimensions of our life.

PERSONALIZED DIGITAL DETOX PRACTICES:

Digital detox is defined as taking an intentional break from using electronic devices or certain media for a period of time, which may range from a few days to several months. There are various digital detox methods, which has to be planned and practiced that are specific to the individual's needs and convenience. It allows for mental and emotional refreshment, promotes face-to-face interactions, and helps individuals reconnect with the non-digital aspects of their lives.

PROMOTING DIGITAL INDEPENDENCE

Digital technology provides access to all sorts of information, which may or may not be appropriate to the user. There are chances for the user to be carried away by the contents

which may distract the user from the purpose of their digital way. It is the responsibility of the user to choose appropriate content and restrict the unwanted. The ability and maturity of the user to wisely choose and use what is appropriate to them is referred as digital independence or being digitally independent. In other words not being carried away by the inappropriate, useless and filthy contents being offered by the digital media.

BALANCING VIRTUAL/REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCES

We are sometimes blinded by the advantages we enjoy through digital technology. We fail to see the damage it causes to our real-life experiences. People are not able to differentiate the virtual world from reality. Experiencing real life is essential to sustain the true nature of human beings.

BEING PERSONALLY AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE TECH USERS

The cybercrimes that are happening of late indicate that we are failing to be responsible both personally and socially. Digital technology is a very powerful tool that can be used either constructively or destructively which is highly dependent on the user. So, it is the responsibility of the user to become empowered with digital literacy skills and be responsible for their own safety and well-being; as well as the safety and well being of others. For the outcome to be beneficial for all of us in today's digital world, it is crucial that we think and act with the common good in mind.

CONCLUSION

Internet addiction requires a multi-faceted interventional approach involving individuals, families, educational institutions, policymakers, and the technology industry. Compared to the attainment of development, the obstacles we must overcome to sustain the progress we have made thus far are numerous. By implementing the Digital India Mission, India has significantly advanced in a variety of sectors. It is the responsibility of each individual to safeguard the development and advance it until we reach a state of sustainability and maximize the benefits. Especially the youth, who are in the productive age group have to be wise and act with discernment in using digital technology by being aware of its pros and cons and adopt practices that promote responsible and balanced internet use. Thus, we can mitigate the negative consequences of addictive internet use, promote digital well-being and ensure that the internet is utilized as a tool for sustainable development rather than a threat or hindrance.

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