A STUDY OF LONELINESS IN RELATION TO INTERNET ADDICTION AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

In the present scenario of changing social structures, social values, industrialization, and globalization, feeling of loneliness is becoming a serious problem among adolescents due to which they tend to use more internet, hence leading themselves towards internet addiction. The present study was conducted to examine the association between loneliness and internet addiction among adolescents studying in Senior Secondary schools. The sample of the study involved 200 adolescents (males = 100, females = 100) between the age range of 15 and 18 years. Loneliness was assessed by Loneliness Scale (Dr. Anjali Arora, 2008) and Internet Addiction was measured by Internet Addiction Test (Dr. Kimberley Young, 1998).The data were analyzed by using Pearson correlation coefficient and independent sample t-test. The results showed that there was significant positive relationship between loneliness and internet addiction. The results also showed that there were gender differences on variable of loneliness and internet addiction which indicates that girls were significantly higher on loneliness than boys; and boys were significantly more addicted towards internet than girls. The study suggest the different kind of strategies for reducing the feeling of loneliness and avoiding internet addiction; so as to prevent their negative impact on adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescents, Loneliness, Internet Addiction

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Introduction

Nowadays the wide spread of internet has resulted in the creation of the phenomenon of addiction to the internet, especially in young people. In addition, internet addiction creates many problems in the field of mental health of young people. Loneliness is a frequently reported mental illness addicted to the internet. Essentially the internet came to fill gaps in the modern lifestyle. It happened, however, just the opposite, as the internet did not work as a tool fillings psychology and communication, but maximized the existing problem. Specifically, through the internet user of social media such as facebook seeks to remedy the lack of social interaction (Griffiths, 2011). The adolescents develop online relationships, trying to cope with loneliness that characterizes them. So adolescents trying to solve the problem of intense loneliness are trapped in a new form of addiction, which encapsulates the problem and maximizes it. The consequence of this is the interrelationship of loneliness and internet addiction (Park & Choi, 2011). Specifically, the survey finds that the more one is addicted to the internet, the higher the risk to present a mental illness, such as loneliness. Similarly, people with mental illnesses encountered frequently in groups addicted to the internet (Young & Rogers, 1997). The diagnosis of internet addiction is linked with mental symptoms that occur from misuse, since many hours of Internet use does not necessarily addiction to it (Akin & Iskender, 2011).

In these studies, it is stated that loneliness can lead to an addicted personality. Therefore, it is thought that' loneliness may be in a significant relationship with internet addiction. So the undertaken study was planned to identify the relationship of loneliness and internet addiction among adolescents studying in Senior Secondary Schools of Chandigarh by concentrating on demographic variable- Gender (Boys & Girls). It was decided to conduct the study on adolescents under the following objectives;

a) To identify the relationship of loneliness and internet addiction among adolescents.

b) To study gender differences on the variables of loneliness and internet addiction among adolescents studying in Govt. Senior Secondary Schools of Chandigarh.

Adolescents are the students who are in the age group of 15 to 18 years and are studying in classes ranging from X to XII. Loneliness for the undertaken study was conceived as a response style of an individual which increases and decreases by making him realise of his social

deficiency and feelings associated to social relationships with family and friends. Internet addiction is regarded as behavioural dependency related to internet as a disorder associated to physical, financial, familial, social and mental losses.

Literature Review

Paplau, Rusell and Heim (1979) suggested that loneliness occurs when an individual network of social relationships is smaller or less satisfying than the desire of the person and the internet usage appeals only those individuals who are lonely and view their loneliness as a stage by which they are drawn towards internet to break their cycle of loneliness.

Kraut (1998) conducted a longitudinal study to examine the effect of internet on the people who had never before had an access to the internet and found that use of internet increases loneliness among them by isolating oneself socially.

Morahan-Martin (1999) conducted research to identify relationship between loneliness and internet addiction and suggested that internet addiction draw people lonely because of the expanded social networks and the altered patterns of online communication.

Hoza, Bukowski and Beery (2000) conducted an investigation to assess peer network and loneliness. The findings of the study reported higher levels of loneliness among boys when compared to girls.

Ko, Yen and Chen (2005) conducted research on internet addiction among adolescents residing in Turkey and suggested that greater use of internet is associated with social and psychological variables such as; loneliness and life satisfaction.

Morrison and Gore (2010) conducted research to analyse relationship between internet addiction and loneliness and found a significant correlation between the two. The study further highlighted that this problem is more prevalent among males and young people who show more addiction towards internet.

Vanhalst et al (2012) conducted research to determine interplay of loneliness and the findings of the study reported that girls exhibit higher levels of loneliness when compared to boys.

Shanwal and Bhat (2013) conducted research on 200 college students and found a significant relationship between internet addiction and loneliness.

Karapetsas, Zygouris and Fotis (2015) conducted research to highlight that high level of loneliness was experienced by adolescents who were addicted to internet and the rates of internet addiction among adolescents grow exponentially along with the highest rates of loneliness in the addicted adolescents.

Methodology:

Participants and Procedure

All of the participants were senior secondary school students' age ranging from 15 to 18 years. Scores taken from loneliness scale and internet addiction test were analysed. Of these participants (N=200), 100 were male and 100 female adolescents. Prior to administration of scales, purpose of the study was explained to all participants.

Instruments Used

Loneliness Scale (LS)

Loneliness scale adapted by Dr. Anjali Arora (2008) was used as a tool to collect the data from adolescents. The test-retest reliability for the test was 0.74. It comprised of 35 statements, 20 positive and 15 negative statements. The consent to each statement was obtained under a five point Likert scale covering a variety of situations such as; Always Agree, Agree, Cannot Say, Disagree and Totally Disagree.

Internet Addiction Test (IAT)

The study used the internet addiction test prepared by Dr. Kimberley Young (1998). 20 questions were used to determine internet addiction of adolescents. The reliability for the test was determined by employing Cronbach's Alpha method which comes out to be 0.899. All the

responses on 20 statements were collected under five point Likert's scale which stands (1-Rarely, 2- Occasionally, 3- Frequently, 4- Often and 5- Always).

Data Analysis

The obtained data analyzed through SPSS 17.0 software. Firstly, relationship between adolescents' Loneliness and Internet Addiction was investigated through Pearson-Product - Moment correlation coefficient for total sample (N=200). Then, relationship was separately analysed on the basis of gender for male (N=100) and female (N=100) adolescents separately.

Findings

The data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient, and independent sample t-test. Karl Pearson Product Moment Correlation method was computed to ascertain connectedness and relatedness among different variables viz; loneliness and internet addiction considered under study. All the analysis under this section is reported in the form of correlation matrices.

Table-1

Loneliness among Adolescents on the Basis of Gender

Means, SD & t-ratio of Male (N=100) and Female (N=100) Adolescents on Loneliness

Variable	Male		Female		t-ratio
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Loneliness	98.68	24.463	119.13	15.309	10.022**

**Significant at the 0.01 level

Table-1 discloses the mean scores of male and female adolescents on loneliness which for male adolescents is 98.68 and for females is 119.13; indicates that male adolescents experience less of loneliness than female adolescents. Further, t-ratio for differences between their means is 10.022; which is significant at 0.01 level. This led to interpret that female adolescents differ from male adolescents by showing more influence by loneliness.

Table -2

Comparison of Internet Addiction among Adolescents on the Basis of Gender

Means, SD & t-ratio of Male (N=100) and Female (N=100) Adolescents on Internet Addiction

Variable	Male		Female		t-ratio
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Internet Addiction	64.98	7.828	49.50	12.697	14.672**

**Significant at the 0.01 level

Table-2 exhibits the mean scores of male and female adolescents on internet addiction as; 64.98 and 49.50 respectively. The t-ratio for differences between the means is 14.672, which is significant at 0.01 level. This led us to interpret that male and female adolescents differ significantly from each other with reference to their usage of internet.

Table -3

Correlations among Loneliness and Internet Addiction for Total Sample of Adolescents (N=200)

Variables	Loneliness	Internet Addiction
Loneliness	1	.100*
Internet Addiction	.100*	1

 * Significant at the 0.05 level

The correlation matrix vide table-3 discloses that loneliness of adolescents has significant association with internet addiction. The value of 'r'= .100* which is positive and significant at 0.05 level. In other words, significant correlation predicts that loneliness increases the addiction among adolescents with more usage of internet. This confirms that loneliness is affected by internet addiction.

Table-4

Correlations among Loneliness and Internet Addiction for Total Sample of Male Adolescents (N=100)

Variables	Loneliness	Internet Addiction
Loneliness	1	.723**
Internet Addiction	.723**	1

**Significant at the 0.01 level

The correlation matrix reveals that loneliness of male adolescents has significant and positive correlation with internet addiction. The value of 'r'= .723** which is significant at 0.01 level. In other words, it indicates that loneliness of male adolescents is influenced by addiction with internet. It led us to interpret that loneliness has significant positive correlation with internet addiction.

Table-5

Correlations among Loneliness and Internet Addiction for Total Sample of Female Adolescents (N=100)

Variables	Loneliness	Internet Addiction
Loneliness	1	.415**
Internet Addiction	.415**	1

**Significant at the 0.01 level

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Table-5 shows that loneliness has positive and significant correlation with internet addiction. The positive value of 'r' is .415; which depicts that loneliness is positively correlated to internet addiction. It means that loneliness of female adolescents make them addicted towards internet also.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between internet addiction and loneliness. Findings of the research showed a direct relationship of loneliness and internet addiction among adolescents. It found that teenagers addicted to the Internet have higher rates of loneliness. The different studies showing the relationship between these two variables (Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukophadhyay & Scherlis, 1998). The Kraut in his research, found that the removal of internet users from socializing in turn leads to negative psychological states such as loneliness.

Specifically, with the reduction of the social circle and the lack of communication with the family. In their studies (Yen, Chih-Hung, Cheng-Fang, Sue- Huei, Wei-Lun, Cheng-Chung, 2008) found that young people addicted to the Internet are characterized not only by loneliness and depression, but also have low self-esteem which can be fatal for young ones.

In conclusion, this study was an effort to examine the relationship between Loneliness and Internet addiction among adolescents. From the results of this study, the schools must impart awareness to adolescents by arranging necessary awareness programs on how to cope with loneliness and proper use of internet and awareness programs at school level. Schools should have a regular feature of organizing seminars, conferences, group discussions, workshops to highlight the negative consequences of problematic internet use and loneliness and their consequences in affecting the overall personality of adolescents.

Delimitations and Suggestions for further studies

The present study is delimited to adolescents studying in senior secondary schools of Chandigarh and its surrounding areas. For the generalization of results more studies and research work can be conducted to other regions, colleges and universities with different data samples and variables. Research should be done on a larger sample, but with better distribution.

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