Relationship Between Internet Addiction and Social Support Among University Undergraduates

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Abstract

Internet is a highly useful and advanced technological tool, which is beneficial and supportive in individual's life including, entertainment, social sharing, easy and faster access to knowledge and information. Its users are rapidly increasing in all over the world. Though there are several advantages of internet use, still its harmful physical, psychological and social effects as a result of excessive use could not be ignored. Present research is aimed at exploring the relationship between internet addiction and social support among University undergraduates age range between 18 to 22 years. Sample of the study consisted of 164 University undergraduate students, 82 male students and 82 female students. Hypothesis of the study states that, there is negative correlation between internet addiction and social support among university undergraduates. For data collection simple random sampling technique was used. Data was collected from various departments of Sindh University. For the measurement of both variables, Internet addiction test (Young, K 1996) and Perceived Social support scale (Zimet, et al 1988) were used. For statistical analysis of the scores obtained by the participants on both scales, statistical methods of Mean, SD, and Pearson product correlation co efficient were computed. Results of the study explored negative correlation (r=--0.03193) between internet addiction and Perceived social support.

Key Words: Internet addiction, Social Support, University Under graduates.

Introduction

The mercy of advanced technological tools becomes a curse, when they detached the individuals from their social life. Unnecessary and prolonged use of internet leads the user towards internet addiction. The excessive amount of time spend on internet is nowadays become so popular. The concept of internet addiction is defined by different researchers in different ways from internet abuse and pathological internet usage ((Morahan-Martin, 1997), to internet exploitation (Young &Rodgers, 1998). According to the definition of internet addiction the victim become helpless to control the use of internet and as a result the user face problems in social, academic or professional life .(Davis 2001; Young & Rogers, 1998).

The victim of internet addiction suffers from the decreased level of socializations, social relations, and eventually increased isolation.(Izanloo and Goudarzi ,2011).Previous studies suggests that, as a result of unnecessary prolonged use of internet, users become alone(Nalwa & Anand2003; Engelberg & Sjöberg, 2004). Internet addicted person's relationships also badly affected particularly with mothers and peer groups (Sanders, Field, Diego & Kaplan, 2000).

The population which is mostly at risk to become the target of internet addiction is adolescence (Odabasıoğlu et. al., 2006). It is the time when adolescence enters in their University life and mostly involved in internet addiction (Kandell, 1998; Young and Rogers1998; Nalwa and Anand, 2003; Niemz et al., 2005).There are several reasons of University life and adolescence as a risk factor of the development of internet addiction including, being first time away from parents check and balance in University life, especially age range between 18 to 22 years, Universities gives unlimited facility of internet, and they

get escape from stresses associated with their academic responsibilities e.g. assignments and semester exams.

They first time enter in a new environment of University making new friends and they adopt the habit of internet use from their peers. (Young, 2004). During the developmental phase of adolescence, there is gradual decrease of parental involvement and support and increase, peer influence (Helsen, Volleberg & Meeus, 2000). Though adolescence is the crucial period of life where young adolescence needs their parents, family members and teachers social and psychological support .In the case of absence or minimal support young boys and girls seek to search the solution of their emotional, psychological issues in increase use of internet.

Perceived social support refers to the ability to give and receive social support. The concept of receiving and offering social support is become more complex during the developmental phase of adolescence. Due to the issues of misunderstandings or the differences in the perception of young adolescence in what they expect and what they received. Multidimensional model of perceived social support is one of the most important models of perceived social support including: social support given by the family members, the social support received by friends, and other significant personalities including, teachers and friends. (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet and Farley, 1988, pp. 30).

In a study conducted by (Musai, M & Darkesh, M 20014) to explore the relationship between internet addiction and social capital, among 18 to 29 years old University students results of the study revealed that increase of internet use decrease the social capital among users. Social capital refers to the mode of communication as a social network for the development of harmony, trust, and cooperation among the members of society.

There are many positive effects of social support to overcome the negative impact of internet addiction. Xu Jie G,F & Han. R, Y (2016) explored in their study conducted on 363 undergraduates, that internet addiction was positively correlated with aggression and life events and social support plays the role of mediating effect between internet addiction and aggression.

Present research is aimed to investigate the relationship between internet addiction and perceived social support among University Undergraduates. The hypothesis of the study states that, there is a negative correlation between internet addiction and social support.

Research Methodology:
Present research is a co relational study, conducted with the help of survey method through questionnaire technique. Simple random sampling technique was used for data collection.

Research Objectives:
Following are the objectives of study:
1. To measure the internet addiction among University Undergraduates.
2. To measure Perceived Social Support among University Undergraduates.

Hypothesis:
There would be negative correlation between perceived high social support and internet addiction among University Undergraduates.

Participants:
The sample of the study comprised 164 University (82 boys and 82 girls) students. Age range was between 18 to 22 years. Participants of the study were approached from various departments of Sindh University.

Measures:
According to the requirement of the study, for the measurement of both variables internet addiction and social support, Internet addiction Test (Young, K, 1996) and Perceived scale Social Support (Zamet et al 1988) were used. Both scales are reliable and valid. Reliability of Perceived scale Social Support (Zamet et al 1988) is 0.88 and reliability of Internet addiction Test (Young, K, 1996) is 0.91.

1. **Youngs'Internet Addiction Test:**
   The test was developed by Kimberly Young, (Young, K, 1996) it consists of 20 questions. To identify three categories of internet addiction it measures mild, moderate and severe internet addiction. It is a 5 point likert scale score ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Score ranges from 20 to 100. 50 to 79 score represents problematic score, and 49 score is considered as normal, with severe addiction shows in 80 to 100 scores. The test has 0.91 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. (Musai, M, Darkesh, M, 2014).

2. **Perceived Social Support Scale.**
   Perceived Social Support scale is a self evaluating, multidimensional scale developed by (Zamet et, al 1988). The scale has three subscales, Family, Friends and significant others. This scale is composed of 12 items, 4 items in each subscale. Family Subscale: Sum across items 3, 4, 8, & 11, and then divide by 4. Friends Subscale: Sum across items 6, 7, 9, & 12, and then divide by 4. Significant Other Subscale: Sum across items 1, 2, 5, & 10, and then divide by 4. Total Scale: Sum across all 12 items, then divide by 12. Scale score ranging from 1 to 2.9 could be considered low support; a score of 3 to 5 could be considered moderate support; a score from 5.1 to 7 could be considered high support. This approach would seem to have more validity, but if you have very few respondents in any of the groups, it could be problematic .The reliability of scale is 88.

Procedure:
After taking the formal permission from the concerned authority and willingness of the university undergraduates to participate in the study. Researcher of the study introduces herself and start to develop rapport with the participants. After the development of rapport researcher briefly explained the purpose of the study. First of all researcher gives personal information questionnaire to participants, which consists of the information about participants, gender, age and socioeconomic class, which takes 5to 10 minutes, then administered Internet addiction test, which was completed within 40 minutes, and in last administered Perceived Social Support Scale which also takes 40 minutes to be filled. Total it takes 1 hour and 30 minutes for the administration of all three measures.

Results:

Table: 1
Table is showing mean, SD of the score of the participants (N=164) on Internet Addiction Test, and Perceived Social Support scale.

	M	SD
Internet Addiction Test	42.85	17.5
Perceived Social Scale	04.81	11.6

Table 1 is showing mean, SD of the scores of the participants on Internet Addiction Test and on Perceived Social Support Scale. According to the scoring and interpretation of Perceived Social Support Scale (Zamet, et al, 1988), when we sum across all 12 items and then divide by 12 the mean= 4.81 and SD= 11.6 is showing greater social support from all three subscales1. Parents, 2. Friends, and significant others. In the result of the participants there is low internet addiction as compared to Perceived social support.

Table: 2
Table Showing correlation coefficient of the scores of the participants (N=164) on Internet Addiction and Perceived Social Support Scale.

Internet Addiction Test	r
Perceived Social Support Scale	-0.03193

Table 2 is showing (r= – 0.03193), correlation coefficient of the scores of the participants on Internet net Addiction and Perceived Social Support Scale. It means that there is negative correlation between Internet Addiction and Perceived Social Support among University undergraduates.

Discussion:
Present research was aimed to investigate the relationship between Internet Addiction and Perceived Social Support among University undergraduates. It was hypothesized that there would be negative correlation between Internet Addiction and perceived social support among University undergraduates. Results of the study confirmed the hypothesis, as results of the scores of participants on both variables have negative correlation, (r = -0.03193). Results of the present study are in consistence with the previous studies, Gündoğdu, M & Gündoğdu, B, K 2010 in their study conducted on 9th and 10th grade students to explored ,The Relationship between Internet Addiction, Peer Pressure and Perceived Social Support among Adolescents, finds that parents and teachers support decreases the level of internet addiction.

The most important sources of social support for adolescence are parents, teachers, and peers (Yıldırım, 2004). Parental social support is a crucial part of an adolescence life, if parents are supportive in the difficult times, then adolescence feels no need to get escape in internet addiction. Besides several benefits of internet including, social interaction and learning new skills, use of internet in individual activities can be a social and psychological harm. Several past studies has captured the importance of perceived social support in the development of social relationships (Coyne & Downey, 1991; Ell, 1996; Uchino et al., 1996; Hupcey, 1998).

During the stressful life events it is the power of social support which changes the stress with support and care. Adolescence perceives the social support internet provides them as dynamic as compared to the real life interpersonal relationships, which they feel as, are not sufficient for them. The imaginary world, which internet provides has several emotional threats as compared to real life. Adolescence faces the emotional risk in the imaginary world of internet addiction as compared to real life (Young, 1997).Social support provided by the internet in the means of online chatting and other sources of communication may disrupt the real life relationship. An internet addicted couldn't get time for real life relationships.

Results of the study revealed high social support and low internet addiction among University undergraduates. There are several possible reasons of it, Pakistan is a low

economic country; facing lots of challenges internet facility is not at the reach of every individual, another important factor is the issue of electricity, there is a shortage of electricity in Pakistan. For the development of internet addiction prolong use of internet is necessary, due to the shortage of the supply of electricity adolescence cannot use internet for a long period of time.

Suggestions/ Recommendations:
Present researches was conducted on University students, future researchers can study the topic on college students. Other confounding variables including, age, gender, socioeconomic class, can be measured with the help of research in the same area.

Conclusion:
Internet is a facility if adolescence uses it for knowledge and their academic and purpose. The problem of internet addiction can be solved with the help of Social Support provided by parents, teachers, and peer group.

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