Comparative Study on Internet Addiction and Psychological Well Being among Young Adults and Middle Adults

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Abstract

Internet addiction has emerged as a major concern in contemporary society, with individuals relying heavily on online platforms for communication, entertainment, and information. The impact of excessive internet use on psychological well-being necessitates thorough investigation. This study examines the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being in a sample of 131 individuals from young and middle age groups, encompassing both genders. Data analysis reveals significant insights into the interplay between internet usage patterns and mental health, shedding light on the implications for overall well-being in the digital age.

Keywords: *Internet Addiction, Psychological Well-Being, Online Platforms*.

Introduction

The advent of the internet has revolutionized the way we live, work, and interact with the world. While its benefits are undeniable, concerns about its addictive potential and its impact on mental health have garnered increasing attention. This research seeks to explore the intricate relationship between internet addiction and the psychological well-being of individuals. By examining the prevalence of internet addiction, its underlying factors, and its potential ramifications on mental health parameters such as stress, anxiety, depression, and overall quality of life, this study aims to shed light on a pressing issue in today's digital age. Understanding the implications of internet addiction on psychological well-being is crucial for informing interventions and strategies aimed at promoting healthier internet usage habits and fostering greater mental well-being in individuals. The internet is a technical instrument that improves our quality of life and has become an essential component of it as the number of users

grows daily (Isman and Dabaj, 2004; Yapici and Akbayin, 2012). The internet provides useful tools like social media sharing, purchasing, and entertainment that make it quicker and easier to obtain knowledge. Yen, Ko, Yen et al., 2007) in addition to psychological and physical consequences such fatigue (Akın and Iskender, 2011; Griffiths, 1998), animosity, despair, and loneliness (Morahan-Martin and Schumacher, 2003).

Being well is a lifestyle. In particular, a life that is optimally oriented toward health and wellness; a body, mind, and soul that are united; a person who has a purposeful attitude and strives to enjoy life to the fullest; and a functioning life in all social, personal, and as well as ecological factors (Myers et al., 2003). An individual's lifestyle and state of health and well-being are strongly correlated. The goal of well-being is to identify the elements that promote health and modify people's lifestyles accordingly. Individuals' life patterns do not determine their fate.

Psychological well-being is a multifaceted construct that encompasses various aspects of an individual's mental and emotional state. It goes beyond mere absence of distress and includes positive functioning, life satisfaction, and fulfilment.

Internet addiction refers to compulsive and problematic internet usage that interferes with an individual's daily life. It encompasses behaviours such as excessive social media engagement, online gaming, and compulsive web browsing. The consequences of internet addiction extend beyond mere time spent online; they affect mental health, social relationships, and overall quality of life. (Sharma, M. K., & Sharma, A. K. (2019)).

Internet addiction also arises from a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors. Genetic predisposition, personality traits, and environmental stressors all contribute to its development. Individuals struggling with internet addiction often experience compromised well-being. Their mental health suffers due to disrupted sleep patterns, reduced face-to-face interactions, and heightened anxiety related to online activities.

Internet addiction refers to the excessive involvement in online activities, such as social media browsing, gaming, or video streaming, which adversely affects one's daily functioning. It is characterized by an overwhelming urge to be online, often leading to neglect of responsibilities, relationships, and personal health. This addiction can take various forms, including compulsive smartphone use, gaming addiction, or obsessive browsing of social media platforms.

Psychological well-being encompasses an individual's emotional, social, and mental state, reflecting their overall happiness and satisfaction with life. It involves maintaining positive self-perception, fostering healthy relationships, and effectively managing life's challenges. Factors like self-esteem, resilience, and stress management play a crucial role in psychological well-being. However, internet addiction can disrupt psychological well-being by fostering feelings of isolation, anxiety, depression, and diminished self-worth.

This research aims to explore the correlation between internet addiction and psychological wellbeing, investigating how excessive internet usage can impact mental health and overall life satisfaction. By gaining insights into these dynamics, we can develop strategies to promote healthier internet habits and improve psychological well-being in the digital era.

Tools

➢ Carol Ryff's Psychological Well Being Scale

➢ Internet Addiction Scale by Kimberly Young

➢ The Psychological Well-Being Scale devised by Carol Ryff serves as a tool for evaluating an individual's psychological health across six key dimensions:

➢ Self-Acceptance: This dimension reflects a positive self-view, encompassing self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-respect.

➢ Positive Relations with Others: This aspect gauges the quality of interpersonal relationships, including feelings of empathy, trust, and intimacy.

➢ Autonomy: Autonomy pertains to the degree of independence, self-reliance, and control over one's life and decisions.

➢ Environmental Mastery: This dimension measures one's ability to effectively navigate and adapt to their surroundings, demonstrating problem-solving skills and fostering opportunities for personal growth.

➢ Purpose in Life: Purpose in life refers to having clear objectives, a sense of direction, and a feeling of significance in one's actions and existence.

➢ Personal Growth: Personal growth encompasses continuous self-development, including the cultivation of skills, abilities, and the pursuit of new challenges for self-improvement.

The Internet Addiction Test (IAT), often called Kimberly Young's Scale of Internet Addiction, is a popular instrument used to gauge the extent of problematic internet use. It was created in the late 1990s by psychologist Kimberly Young and has since been used to identify those who are at risk of internet addiction in clinical settings and research. The scale is made up of a number of questions that gauge different facets of online behaviour and how it affects day-to-day activities. To assess the degree of internet addiction, it considers factors including fixation, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, loss of control, unfavourable outcomes, escape, conflict, and functional impairment.

Review of literature

Jaish et al, (2022) The study by Jaishy et al. investigates the impact of internet addiction on psychological well-being in a community-based setting. The research focuses on both urban and rural adolescents, aiming to understand usage patterns and associated implications. Findings reveal no significant differences in internet usage patterns or psychological health between urban and rural youth. However, a positive association exists between overall internet use severity and poor psychological health. Notably, gender-wise differences highlight the digital divide. This study emphasizes the need for educating youth about healthy technology use.

Nurmaria, H. Et al, (2021): Nurmaria and Risnawati's study explores the connection between internet addiction, psychological health, and loneliness in teenagers who use the internet frequently in the Greater Jakarta area. The researchers investigate these relationships using extensive measures, such as the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB), Internet Addiction Test (IAT), and UCLA Loneliness Scale. Surprisingly, the findings show no discernible link between internet addiction and psychological well-being or between loneliness and psychological well-being. Nonetheless, an important discovery indicates that there is a strong link between teenage internet addiction and loneliness. This shows that internet addiction is linked to loneliness even if it may not have a direct effect on general wellbeing.

Onyemaechi et al, (2022): The study by Onyemaechi et al. investigates the correlation between internet addiction and psychological well-being among undergraduate students. Their research sheds light on the detrimental impact of excessive internet use on mental health. Notably, internet addiction is significantly negatively correlated with psychological well-being ($r = -0.572$, $p < 0.01$) and its subdimensions. Students with higher levels of internet addiction are more likely to experience lower psychological well-being. Simple linear regression further confirms that internet addiction serves as a significant negative predictor of overall well-being. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to promote healthier internet habits and safeguard students 'mental health.

Ilardi et al (2009): Adolescents spend eleven hours a day in front of screens, and according to a 2017 survey, 25% of Millennials use their phones for five hours on average each day; 25% of Millennials check their phones more than 100 times daily. April 17, 2018. A substantial body of clinical research suggests that the digital environment and our 21st-century lifestyles are much to blame for the current mental health crisis: The effects of social media include increased isolation, sedentary behavior from screen time, a lack of meaningful connections, and a diminished sense of meaning in a post-industrial, automated, and dehumanizing digital society.

Methodology

The study aims to investigate the relationship between internet addiction and psychological wellbeing across different demographic groups. Three hypotheses were formulated: first, that higher levels of internet addiction would correspond to lower levels of psychological well-being; second, that internet addiction and psychological well-being would vary based on demographic factors such as gender; and third, that internet addiction and psychological well-being would differ across age groups. The research followed an ex-post facto design.

A sample of 132 participants, comprising both young adults (18-29) and middle adults (30-60), was randomly selected. Data collection utilized Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales (42-item version) and the Internet Addiction Test by Dr. Kimberly S. Young. Participants completed the survey online via Google Forms, with informed consent obtained prior to participation. The survey was shared on various social media platforms, and participants were instructed to read and respond honestly to each question. Exclusion criteria included individuals under 18 or over 60 years of age and those who do not use the internet regularly.

The study aimed to elucidate how internet addiction impacts psychological well-being across demographic groups, employing robust methodology to gather and analyze data effectively.

Result

Correlation analysis will be used to examine the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being. T-Test would be used to determine the overall result as well.

A total of 131 participants questionnaires were analyzed, out of which there were 65 male and 66 females. The other descriptive statistics were noted in Table 1.

Table 1 mean scores and standard deviations for Internet Addiction Scale (IAS) total and Psychological Well-Being (PWB) total, categorized by gender (male and female) among young and middle adults.

The mean score for internet addiction is slightly higher among males (28.62) compared to females (27.05), indicating that males may have a slightly higher tendency towards internet addiction. However, both genders have relatively low standard deviations, suggesting that the scores are closely clustered around the mean, indicating consistent responses within each gender group.

The mean score for psychological well-being is higher among females (180.303) compared to males (168.954), indicating that females may have a higher level of psychological well-being. Additionally, the standard deviation for females is slightly higher than for males, suggesting greater variability in psychological well-being scores among females compared to males.

Table 1 - T-test between Gender

GENDER		Mean	Std. Deviation
IAS Total	Male (65)	28.62	18.085
	Female (66)	27.05	15.865
PWB Total	Male (65)	168.9538	23.35088
	Female (66)	180.3030	27.13781

IAS (Internet Addiction Score); PWB (Psychological Well-Being)

Table 2 mean scores and standard deviations for Internet Addiction Scale (IAS) total and Psychological Well-Being (PWB) total, categorized by age groups—specifically, young adults aged 18-29 and middle adults aged 30-60—within a comparative study on internet addiction and psychological well-being.

The mean score for internet addiction is higher among young adults (30.98) compared to middle adults (25.32), suggesting a potentially greater tendency towards internet addiction in the younger age group. However, the standard deviation for young adults is lower than for middle adults, indicating less variability in responses among young adults.

Interestingly, young adults have a slightly lower mean score for psychological well-being (173.2414) compared to middle adults (175.8082). This suggests that middle adults may have slightly higher levels of psychological well-being than their younger counterparts. However, both age groups exhibit similar levels of variability in psychological well-being scores, as indicated by comparable standard deviations.

Table 2 - T-test between Age Group

AGE		Mean	Std. Deviation
IAS Total	Young adults (1829)	30.98	16.037
	Middle adults (3060)	25.32	17.352
PWB Total	Young adults (1829)	173.2414	23.05243
	Middle adults (3060)	175.8082	28.00826

IAS (Internet Addiction Score); PWB (Psychological Well-Being)

Table 3 presents a correlation matrix displaying the relationship between Internet Addiction Scale (IAS) total scores and various dimensions of Psychological Well-Being (PWB) among young and middle adults in a comparative study.

The correlations between IAS total scores and PWB dimensions are predominantly negative, indicating an inverse relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being. Specifically, higher levels of internet addiction are associated with lower levels of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

There are strong positive correlations among the different dimensions of psychological well-being. For example, autonomy is positively correlated with environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Similarly, other dimensions of psychological well-being also show positive associations with each other.

Table 3 - Correlation - Relationship between two variables and its six aspects

Dimension	IAT Total	PWB Autonomy	PWB Environmental Mastery	PWB Personal Growth	PWB Positive Relations	PWB Purpose In Life	PWB Self-Acceptance	PWB Total
IAS Total	1	-.276**	-.002	-.311**	-.226**	-.296**	-.216*	-.295**
PWB Autonomy	-.276**	1	.368**	.471**	.514**	.384**	.576**	.723**
PWB Environmental Mastery	-.002	.368**	1	.500**	.516**	.524**	.580**	.719**
PWB Personal Growth	-.311**	.471**	.500**	1	.535**	.601**	.623**	.802**
PWB Positive Relations	-.226**	.514**	.516**	.535**	1	.416**	.657**	.790**
PWB Purpose In Life	-.296**	.384**	.524**	.601**	.416**	1	.619**	.750**
PWB Self-Acceptance	-.216*	.576**	.580**	.623**	.657**	.619**	1	.878**
PWB Total	-.295**	.723**	.719**	.802**	.790**	.750**	.878**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; IAS (Internet Addiction Score); PWB (Psychological Well-Being) Discussion

The comparative study on internet addiction and psychological well-being among young adults and middle adults yields insightful findings regarding gender differences, age-related patterns, and the interplay between internet addiction and psychological well-being.

Firstly, the analysis suggests gender disparities in internet addiction and psychological well-being, with males exhibiting slightly higher tendencies towards internet addiction, while

females demonstrate potentially higher levels of psychological well-being. However, further research is warranted to delve deeper into these differences and understand the underlying factors contributing to them.

Regarding age groups, young adults aged 18-29 display a higher mean score for internet addiction compared to middle adults aged 30-60. This implies that younger individuals may be more prone to excessive internet use and related addictive behaviors. Conversely, middle adults exhibit slightly higher mean scores for psychological well-being, indicating potentially better psychological wellbeing compared to their younger counterparts. These findings underscore the importance of considering age as a crucial factor in understanding patterns of internet addiction and psychological well-being.

Furthermore, the negative correlation between internet addiction and psychological well-being suggests an inverse relationship between the two constructs. Higher levels of internet addiction are associated with lower levels of psychological well-being across various domains, including autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and selfacceptance. This highlights the detrimental impact of internet addiction on overall psychological well-being.

The varying magnitudes of correlations across different dimensions of psychological well-being indicate the nuanced associations between internet addiction and specific aspects of well-being. Additionally, positive correlations among different dimensions of psychological well-being underscore the interconnected nature of these constructs, emphasizing the importance of considering multiple facets of well-being in interventions and research efforts.

In conclusion, the study underscores the need for targeted interventions aimed at reducing internet addiction and promoting holistic well-being across various dimensions among young and middle adults. By addressing age-related differences and understanding the intricate relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being, interventions can be tailored to meet the specific needs of different age groups, ultimately fostering healthier internet usage habits and enhancing overall well-being.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative study sheds light on the complex dynamics between internet addiction and psychological well-being among young and middle adults. It highlights gender disparities, age-related patterns, and the interconnected nature of these constructs. While males tend to exhibit higher tendencies towards internet addiction, females show potentially higher levels of psychological well-being. Young adults are more susceptible to internet addiction, whereas middle adults demonstrate better psychological well-being. The negative correlation between internet addiction and psychological well-being underscores the detrimental impact of excessive internet use on various dimensions of well-being. Tailored interventions aimed at different age groups are essential to address these issues and promote healthier internet usage habits and overall well-being.

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