

# A Study On Internet Addiction And Well-Being Among School Students

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## ABSTRACT

Internet is an indispensable and vital part of everyday life. It provides easy access to abundant information, serves as a mode of communication and interaction across the globe. It is also a source of entertainment but is a double-edged sword that many adolescents may be unable to recognize, and compulsive usage can lead to harmful effects on the health and well-being of adolescents. The study aims to investigate internet addiction and well-being among school students. Internet addiction is excessive or poorly controlled preoccupations, or behaviours or urges, regarding computer and internet use that can lead to distress (Shaw & Black, 2008). Based on literature reviews, according to Pressman et al. (2020), well-being is as a state of physical, social, and psychological health. The sample consisted of 158 students from two sections of classes 7 and 8 studying in a private English-medium school aged 13 and 14. The research design was ex post facto bivariate in nature. Internet Addiction Test (Young, 1998) and General Well-Being Scale (Kalia & Deswal, 2011) were used to assess internet addiction and well-being respectively. Independent sample *t* test was used to find the gender difference in internet addiction and well-being among school students and Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to find the relationship between Internet addiction and well-being. Results indicated that there was no significant difference between boys and girls in internet addiction as well as their well-being. Internet addiction negatively correlated with well-being among school students.

**Keywords:** School Students, Internet Addiction, Well-Being.

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the period between being a child and an adult, between the ages of 10 to 19 years, as the World Health Organization (WHO) defines it. According to Kircaburun (2016), this period is characterized by emotional, physiological, and cognitive changes. Adolescents are becoming predominant internet users and are developing online social interactions while remaining anonymous (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009). Internet usage is becoming increasingly important in daily life as technological advancements have made our lives simpler, more convenient, and more comfortable. According to DataReportal (2022), there were 658 million internet users in India as of January 2022. The IAMAI-Kantar ICUBE (2020) reports that it is projected to reach 900 million plus active internet users by 2025. Adolescents, who are at a stage of natural curiosity and are comfortable with the use of technology, enter the virtual world without understanding the impending hazards and limited adult supervision.

Also, the most popular online activities among both urban and rural Indians are communication, social media, and entertainment. It is at this vulnerable stage that adolescents run the risk of developing a dependency on the internet, which can lead to addiction. The dependency on the internet is increasing not only in India but across the world.

Shaw and Black (2008) defined internet addiction as excessive or poorly controlled preoccupations, or behaviours or urges, regarding computer and internet use that can lead to distress. Nazim and Islam (2020) observed that internet usage is not just limited to college campuses where students have access to digital devices with internet access but is also prevalent among school students. Pressman et al.(2020),based on literature reviews, considered well-being as a state of physical, social, and psychological health. It also entails functioning smartly and having a positive mental state.

Excessive internet usage may cause physical disturbances, stress and anxiety, affecting academic and school life and reducing levels of well-being (Aksoy & Oztoprak, 2021; Akin & Iskender 2011). Kraut et al. (2002) reported that increased internet usage might lead to improved communication and socialization, resulting in enhanced well-being. Raina and Bhatt (2021) in their study found that boys have higher internet addiction than girls. Sayili et al. (2021), in their study on problematic internet usage among school students, found that internet usage among girls was higher than among boys. Geng and He (2022) found that girls have better well-being than boys. Kaur et al. (2018), in their study on well-being among school students, found that boys have higher levels of well-being than girls. Owing to the contradictions in the results of the various studies mentioned above, the aim of the present study is to analyse the difference with respect to gender and the relationship between internet addiction and well-being among school students. Identifying vulnerable and at-risk adolescents and teaching them how to use technology wisely and judiciously, will help them use the internet with responsibility, because the goal is to promote healthy internet use with self-discipline rather than complete abstinence, advocates Young (2013), to maintain their overall well-being. Huppert (2009) encourages adolescents to take positives and negatives with equanimity, have control of their own life, work with focus and achieve their objectives while maintaining positive relationships, thus ensuring their overall well-being.

## OBJECTIVES

- To find the level of internet addiction among school students.
- To assess the gender difference on internet addiction and well-being among school students.
- To study the relationship between internet addiction and well-being among school students.

## HYPOTHESES

1. There will be no significant difference in internet addiction among school students based on gender.
2. There will be no significant difference in well-being among school students based on gender.
3. There will be no significant relationship between internet addiction and well-being among school students.

## METHODOLOGY

### Sample:

The research design used for this study is ex-post facto. The sample consisted of 158 students, with 80 girls and 78 boys between the ages of 13 and 14 years belonging to classes 7 and 8 of a private English medium school. Permission was obtained from the school prior to the data collection. A convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample.

## RESEARCH TOOLS

### Internet Addiction Test (IAT):

The IAT is a 20-item scale that measures the level of severity and presence of internet usage and dependency (Young, 1998). It is a five-point Likert scale with responses ranging from “not applicable” =0, “rarely” =1, “occasionally” =2, “frequently” =3, “often” =4 and “always” =5. Scores range from 0-100. Higher scores represented higher levels of internet addiction. The scale differentiates four levels of internet addiction-normal, mild, moderate, and severe. The internal consistency of this test is 0.90 to 0.93. The test-retest reliability is 0.85.

### General Well-Being Scale (GWBS):

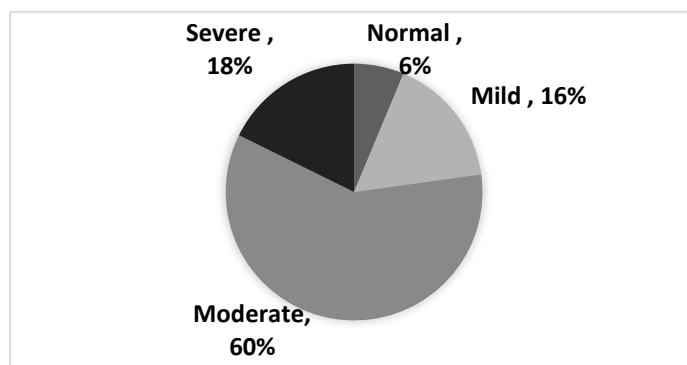
The GWBS was constructed and standardized by Kalia and Deswal (2011). It is a five-point scale consisting of 55 statements with both positive and negative items with scores ranging from "strongly disagree=1," "disagree=2," "undecided=3," "agree=4," and "strongly agree" =5 for positive items and for negative items the scoring procedure is reversed. This scale also differentiates between high, average, and low scorers. On the GWBS, the maximum score that can be obtained is 275, and the minimum score is 55. A higher score indicates an enhanced sense of general well-being, and a low score indicates lower levels of general well-being. The reliability of this scale is quite high and is estimated at 0.99.

### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS:

Independent sample *t* test was used to find the gender difference in internet addiction and well-being among school students and Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to find the relationship between internet addiction and well-being.

## RESULTS

### *Level of internet addiction among school students*



*Figure 1: Pie chart representing level of internet addiction among the school students.*

The pie chart illustrates the level of internet addiction among the school students. 10 school students had normal levels of internet addiction (6 %), 26 school students had mild levels of internet addiction (16 %), 94 school students had moderate levels of internet addiction (60%) and 28 school students had severe levels of internet addiction (18 %).

**Table 1**

*Mean, standard deviation, t value, level of significance on internet addiction and well -being based on gender among school students*

| Variable           | Groups | N  | Mean   | SD    | t        | p   |
|--------------------|--------|----|--------|-------|----------|-----|
| Internet Addiction | Girls  | 80 | 61.49  | 17.05 | 0.84(NS) | .40 |
|                    | Boys   | 78 | 63.77  | 17.07 |          |     |
| Well- Being        | Girls  | 80 | 156.96 | 28.83 | 1.09(NS) | .27 |
|                    | Boys   | 78 | 162.63 | 35.70 |          |     |

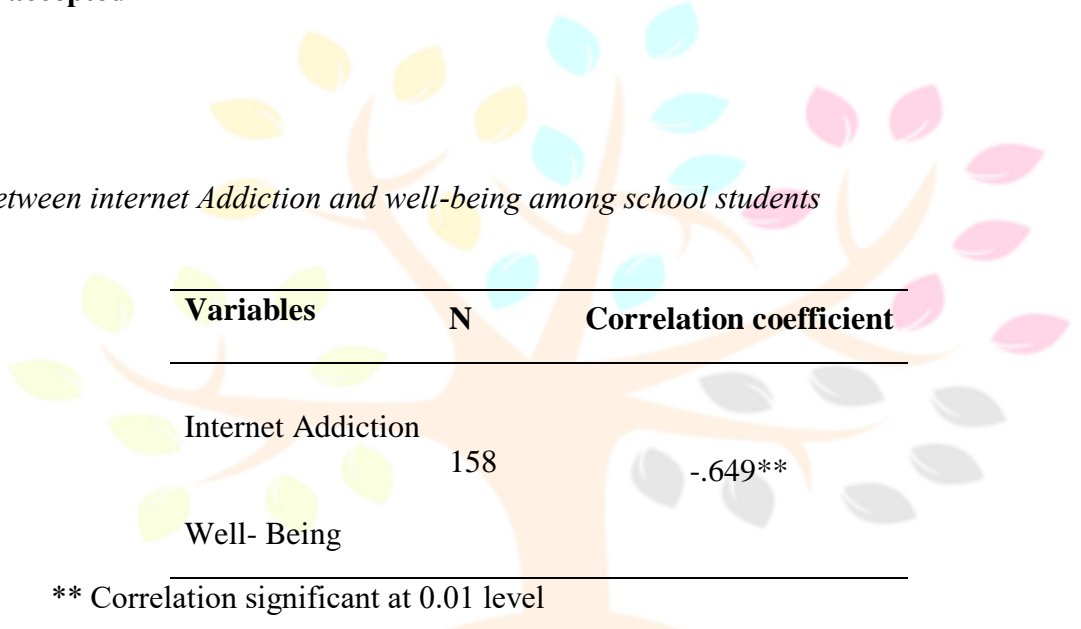
*NS-Not Significant*

Independent sample  $t$  test was conducted to compare internet addiction among school students based on gender. There was no significant difference in internet addiction between girls ( $M=61.49$ ,  $SD=17.05$ ) and boys ( $M=63.77$ ,  $SD=17.07$ ),  $t(156)=0.84$  with respect to gender. Taking the mean scores of internet addiction into consideration, it was found that the boys were slightly higher than girls. Hence, **Hypothesis No.1, “There will be no significant difference in internet addiction among school students based on gender” is accepted.**

Independent sample  $t$  test was conducted to compare well-being among school students based on gender. There was no significant difference in well-being between girls ( $M=156.96$ ,  $SD=28.83$ ) and boys ( $M=162.63$ ,  $SD=35.70$ ),  $t(156)=1.09$  with respect to gender. It was also observed that boys were slightly higher than girls. Hence, **Hypothesis No.2, “There will be no significant difference in well-being among school students based on gender” is accepted.**

**Table 2**

*Correlation between internet Addiction and well-being among school students*



| Variables          | N   | Correlation coefficient |
|--------------------|-----|-------------------------|
| Internet Addiction | 158 | -.649**                 |
| Well- Being        |     |                         |

\*\* Correlation significant at 0.01 level

Pearson's product -moment correlation was computed to assess the relationship between internet addiction and well-being among school students. There was a significant, negative correlation between internet addiction and well-being ( $r(157) = -.649$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) which indicates that when internet addiction increases well-being decreases. Hence, **Hypothesis No. 3** which states that, “**There will be no significant relationship between internet addiction and well-being among school students**” is not accepted.

## DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that significant difference was not found on internet addiction with respect to gender among school students. The reason could be that both boys and girls have constant access to the internet and are becoming increasingly reliant on it for their academic, social, and recreational needs. The results of the present study are in line with a study by Dufour et al. (2016), which inferred that though internet addiction was prevalent among both genders, boys preferred to spend a little more time on online games than girls, who preferred social media interaction. With regard to well-being significant difference was not found with respect to gender. The



reason could be that both boys and girls experience similar degrees of satisfaction and depression in their lives (To et al., 2017). The result is in line with the study by Karatzias et al. (2006), who reported no gender difference in well-being. The finding of the study differs from studies conducted by Geng and He (2022) & Kaur et al. (2018) which indicates gender difference on well-being among adolescents.

Significant negative relationship between internet addiction and well-being indicates that adolescents who spend a lot of time online are more likely to feel less satisfied with their lives, have lower self-esteem, and experience mood fluctuations (Wang et al, 2012). According to Riehm et al. (2019), adolescents who spend long hours on the internet and social media may be more vulnerable to a decline in mental health. The present study revealed that when internet addiction increases, well-being decreases. The results are in line with a study by Cardak (2013) & Mei et al. (2016).

## CONCLUSION

- Gender did not significantly differ on internet addiction and well-being among school students.
- Internet addiction and well-being are negatively correlated.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study will help to analyse the students on internet addiction and well-being.
- The students with moderate and high internet addiction can be given suitable awareness programs and psychological interventions to prevent severe consequences to their overall well-being.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study was limited to a small sample of students.
- The study was conducted only on school students of classes 7 and 8.
- The study was conducted only on private English medium school students.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- The study can be conducted on a larger sample.
- internet addiction can be studied with many more variables.
- The study could be conducted on students of higher classes at school and college level.

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