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Relationship between Internet Usage and Emotional Maturity among Higher Secondary Students

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ABSTRACT

The internet has emerged as a powerful medium for communication and information exchange across the globe. In the present era, internet usage has become widespread across various sectors, including education. Today, students rely on the internet to such an extent that concerns regarding internet addiction and its impact on their emotional maturity have become evident. The primary objective of this study was to examine the influence of internet usage on the emotional maturity of higher secondary students and to explore whether gender differences exist in terms of internet usage and emotional maturity. This descriptive study was conducted on a sample of 200 students (100 boys and 100 girls) from rural and urban schools in Hisar district. Standardized tools were utilized to measure emotional maturity (Y. Singh & Bhargava, 2012) and internet usage (Shaloo Saini & Parminder Kaur, 2017). Data analysis was performed using the t-test and product-moment correlation to determine the relationship between internet usage and emotional maturity among higher secondary students. The results of the study revealed that students from urban areas demonstrated higher emotional maturity compared to their rural counterparts. Additionally, a positive correlation (r = 0.48) was found between emotional maturity and internet usage, indicating that increased internet usage was associated with greater emotional maturity. These findings highlight the importance of providing educators with insights into addressing students' emotional needs and encouraging them to engage in outdoor activities for overall well-being.

Keywords: Internet Usage, Emotional Maturity, Internet Addiction, Gender Differences

INTRODUCTION

The internet has revolutionized communication, education, and social interactions, making it an integral part of daily life, particularly for students. With the rapid advancements in technology, internet usage among adolescents has significantly increased, influencing various aspects of their psychological well-being, including emotional maturity. Emotional maturity refers to an individual's ability to understand, regulate, and express emotions effectively, allowing for stable and adaptive responses to life's challenges (Singh & Bhargava, 2012).In today's digital age, students extensively depend on the internet for educational purposes, social networking, and entertainment. However, excessive or unregulated internet usage has raised concerns regarding its impact on adolescents' emotional development (Kaur & Saini, 2017). The increasing reliance on the internet, particularly among high school students, may contribute to emotional instability, social isolation, and behavioral changes. This growing concern necessitates an empirical exploration of the relationship between internet usage and emotional maturity among higher secondary students.Several studies have highlighted both the positive and negative effects of internet usage on adolescents. While some researchers argue that online interactions and digital learning can enhance cognitive and emotional skills (Chou et al., 2009), others emphasize the adverse effects of internet overuse, including emotional instability, decreased self-regulation, and increased stress (Young, 1998). Given these contrasting perspectives, it is crucial to investigate whether internet usage supports or hinders the emotional maturity of students, particularly in the Indian context, where access to digital technology varies significantly across urban and rural areas.This study aims to examine the relationship between internet usage and emotional maturity among higher secondary students. Additionally, it seeks to determine whether gender and geographical location (urban vs. rural) influence this relationship. The findings of this research will provide valuable insights for educators, parents, and policymakers to develop balanced digital literacy programs that promote healthy internet usage while fostering emotional well-being among students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The internet plays a crucial role in shaping the cognitive and emotional development of students. Research has shown that while internet usage enhances academic learning and global connectivity, excessive or unregulated use may lead to emotional distress and behavioral changes (Kuss& Griffiths, 2012). Adolescents, being in a critical phase of identity formation, are particularly vulnerable to the psychological effects of prolonged internet exposure (Anderson & Jiang, 2018).Young (1998) introduced the concept of "Internet Addiction," highlighting its impact on emotional and psychological health. The study revealed that excessive internet use could lead to emotional detachment, anxiety, and

difficulty in maintaining real-life relationships. Similarly, Chou et al. (2009) found that students who spend excessive time on the internet exhibit higher levels of emotional instability and social withdrawal.Emotional maturity is a critical component of adolescent development, influencing their ability to cope with stress, build relationships, and navigate life challenges. Singh and Bhargava (2012) defined emotional maturity as the ability to manage emotions effectively, leading to stable interpersonal relationships and adaptive behaviors. Studies suggest that emotionally mature individuals demonstrate better decision-making skills, resilience, and psychological well-being (Goleman, 1995).

Adolescents with lower emotional maturity often struggle with impulsivity, frustration, and social maladjustment (Santrock, 2020). Research by Turner & Helms (1991) indicated that emotional immaturity in students is linked to increased stress and poor academic performance. Given the significant role of emotional maturity in adolescent development, it is important to explore the factors that influence it, including internet usage.Several studies have examined the correlation between internet usage and emotional maturity. While moderate internet use is associated with enhanced cognitive skills and emotional awareness, excessive dependence may lead to emotional instability and reduced self-regulation (Kuss& Griffiths, 2012).A study by Kaur and Saini (2017) investigated the relationship between internet usage and emotional maturity among high school students in India. The findings revealed that students with higher internet usage showed lower emotional maturity, particularly in dimensions such as independence and emotional stability. Similarly, Saini et al. (2020) found that excessive social media engagement contributed to emotional distress and impulsive behavior among adolescents.

Contrary to these findings, some researchers argue that controlled and purposeful internet usage can enhance emotional intelligence and self-awareness (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). For instance, Kim et al. (2017) found that students who engage in meaningful online discussions and educational platforms exhibit better emotional regulation and social awareness.Studies suggest that gender and geographical background play a crucial role in shaping internet usage patterns and emotional maturity. Research indicates that boys tend to engage more in gaming and online entertainment, whereas girls use the internet primarily for social interactions (Weiser, 2000). Additionally, urban students have greater access to digital resources compared to their rural counterparts, influencing their internet usage patterns and emotional development (Kumar &Sahu, 2019).

A study by Sharma & Singh (2021) found that urban students displayed better emotional regulation compared to rural students due to their exposure to diverse learning environments and technological resources. Similarly, findings by Rani et al. (2018) suggested that gender differences exist in emotional responses to internet usage, with boys exhibiting higher impulsivity and girls showing greater social-emotional awareness.The review of literature suggests that internet usage has both positive and negative effects on emotional maturity among students. While digital engagement can enhance cognitive skills and social interactions, excessive usage may lead to emotional instability and dependency. Furthermore, gender and geographical location influence the relationship between internet usage and emotional maturity, necessitating further research to develop effective digital well-being strategies for students.

Need for the Study: The rapid increase in internet usage among adolescents has raised concerns about its impact on emotional maturity. As students increasingly rely on digital platforms, understanding how internet usage influences emotional stability, independence, and social adjustment is crucial. This study aims to explore this relationship, considering gender and geographical differences, to provide insights for educators and parents in fostering balanced internet habits and emotional well-being among higher secondary students.

METHODOLOGY

Statement of the Problem: A study of the relationship between internet usage and emotional maturity of higher secondary students.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the availability of the internet in rural and urban areas for students at the higher secondary level.
2. To examine the differences in internet usage patterns between boys and girls.
3. To explore gender differences in internet usage and emotional maturity.
4. To compare the emotional maturity of internet users between rural and urban students at the higher secondary level.
5. To analyze the relationship between internet usage and emotional maturity.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significant relationship between urban and rural areas regarding internet usage.
2. There is no significant difference between boys and girls regarding internet usage.

3. There is no significant difference between boys and girls regarding emotional maturity.
4. There is no significant difference in emotional maturity between rural and urban students at the higher secondary level.
5. There is no significant relationship between internet usage and emotional maturity among higher secondary students.

Method of the Study

The present study follows a descriptive survey method, where questionnaires were administered to gather information on the behavior, beliefs, and attitudes of students. The objective is to assess internet usage and availability among higher secondary students in both rural and urban areas and examine its impact on emotional maturity.

Sample Size:A total of 200 students (100 boys and 100 girls) from rural and urban schools in Hisar district participated in the study. Schools were selected using purposive sampling, while simple random sampling was applied to select students.

Tools Used

1. **Emotional Maturity Scale (Y. Singh & Bhargava, 2012)** – This tool assesses the emotional maturity levels of students.
2. **Internet Usage Scale (Shaloo Saini & Parminder Kaur, 2017)** – This tool measures the extent of internet usage among higher secondary students.
   Statistical Techniques : The study used mean, standard deviation, t-test, and product-moment correlation to analyze internet usage and emotional maturity among students.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Table-1 The analysis of the data indicates that internet availability differs between rural and urban students at the higher secondary level

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value	Level of Significance
Rural	100	42.6	12.38	33.38	0.05
Urban	100	46.1	12.66		

The analysis of the data indicates that internet availability differs between rural and urban students at the higher secondary level. The mean score for rural students (42.60) is lower than that of urban students (46.10), suggesting that urban students have better access to the internet. The calculated t-value (33.38) exceeds the critical value at the 0.05 significance level (1.96), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Thus, a significant difference exists in internet availability between rural and urban students.

Table-2 Internet Usage Differences (Boys vs. Girls)

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Boys	100	47.41	12.32
Girls	100	45.39	14.75

The analysis indicates that the t-value (1.051) is lower than the critical value (1.96) at the 0.05 significance level. This suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in internet usage between boys and girls. As a result, the hypothesis stating that "There is no significant difference between boys and girls regarding internet usage" is accepted.

Table-3 Emotional Maturity Differences (Boys vs. Girls)

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Boys	100	163.48	22.29
Girls	100	162.08	22.31

The analysis indicates that the t-value (0.444) is lower than the critical value (1.96) at the 0.05 significance level. This suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in emotional maturity between boys and girls. As a result, the hypothesis stating that "There is no significant difference between boys and girls regarding emotional maturity" is accepted.

Table-4 Emotional Maturity Comparison (Rural vs. Urban)

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Rural	100	161.17	25.11
Urban	100	164.39	18.98

The analysis indicates that the t-value (1.023) is lower than the critical value (1.96) at the 0.05 significance level. This suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in emotional maturity between rural and urban students at the higher secondary level. Thus, the hypothesis stating "There is no significant difference in emotional maturity between rural and urban students at the higher secondary level" is accepted.

Table-5 Internet Usage and Emotional Maturity Relationship

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Internet Usage (IUS)	200	46.4	13.59
Emotional Maturity (EMS)	200	162.78	22.26

Additionally, the correlation analysis between internet usage and emotional maturity reveals a positive relationship (r = 0.48). The tabulated value of significance (0.138098) is lower than the calculated value, leading to the rejection of the hypothesis stating "There is no significant relationship between internet usage and emotional maturity of students at the higher secondary level." This finding indicates that higher internet usage is associated with greater emotional maturity among students.

Findings of the Study

The findings of the study highlight several key aspects regarding internet usage and emotional maturity among higher secondary students. It was observed that students from urban areas use the internet more frequently than their rural counterparts, with a mean score of 46.1 compared to 42.6, indicating a moderate level of usage. The calculated t-value of 33.38, which exceeds the significance level of 0.05 (1.96), confirms a significant difference in internet availability between rural and urban students. In terms of gender differences in internet usage, boys exhibited slightly higher internet usage (mean = 47.41) compared to girls (mean = 45.39), yet the t-value of 1.051 indicated no statistically significant difference between them. Regarding emotional maturity, both boys and girls demonstrated similar levels, with mean scores of 163.48 and 162.08, respectively.

The t-value of 0.444 confirmed that there was no significant gender-based difference in emotional maturity. Additionally, when comparing emotional maturity between rural and urban students, the study found that urban students had a slightly higher emotional maturity level (mean = 164.39) compared to rural students (mean = 161.17). However, both groups fell within the above-average range of emotional maturity, and the t-value of 1.023 suggested no significant difference between them.

Lastly, the study established a positive relationship between internet usage and emotional maturity, with a correlation coefficient of 0.48, indicating that increased internet usage was associated with higher emotional maturity among students. These findings suggest that while internet access and usage patterns vary across demographic groups, its impact on emotional maturity is generally positive, reinforcing the need for balanced digital engagement in students' daily lives.

Implications

The findings of this study provide valuable insights for educators, parents, and policymakers. The positive correlation between internet usage and emotional maturity suggests that structured and guided digital engagement can enhance students' emotional development. Schools should integrate digital literacy programs to promote responsible internet use. Additionally, parents should monitor and encourage balanced internet usage to ensure it positively influences emotional stability. Policymakers must work towards improving internet accessibility in rural areas while implementing awareness campaigns on the psychological effects of excessive internet use. Encouraging outdoor activities alongside controlled internet usage can further contribute to students' overall well-being and emotional growth.

Limitations

Despite its significant findings, the study has certain limitations. The sample size was limited to 200 students from Hisar district, which may not be representative of the entire student population. Additionally, self-reported data on internet usage might have led to response bias. The study focused only on higher secondary students, limiting its generalizability to other age groups. Furthermore, it did not consider other psychological variables such as personality traits and social influences that may impact emotional maturity. Future research should address these gaps with a larger and more diverse sample.

Future Suggestions

Future studies should expand the sample size and include students from diverse geographical regions for better generalizability. Longitudinal studies can be conducted to examine the long-term effects of internet usage on emotional maturity. Additionally, qualitative research methods such as interviews and case studies can provide deeper insights into students' internet habits and emotional well-being. Further research should explore the impact of specific online activities, such as social media use, gaming, and educational platforms, on emotional development. Implementing intervention programs to assess the effectiveness of balanced internet use strategies can also be an important area of future research.

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