A Study on Internet Addiction and Anxiety

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Abstract: *Internet is one the most widely used means for communication and it connects individuals worldwide but overuse of internet may affect the individual's social life. This study aims to know if internet addiction causes an individual to be socially anxious, to know if a socially anxious person uses the internet to cope and to know if there is any difference between internet addiction and social anxiety between genders. The research was conducted on hundred male and female college students aged between 20-25 years. The data was collected through purposive sampling. The samples were taken from various colleges in Bangalore. Two questionnaires were given to the subjects one was internet addiction test and the other one was Leibowitz social anxiety scale. The scores were calculated and SPSS was used for the analysis of data. The findings were that there is a high significant correlation between internet addiction and social anxiety.*

Keywords: Internet Addiction, Social anxiety, College students

1. Introduction

Internet is the most common and widely used method for interactions or communication in our world of social media and networking. In today's society we can see that almost everyone is a part of this and uses social networking on a daily basis. Social networking has helped people connect instantly and has helped individuals not only in their personal life but at their workplace as well. But it is not just positive traits for social media. Social media networks have created a phenomenon on the internet that has gained popularity over the last decade. People use social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace to create and sustain relationships with others (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). These social media sites let those who use them create personal profiles, while connecting with other users of the sites. Users can upload photographs, post what they are doing at any given time, and send personal or public messages to whomever they choose. In this "information age," social media sites seem to be growing in popularity rapidly, especially among young adults (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2008). In particular, college students form a large proportion of users on social media networks. Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zickuhr (2010) found that 72% of all college students have a social media profile with 45% of college students using a social media site at least once a day. Many of these young adults use social media networks to communicate with family, friends, and even strangers. Social media sites have created various new and non-personal ways for people to communicate with others and young adults have taken advantage of this technological trend. The purpose of this study was to examine how social media affects college student's social life.

There has been a massive increase in the use of social networking media in recent years, as illustrated by the fact that Facebook had grown to 800 million users in eight years. Social interactions with family members sometimes gets effected due to the overuse of internet and social media website. Because of internet and social networking sites it has become very easy for strangers to get in contact. The whole concept of 'do not talk to strangers' which is a common saying by every mother is completely ignored and not cared for now days. The problem is also with personal privacy. Even though we can change privacy setting it is still not the same as keeping photos to ourselves. People can gain access to our personal information easily through social networking sites. We can notice a significant change in the social interactions of people in comparison to the times before social media was this huge. For people who are entirely into social network interactions for them face to face interactions might not be a norm. The concern is that this may have had a detrimental effect on their interpersonal communications. Simply not having as much in-person communication might have allowed individuals to be less able to pick up on social cues. Because people who communicate through non-face to face mediums do not regularly see people talking, they may have difficulty recognizing facial indicators of moods and emotions. Body language is sometimes absent from these forms of communication.

A previous study done byKujath (2011) to examine the use of Facebook and MySpace in this regard among 183 college students. The study found that Facebook and MySpace did act as an extension of face to face interaction, but that some users tended to rely on Facebook to MySpace for interpersonal communication more than face to face interaction (Kujath, 2011). Results of Kujath's (2011) study found that respondents reported using Facebook an average of 1.2 times per day and spent an average of 31.5 minutes each time they used it. MySpace users reported an average usage of 1.6 times a day and spent an average of 38.8 minutes for each use.

Another study done In 2011 by, Smock, Ellison, Lampe, and Wohn applied the uses and gratification approach to analyse why individuals use Facebook in general, as well as why they use certain functions on the website. The researchers found that users who update their status are motivated chiefly by a desire for expressive information sharing, whereas individuals who post comments do so for relaxing entertainment, companionship, and social interaction. However, individuals who posted on friends walls did so for professional advancement, social interaction, and habitual

pass time. Two motives, professional advancement and social interaction, were discovered as underlying reasons why users sent private messages. Smock et al. also found social interaction was the only significant motive discovered in the usage of Facebook's chat feature. Finally, the usage of groups on the site was positively influenced by expressive information sharing, and negatively by social interaction.

Another study by Miller, Parsons and Lifer (2010) reported on the results of a field study in which undergraduate students were questioned about their use of social networking sites and the appropriateness of the content that they post. The data was collected directly from students who used MySpace and Facebook. Students were asked about how often they visited the sites and the amount of time they spent during each visit. Focus groups were conducted with students who were active users of the sites. These focus groups were made up of students from a variety of disciplines, all attending a small private university in the Midwest United States. The sample for the study had 165 undergraduate students attending the same university as those from the focus group. The results of Miller et al's (2010) study found that the vast majority (88.5%) admitted to visiting the sites at least once a day. Perhaps more interestingly 60% of the students reported that they visited the sites multiple times a day. Although this may lead to the assumption that students are spending hours on these sites, the results paint a slightly different picture. In fact the students reported that their individual visits tended to be short, 60% less than 10 minutes and 35.2% between 10 and 30 minutes (Miller et al, 2010).

2. Methodology

Aim: To study the relationship between Internet addiction and social anxiety among male and female youth population.

Objectives:
1) To study internet addiction among males
2) To study the internet addiction among females
3) To study social anxiety among males
4) To study social anxiety among females
5) To study the relationship between internet addiction and social anxiety

Hypotheses:
There will be a difference in internet addiction between both genders
There will be a difference in social anxiety between both genders
There would be a correlation between internet addiction and social anxiety

Variables:
Independent Variable: Internet addiction
Dependent Variable: Social anxiety

Research Design:
In this quantitative study the number of subjects were selected as a sample initially by building a rapport and then the socio-demographic details were taken (Name, Age, Sex and Educational qualification). Then the selected tools were provided to the subjects to complete.

Sample: A total of 100 subjects were chosen through purposive sampling. 50 males and 50 females within the age range of 20-25 years.

Inclusion criteria:
People who can comprehend English language
People who use internet for more than 2 hours

Exclusion criteria:
People who are technologically illiterate
People who are not aware of the online trends

Tools:

Internet Addiction Test (IAT): The Internet Addiction Test is the first validated and reliable measure of addictive use of the Internet. This test is developed by Dr Kimberly Young. The IAT is a 20 item questionnaire that measures mild, moderate, and severe levels of Internet Addiction. The subject must choose the appropriate choice. Spearman Brown value for the scale was 0.86. Guttmann Split Half value for the scale was 0.85. These calculated coefficients were all in the acceptable range, and these suggested that the test and the each factor had internal reliability. Validity and reliability analysis were reviewed about the adoption of Internet Addiction Test and it was in the acceptable ranges.

The Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS): This is a short questionnaire developed by Michael Liebowitz, a psychiatrist and researcher at Columbia University and the New York State Psychiatric Institute. Its purpose is to assess the range of social interaction and performance situations feared by a patient in order to assist in the diagnosis of social anxiety disorder. It is commonly used to study outcomes in clinical trials and, more recently, to evaluate the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioural treatments. The scale features 24 items, which are divided into two subscales. 13 questions relate to performance anxiety and 11 concern social situations. The LSAS was originally conceptualized as a clinician-administered rating scale, but has since been validated as a self-report scale. Research found that the internal consistency of the LSAS is high, too. In a large study, LSAS scores were compared with scores for Total fear, Fear of social interaction, Fear of performance, Total avoidance, Avoidance of social interaction and Avoidance of performance.

Procedure:
In this study 100 Respondents N =50 Males, N= 50 Females between the ages 20-25 years were selected from various colleges. Two questionnaires were selected, Internet Addiction Test and Social Anxiety scale. Both questionnaires were given to each subject. The scores collected were analysed and interpreted.

Analysis: Proper statistical analysis was done using the Pearson r correlation and t test results were taken.

3. Results

The current study was conducted in order to find the relationship between social anxiety and internet addiction among youths. After the calculations using Pearson r

correlation it was found that there is high significant correlation between social anxiety and internet addiction. The questionnaires were given separately to males and females from various colleges in Bangalore. The results show that there is a significant correlation between males and females in both the tests. The mean result for males in internet addiction is 42.8 and the mean result for internet addiction in females is 41.6 which indicates that Internet addiction for males is slightly higher than females in this study. The mean results for males in social anxiety is 33.7 and the mean result for females in social anxiety is 37.8 which indicates that the social anxiety is little higher in females than males in this study. After doing the t test the results (Table 1 and 2) showed that there is no significant difference between males and females in terms of internet addiction and social anxiety and the difference is not statistically significant as well. For a result to be significant, the sig level should be equal to or less than .05 in this result the sig level for internet addiction is .73 and social anxiety is .40, which is both higher than .05.

The overall study shows that there is a high significant correlation between internet addiction and social anxiety in both males and females so it accepts the hypothesis which states that there will be a significant correlation between internet addiction and social anxiety among youths. Internet addiction is higher in males than in females which accepts the hypothesis that there will be a difference in the levels of internet addiction between both genders. Social anxiety is higher in females than in males which accepts the hypothesis that states there will be a difference between genders in their social anxiety.

Table 1

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, t and significance for men and women in internet addiction test

M1	M2	SD1	SD2	t	sig
42.86	41.63	14.08	15.8	.34	.73

The hypothesis states that there will be a difference in the levels of internet addiction between both genders.

Mean for men (M1) is 42.86 and Mean for women (M2) is 41.63. Standard deviation for men (SD1) is 14.08 and Standard deviation for women (SD2) is 15.8. The t and sig(significance) results are .34 and .73. From the given scores we can see tha t internet addiction is slightly higher in males than in females. Internet addiction is similar to addictions like taking drugs or alcohol. Internet addicts have the same feeling that a drug abuser feels when they use various drugs, a feeling of high and the addicts become dependent on the cyberspace.Internet addicts struggle to control their behaviours and experience despair over the constant failure to use the internet. Their loss of self-esteem grows and they use internet and various social media sites as an escape route.

Table 2

M1	M2	SD1	SD2	t	Sig
33.7	37.8	17.43	22.75	.83	.40

Table 2 shows the mean, standard deviation, t and significance for males and females in social anxiety scale.

The hypothesis states that there will be a difference in social anxiety between both genders

Mean for men (M1) is 33.7 and Mean for women (M2) is 37.8. Standard deviation for men (SD1) is 17.43 and Standard deviation for women (SD2) is 22.75. The 't' and sig (significance) results are .83 and .40. From the given scores we can see that social anxiety is higher in females than in males. Social anxiety can be caused because the individual might be used to online chatting or conversation and might not have much experience with face to face interaction. This might cause a person to feel anxious when they are put in social situations. There might be biological factors like imbalance in serotonin that cause social anxiety. The amygdala also plays a role in controlling the fear so if people have an overactive amygdala they might have heightened fear which causes increase in anxiety levels.

Table 3

Table 3 shows the correlation between internet addiction (IA) and social anxiety (SA) in men, women and overall correlation

	Internet Addiction of the subjects	Social Anxiety of the subjects
Internet Addiction of the subject		.474**
Social Anxiety of the subject	.474**	

*- significant at 0.05 level, **- significant at 0.01 level

The hypothesis states that there will be a significant correlation between internet addiction and social anxiety.

The above table shows the correlation between the scores of internet addiction and social anxiety which were achieved by the respondents. The Pearson correlation is .474 in internet addiction and social anxiety.

The results show that there is a high significant correlation between the 0.01 and 0.05 level.

This indicates that if an individual is addicted to internet he/she might develop social anxiety and will not be able to deal effectively in society. At the same time even if an individual is socially anxious he/she may use the internet as a way to escape from social situations.

4. Conclusion

- There is a significant correlation between internet addiction and social anxiety
- Social anxiety is higher in females than in males
- Internet addiction is higher in males than in females

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