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RESEARCH PAPER
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Problematic Internet Use among College Students in Relation to Stress and Depression

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ABSTRACT

The present research was executed to elucidate the role of stress and depression on problematic internet use of college students. The sample consisted of 60 students studying degree courses in a college. They were assessed by stress scale, depression scale and problematic internet use scale. The results of correlation coefficient indicated that all of the studied variables were positively significantly correlated with problematic internet use. Also, the regression analysis showed that stress and depression could predict problematic internet use significantly. The implications and limitations of the research are discussed.

Key Words : Stress, Depression, Problematic internet use, Students in college

INTRODUCTION

Students are the greatest resource of a nation. They are to be given appropriate guidance and counseling so that they can lead their lives successfully. Problematic internet use is a widespread problem among the youth. Prolonged internet use contributes to several interpersonal and psychological issues. The present study is an attempt in ascertaining the predictors of problematic internet use among college students.

Stress:

Stress is the reaction of the body to any change that requires an adjustment or response. The body manages these changes with physical, mental, and emotional responses. Stress is a part of life. The human body can experience stress and react to it. Stress can be positive and negative. The body's autonomic nervous system has a stress response mechanism that causes physiological changes to allow the body to combat stressful situation which is known as the fight or flight response. However, this response can become activated during longer periods of stress. Lengthened activation of the stress response causes wear and tear on the body – both physical and emotional.

Depression:

Depression is a mood disorder. It is feelings of sadness, loss, or anger that interferes with a person's everyday activities. People experience depression in different ways. It may interfere with daily work, resulting in loss of time and lower productivity. It can affect relationships and some chronic health conditions.

Depression can be temporary or it can be long-term. Treatment doesn't always make depression go away completely. But treatment often makes symptoms more manageable. Managing symptoms of depression is finding the right combination of medications and therapies.

Problematic internet use:

Problematic internet use is an addictive behaviour regarding computer use and internet access that lead to impairment or distress. The problem is more prevalent in adolescent males than females. Internet addiction is a world- wide problem. Youth have been identified as particularly at risk of developing problems with excessive

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internet use. A young person could be at risk if they: • Suffer from depression and/or anxiety • Have been diagnosed with an ADHD • Have been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome • Lack social support and have few friends • Are bored or stressed • Have a physical disability • Broken family or social bonds Signs of problematic internet use: • Having difficulty in completing homework or household chores on time • Isolation from family and friends • Feeling guilty or defensive about the time they spend online • Only feeling happy when in the gaming environment. • Physical symptoms include dry eyes or strained vision, back and neck aches, headaches, sleep disturbances, pronounced weight gain or loss.

Review of related literature:

Review of related literature is an important pre-requisite for actual planning and carrying out of any research work. The present section represents a brief review of the researches done in the area related to the present investigation.

Tekinarslan (2017) examined the relationships or correlations among PIU, depression and quality of life levels of Turkish undergraduate students. The results showed that the students' PIU and depression levels were negatively correlated with quality of life levels and positively correlated with each other .

Chang *et al.* (2019) examined the effect of short-term adventure-based outdoor programs (AOP) on reducing college students' stress levels. Findings suggest that short-term AOP affords opportunities for college students to be away from daily challenges, and in turn reduce college students' psychological stress levels and provide a temporary relief of physiological stress levels. No significant differences in college students' stress levels were found between sex and different outdoor adventure activities.

Tutgun *et al.* (2011) compared the problematic internet use and its relation to loneliness among two nations' prospective teachers, Turkey and South Korea. Some of the major findings are as follows: a) No differences were found between the problematic Internet use of Turkish and Korean prospective teachers; b) Male Turkish prospective teachers found to have more problematic use of internet than female counterparts on the other hand no differences were found among South Korean prospective teachers by means of sex; c) Positive but low correlations between problematic Internet use and loneliness levels of prospective teachers of both nations; d) There is a significant difference between Turkish and Korean prospective teachers. South Korean prospective teachers were found to be in higher levels of loneliness than Turkish counterparts.

Objectives:

– To study the relationship between stress, depression and problematic internet use among students in college.

– To assess the role of stress and depression on problematic internet use among students in college.

Hypotheses:

– There is a positive and significant relationship between stress, depression and problematic internet use among students in college.

– There is a positive and significant contribution of stress on problematic internet use among students in college.

– There is a positive and significant contribution of depression on problematic internet use among students in college.

METHODOLOGY

Sample:

Participants:

Sample of the study consisted of 60 students; their age range was 20 to 25. There are 30 males and 30 females. They were selected by snowball sampling technique from a college.

Tools:

Problematic internet use scale :

This scale consists of 18 statements related to internet usage among students. There are 5 options for each statement namely never, rarely, sometimes, often and very often.

Perceived stress scale:

This scale was developed by Sheldon Cohen (1994). There are 10 items which can be marked as never, almost never, sometimes, fairly often, very often and scored as 0, 1, 2, 3 and 4, respectively.

Beck depression scale :

The scale consists of 21 statements related to the level of depression in people of all age groups. Higher

the scores, greater is the depression.

Procedure:

The students were approached and asked to complete the questionnaires of stress, depression and problematic internet use. All the respondents were also told that their anonymity will be preserved and their responses will be confidential. After that questionnaires were collected from the respondents and scored manually.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ha1: There will exist a positive correlation between stress and the problematic internet use in college students.

The Pearson's coefficient of correlation was computed to measure the relationship between stress and problematic internet use in college students. It was found that stress had a significant positive correlation with problematic internet use (r=1.000, p=<0.01). The mean and SD scores on stress (M=14.30 and SD=2.250) and problematic internet use (M=22.30, SD=2.250). Thus the hypothesis that there will exist a positive correlation between stress and the problematic internet use in college students.

Ha2: There will exist a positive correlation between depression and the problematic internet use in college students.

The Pearson's coefficient of correlation was computed to measure the relationship between depression and problematic internet use in college students. It was found that depression had a significant positive correlation with problematic internet use (r=1.000, p=<0.01). The mean and SD scores on depression (M=24.30 and SD=2.250) and problematic internet use (M=22.30, SD=2.250). Thus the hypothesis that there will exist a positive correlation between depression and the problematic internet use in college students.

Table 3 showed that stepwise regression revealed a significant model of problematic internet use, F=0, p=.000, which explained 1% of the variance (Adjusted R^2=1.000). In the model, Stress (b=2.000), t=0 (p>0.01) and Depression (b=1.000), t=0 (p<0.01) emerged as a significant predictor for problematic internet use. Thus the hypothesis that there will exist a predictive value of Stress and Depression to the problematic internet use in college students is proved.

This study aimed at predicting problematic internet use from stress and depression. As expected the results of the correlation analysis showed that stress and depression were positively correlated with problematic internet use. Also, the multiple regression model predicted that both the variables stress and depression significantly predicted problematic internet use. .A person high in stress will have more tensions and thus have more problematic internet use and vice versa. Similarly, a person with high level of depression will be sad and thus have more problematic internet use.

Table 1: Pearsons correlation coefficient among the stress and the problematic internet use in college students (n=60)

Measures	Stress	Problematic internet use
Stress	1	1.000**
Mean	14.30	22.30
SD	2.250	2.250

** Significant at the 0.01 level * Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 2: Pearsons correlation coefficient among the depression and the problematic internet use in college students (n=60)

Measures	Depression	Problematic internet use
Depression	1	1.000**
Mean	24.30	22.30
SD	2.250	2.250

** Significant at the 0.01 level * Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3 : Stepwise multiple regression analysis predicting the problematic internet use from stress and depression (N=60)

Predictors	β	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	t-value	F
Stress	2.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.506	0.138*
Depression	1.000				5.562	0.001*

* Significant at the 0.05 level

Conclusion:

Consequently, it is concluded that stress and depression are positively correlated with problematic internet use. Both the independent variables are having significant variance on the problematic internet use of college students. The people with high levels of stress and depression are having higher levels of problematic internet use.

Suggestion:

The findings of study show a glimpse of the impact of student's stress and depression on problematic internet use. However, more researches are needed to study the moderating factors of problematic internet use among different professions, culture as well as age groups. The findings of students could be compared with those found in other area of the world to decode similarities and differences.

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Conflict of Interests:

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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