

Internet Addiction and Its Impact on Psychological Well Being Among Young Adults in Delhi, India

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Abstract—Internet usage has been increasing at an alarming rate. This has affected the lifestyle of young adults. While it has been proved that excessive use of the internet results in internet addiction, it has negative consequences on mental health. This study aims at understanding the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being among young adults in Delhi. For the present study, a quantitative research design has been used. For the present study, 201 young adults between the ages of 18-30 years were chosen as participants. Internet addiction has been measured by using the Internet Addiction Test developed by Young (1998). Psychological well-being has been measured by using the General Health Questionnaire-12 developed by Goldberg (1972). Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation were used to analyze the data. It has been found that young adults experience moderate to high levels of internet addiction. It has been found that young adults experience moderate levels of psychological distress. It has been found that there is a significant positive correlation between internet addiction and psychological distress. It has been found that $r = .598$, $p < .01$. This shows that there is a positive relationship between internet addiction and psychological distress. It has been found that 35.8% of the variance in psychological well-being is accounted for by internet addiction. It has been found that excessive use of the internet has negative consequences on mental health.

Index Terms—Internet Addiction, Psychological Well-Being, Young Adults, Mental Health

CHAPTER I

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has changed the way people communicate, learn, and relate to each other. For instance, the internet is now an integral part of people's lives, especially for the younger generation. This generation seeks information

from the internet for learning purposes, entertainment, and even social interactions. While it is obvious that there are benefits to internet usage, such as easy access to information and better connectivity, overuse or a lack of control over internet usage raises several issues about the mental and behavioral consequences.

One of the main issues that arise from the overuse of internet facilities is internet addiction. This is a disorder that results from a maladaptive pattern of internet usage that is accompanied by symptoms such as excessive internet usage, a lack of control over internet usage, and negative consequences from internet usage. People with internet addiction often neglect their schoolwork, jobs, or even social obligations. They also experience emotional problems when they cannot access the internet. Thus, internet addiction is considered a behavioral addiction that affects people's lives in a negative manner.

Another important concept in mental health is the idea of psychological well-being, or the feeling of thriving psychologically and the ability to cope with life's bumps. Imagine it like a combination of self-acceptance, supportive relationships, independence, feeling in control of one's environment, having a purpose, and personal growth. People who have a high level of psychological well-being have better coping skills for stress, healthier relationships, and a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment in life.

Recently, researchers have shown greater interest in the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being, particularly among young adults who are surrounded by digital technology. Internet addiction has the potential to interfere with daily routines, social relationships, and even cause emotional problems such as stress, loneliness, and anxiety. Therefore, it is important to investigate the relationship between internet addiction and

psychological well-being to better understand the psychological effects of excessive screen time among young adults.

II. DEFINITION OF INTERNET ADDICTION

Internet Addiction (IA) is a maladaptive pattern of internet use characterized by excessive or poorly controlled preoccupations, urges, or internet-related behaviors that cause clinically significant impairment or distress in psychological, social, academic, or occupational functioning. Individuals with internet addiction frequently display salience, loss of control, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, and sustained usage despite negative consequences, which are similar to traits seen in substance-related and behavioral addictions (Young, 1998; Griffiths, 2005).

According to the behavioral addiction framework, internet addiction is a non-substance addiction in which the reinforcing properties of online activities such as social networking, gaming, streaming, or information seeking serve as the primary source of gratification rather than the internet itself (Griffiths 2000). This viewpoint emphasizes the functional degradation caused by excessive use rather than the amount of time spent online.

Contemporary diagnostic debates recognize internet addiction as a complex construct with various subtypes such as online gaming, social media use, cyber-relationships, and compulsive information searching. While internet addiction is not officially recognised as a separate disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), Internet Gaming Disorder has been identified as a condition that requires further investigation, reflecting growing empirical support for problematic internet-related behaviours (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

In recent work, the term Problematic Internet usage (PIU) is frequently used interchangeably with internet addiction in order to avoid pathologization and emphasise dysfunctional patterns of usage rather than frequency. Regardless of nomenclature, research consistently linked excessive internet use to sadness, anxiety, loneliness, sleep difficulties, and poor psychological well-being, especially among young adults and students (Kuss & Lopez-Fernandez, 2016).

III. DETERMINANTS OF INTERNET ADDICTION

Internet addiction is a complex phenomenon caused by the dynamic combination of personal vulnerabilities, environmental factors, and societal pressures. Contemporary models view problematic internet use as the result of predisposing psychological variables, reinforcing online settings, and interpersonal and sociocultural situations that promote excessive participation (Davis, 2001; Brand et al., 2016).

1. Internal (Individual) Determinants of Internet Addiction

Internal determinants are psychological, emotional, cognitive, and biological variables that incline people to adopt maladaptive internet use practices.

1.1 Psychological Factors

a) Emotional Dysregulation

People with weak emotional regulation abilities frequently utilize the internet as a maladaptive coping method to avoid bad emotions like stress, melancholy, boredom, or loneliness. Online settings offer instant respite and distraction, reinforcing excessive use via negative reinforcement mechanisms (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014).

b) Low self-esteem and identity issues.

Low self-esteem has been consistently linked to internet addiction. Online platforms enable people to experiment with idealized identities, get approval, and avoid real-world self-evaluative dangers, increasing their reliance on virtual interactions (Caplan, 2007).

c) Personality Traits

Certain personality features strongly predict problematic internet use:

- High neuroticism is associated with greater emotional fragility.
- Low conscientiousness correlates with poor impulse control.
- High impulsivity and sensation-seeking increase vulnerability to online reinforcement loops (Mehroof & Griffiths, 2010).

1.2 Cognitive Factors

a) Maladaptive cognitions

Dysfunctional ideas like "I am only valued online" or "The internet is the only place I feel competent"

contribute to excessive internet use. These thoughts relate to cognitive preoccupation and obsessive behaviour (Davis, 2001).

b) Attentional biases and reward sensitivity

Individuals with high reward sensitivity are more responsive to online stimuli such as notifications, likes, and awards, which reinforces habitual use via dopaminergic reward pathways (Brand et al., 2019).

1.3 Aspects of Biology and Neuropsychology

According to neurobiological research, internet addiction is similar to other behavioural addictions, such as:

- Decreased inhibitory control as a result of altered prefrontal brain function.
- Increased mesolimbic dopamine system activity, which strengthens reward-seeking behaviours (Ko et al., 2009).

2. Environmental and External Factors Affecting Internet Addiction

Contextual and structural elements that support or encourage excessive internet use are examples of external determinants.

2.1 Internet Availability and Accessibility

Exposure and the potential for excessive usage are greatly increased by the widespread availability of cellphones, high-speed internet, and reasonably priced data plans. Constant accessibility encourages repeated checking behaviours and diminishes natural halting cues (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

2.2 Stress at Work and in the classroom

People may turn to the internet as an avoidance coping mechanism due to high academic pressure, performance anxiety, and a lack of institutional support. In order to momentarily alleviate psychological pain, students who are under scholastic stress may overindulge in social media or online amusement (Li et al., 2020).

2.3 The Family Setting

a) Style of Parenting

Increased internet addiction, especially among teenagers and young adults, is linked to authoritarian or negligent parenting approaches, inadequate parental supervision, and a lack of emotional warmth (Yap et al., 2014).

b) Family Conflicts

People may turn to online spaces that provide a sense of safety, independence, and acceptance as a result of ongoing family strife and emotional invalidation.

3. Social Factors Affecting Internet Addiction

Interpersonal relationships, peer dynamics, and sociocultural influences are all considered social determinants.

3.1 Social Exclusion and Feeling alone

Internet addiction is strongly predicted by loneliness. In order to satisfy unfulfilled requirements for belongingness, people with small offline social networks frequently turn to online platforms, which increases their reliance on virtual interactions (Nowland et al., 2018).

3.2 The Impact of Peers and Social Standards

Overuse of the internet is normalised by peer norms that promote continuous online interaction. Particularly on social networking sites, the fear of missing out (FoMO) encourages constant connectivity (Przybylski et al., 2013).

3.3 Social Reinforcement Online

Similar to gambling behaviours, social media platforms are built around variable ratio reinforcement schedules and offer erratic rewards (likes, comments, shares) that highly incentivise repeated use (Montag et al., 2019).

3.4 Aspects of Socioculture

The demand to stay connected at all times is increased by the cultural emphasis on digital competency, productivity, and online visibility. Online platforms may act as extensions of social identity in collectivistic societies, increasing dependence and involvement (Kuss et al., 2014).

IV. AN INTEGRATIVE VIEWPOINT

The Interaction of Person–Affect–Cognition–Execution (I-PACE) model offers a thorough framework for understanding how social reinforcement, environmental triggers, and personal vulnerabilities combine to create internet addiction. This concept states that repeated cycles of affective and cognitive reactions to online stimuli give rise to

internet addiction, which eventually results in a loss of self-control and compulsive use (Brand et al., 2016).

V. COMPONENTS OF INTERNET ADDICTION

Despite the lack of a psychoactive drug, internet addiction is recognized as a type of behavioral addiction with core characteristics similar to substance-related addictions. Griffiths' Components Model of Addiction is a commonly acknowledged framework for explaining internet addiction. It posits that addictive behaviors are made up of six fundamental components: salience, mood modulation, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse (Griffiths, 2005). These components provide a systematic framework for identifying and assessing problematic internet usage habits.

1. Salience

Salience refers to the extent to which internet use becomes the most essential activity in a person's life, influencing thinking, emotions, and behaviour. Individuals with salience have a persistent concern with online activities, usually reflecting on earlier online experiences or anticipating their next opportunity to use the internet. Daily routines may become increasingly focused on online access, resulting in neglect of offline duties and interests.

Behaviourally, salience manifests as continuous scanning of digital devices, difficulties disengaging from online platforms, and prioritising internet use over essential activities such as academic work, sleep, and face-to-face social contacts. This component emphasises the importance of internet use in an individual's psychological functioning (Griffiths, 2005).

2. Mood modification

Mood modification describes the subjective emotional changes that occur as a result of internet use. Individuals frequently describe sensations of joy, excitement, relaxation, or release from stress and unpleasant emotions while engaging in online activities. Internet use may be used as a coping method for mental pain, boredom, loneliness, or worry.

Over time, relying on the internet for emotional regulation may diminish engagement in adaptive coping techniques. The frequent link between internet use and emotional alleviation develops habitual

patterns of use, promoting addictive behaviour via negative reinforcement (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014).

3. Tolerance

Tolerance is defined as the gradual increase in internet use required to reach the same level of enjoyment or emotional relief as with lower levels of use. Individuals may spend more time online, use numerous platforms simultaneously, or seek for more interesting online content.

This increase indicates a decreased sensitivity to the rewarding effects of internet use. As tolerance grows, individuals experience less enjoyment, promoting additional increases in usage and growing dependence on online activities (Brand et al., 2016).

4. Withdrawal Symptoms

Withdrawal symptoms appear when internet access is restricted, diminished, or eliminated. Irritability, restlessness, anxiety, depression, boredom, and difficulties concentrating are also prevalent psychological signs of withdrawal. Some people may notice physical discomfort, such as headaches or sleep difficulties.

These symptoms cause discomfort, which encourages a return to internet use, perpetuating compulsive behaviour. Withdrawal is a differentiating trait that distinguishes addictive use from voluntary or recreational online activity (Young, 1998).

5. Conflict

Conflict refers to the negative implications of excessive internet use in several realms of functioning. Interpersonal problems might emerge as a result of neglected connections, limited communication, or arguments about how much time is spent online. Intrapersonal conflict includes emotions of guilt, lack of control, and awareness of the negative consequences of excessive usage.

Academic or occupational conflict is characterised by poor performance, absenteeism, missed deadlines, and decreased production. Despite these negative consequences, people continue to use the internet excessively, demonstrating poor self-regulation and obsessive behaviour (Griffiths, 2005).

6. Relapse

Relapse is the tendency to return to problematic internet use patterns following periods of abstinence

or limited use. Even after making deliberate steps to minimise internet use, people can quickly revert to excessive use, which is commonly caused by stress, emotional distress, or environmental cues.

Relapse emphasises the chronic and recurring character of internet addiction, as well as the difficulties of maintaining long-term control over internet use in the absence of focused interventions (Marlatt and Donovan, 2005).

VI. Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being (PWB) is a key concept in modern psychology, representing individuals' positive functioning and ideal experiences rather than simply the absence of psychological pain or mental illness. Traditional approaches to mental health emphasized pathology, which included symptoms, dysfunction, and disorders. However, as the limits of this deficit-oriented perspective became more widely recognized, positive psychology emerged, emphasizing strengths, personal growth, and well-being as critical components of mental health (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Psychological well-being refers to how people evaluate and experience their life, including their emotional reactions, cognitive judgements, and sense of meaning and purpose. It is widely recognised as a multifaceted construct that includes positive self-evaluation, effective functioning, happy relationships, and the ability to handle life's problems. Unlike subjective well-being, which is primarily concerned with happiness and life satisfaction, psychological well-being emphasises eudaimonic aspects of human functioning, such as self-realization and personal development (Ryan and Deci, 2001).

Ryff (1989) provided one of the most influential conceptualisations of psychological well-being, defining it as having six basic dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, life purpose, and personal progress. This approach brings together humanistic, developmental, and existential perspectives, emphasising that well-being entails not only feeling good but also operating effectively and meaningfully. Ryff's paradigm has been widely employed in empirical research, demonstrating substantial links to physical health, resilience, and adaptive coping.

Psychological well-being is influenced by a complex interaction of individual, social, and environmental factors. Personality qualities, emotional regulation skills, self-esteem, and coping techniques all play an important part in determining well-being. Interpersonal interactions, social support, academic or occupational contexts, and cultural beliefs all have a substantial impact on individuals' psychological functioning (Keyes, 2002). In an era of rapid technological advancement, shifting social structures, and increased academic and occupational pressures, psychological well-being has emerged as an important indicator of mental health, particularly among teenagers and young adults.

Research has consistently shown that higher levels of psychological well-being are linked to better mental health outcomes, such as decreased levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, as well as increased academic performance and life satisfaction. Conversely, poor psychological well-being has been related to maladaptive behaviours, emotional issues, and a lower quality of life. As a result, psychological well-being is increasingly regarded not only as an outcome variable, but also as a protective factor that shields persons from psychological discomfort (Keyes, 2005).

Psychological well-being has recently attracted attention in clinical, educational, and health psychology due to its importance in understanding how people adjust to modern pressures. Examining psychological well-being provides useful insights into overall mental health, as well as a comprehensive framework for analysing the influence of behavioural patterns, such as excessive internet use, on individuals' emotional and psychological functioning.

VI. Components of Psychological Wellbeing

Psychological well-being (PWB) is a multifaceted concept that encompasses healthy psychological functioning and optimal human development. Carol D. Ryff (1989) created one of the most prominent and extensively used models of psychological well-being, conceptualising it as six fundamental components based on humanistic, existential, and developmental theories. These components value not just subjective enjoyment, but also successful functioning, self-realization, and purposeful existence.

1. Self-acceptance

Self-acceptance is a positive assessment of oneself and one's prior experiences. Individuals with high levels of self-acceptance are aware of and accept their own strengths and limits, and they retain a generally positive attitude toward themselves. This component demonstrates psychological development and emotional integration since people can admit their flaws without excessive self-criticism.

Low levels of self-acceptance are linked to unhappiness, low self-esteem, and susceptibility to psychological discomfort. Self-acceptance is regarded as essential to psychological well-being because it determines how people perceive themselves and interact with the world (Ryff, 1989).

2. Positive relationships with others

Positive relationships with others require the ability to develop warm, trusting, and gratifying interpersonal partnerships. This component involves empathy, affection, intimacy, and care for the well-being of others. Individuals with great psychological well-being exhibit the ability to form deep emotional bonds and mutual understanding.

Healthy interpersonal relationships protect against stress and emotional issues, whereas social isolation and conflict are associated with decreased well-being. This component emphasises the social aspect of psychological well-being and the significance of meaningful social connections (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

3. Autonomy

Autonomy is defined as self-determination, independence, and the ability to control behaviour from within. Autonomous people judge themselves according to personal standards rather than external constraints, and they can oppose social conformity when it contradicts their ideals.

This component represents psychological freedom and genuineness. While autonomy does not entail social detachment, it does emphasise the necessity of maintaining personal integrity and self-direction, both of which are necessary for long-term psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989).

4. Environmental mastery

Environmental mastery is the ability to effectively manage life problems and build or select environments that match human requirements and ideals. Individuals with high environmental mastery are confident in

performing daily obligations and can adjust to changing conditions.

A lack of environmental mastery is linked to feelings of helplessness and decreased control over life events. This component emphasises the need of practical skill and adaptation in preserving psychological well-being (Ryff and Keyes, 1995).

5. Purpose in Life

Purpose in life refers to the presence of objectives, intentions, and a feeling of direction that give one's life significance. Individuals with a strong sense of purpose see their life as meaningful and are motivated to pursue important goals.

Purpose in life is especially important for resilience and psychological adjustment since it helps people negotiate adversity and life changes. A lack of purpose has been linked to existential emptiness and psychological discomfort (Ryff, 1989).

6. Personal Growth

Personal growth represents a desire to continue developing and realising one's full potential. Individuals with a high level of personal growth are open to new experiences, see problems as chances for learning, and work hard to improve themselves.

This component emphasises that psychological well-being is a dynamic and ongoing process, not a static condition. Personal development promotes adaptation, creativity, and long-term psychological wellness (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

VII. IMPORTANCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

Psychological well-being (PWB) is a key measure of total mental health and quality of life, including good functioning, emotional balance, and the ability to deal with life's obstacles effectively. Unlike traditional models that associate mental health with the absence of psychopathology, psychological well-being emphasises strengths, resilience, and optimal human functioning, making it a key concept in contemporary psychology research and practice (Ryff, 1989).

Psychological well-being is vital for a variety of reasons, including emotional management and mental health protection. Individuals with higher levels of psychological well-being show more emotional awareness, adaptive coping techniques, and resilience

in the face of stress. Research has consistently shown that high psychological well-being is connected with lower levels of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress, whereas low well-being increases vulnerability to mental health disorders (Ryff and Keyes, 1995).

Physical health and longevity are both heavily influenced by psychological well-being. Empirical research reveals that those with higher levels of well-being have better immune functioning, healthier lifestyle habits, and a lower risk of chronic illness. Psychological well-being influences physiological processes such as stress hormone control and cardiovascular function, which contribute to long-term health outcomes (Ryff & Singer, 1998).

In educational and professional settings, psychological well-being is a significant predictor of academic success, productivity, and work satisfaction. Individuals with higher levels of well-being are more likely to be motivated, concentrated, creative, and capable of problem solving. In contrast, poor psychological well-being is linked to burnout, disengagement, absenteeism, and poor performance, particularly among students and working professionals (Keyes, 2002).

Psychological well-being is also required for positive interpersonal interactions and social functioning. Individuals with higher levels of well-being are more likely to create stable, supportive relationships and demonstrate better empathy, trust, and prosocial behaviour. Positive social ties, in turn, promote psychological well-being, resulting in a mutually beneficial relationship between individual mental health and social connectedness (Keyes, 2005).

From a developmental standpoint, psychological well-being promotes personal growth, identity formation, and life satisfaction throughout life. Individuals with a strong sense of purpose, autonomy, and self-acceptance are better able to navigate developmental milestones and adjust to changing circumstances. In the face of current stresses such as academic pressure, technology overuse, and social isolation, psychological well-being acts as a buffer, encouraging resilience and adaptive functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Given its extensive impact on mental, bodily, social, and occupational functioning, psychological well-being is increasingly regarded as a key outcome variable in psychological research. Understanding and supporting psychological well-being is so critical for

creating effective prevention and intervention techniques to improve overall mental health and quality of life.

VIII. FACTORS INFLUENCING PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Psychological well-being (PWB) is a multifaceted concept determined by a complex interplay of individual, interpersonal, and environmental factors. Personal qualities, life experiences, social situations, and broader cultural and environmental variables all influence psychological well-being, which is dynamic rather than static. Understanding these elements is critical for recognising mental health concerns and building effective prevention and intervention plans.

1. Individual (personal) factors

1.1 Personality traits

Personality significantly influences psychological well-being. Neuroticism is negatively connected with well-being due to increased emotional reactivity and susceptibility to stress, whereas extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness are positively associated with good affect, purpose in life, and personal development. Stable personality dispositions determine how people understand experiences and deal with obstacles, which affects their long-term well-being (Ryff, 1989).

1.2 Self-esteem and Acceptance

Self-esteem and self-acceptance are essential for psychological well-being. Individuals who rate themselves positively tend to be more emotionally stable, resilient, and satisfied with their lives. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, is linked to higher psychological distress, a negative self-image, and susceptibility to anxiety and depression (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

1.3 Emotional Regulation and Coping Skills

Effective emotional regulation and adaptive coping mechanisms greatly improve psychological well-being. Individuals who can manage stress, regulate negative emotions, and use problem-solving coping strategies are better prepared to deal with life pressures. Maladaptive coping techniques, such as avoidance or rumination, have a detrimental influence on well-being and contribute to psychological distress.

2. Interpersonal and social factors

2.1 Social Support and Relationships

Social support is a powerful predictor of psychological well-being. Supportive relationships with family, friends, and peers provide emotional security, validation, and practical aid, which help people cope with stress. Conversely, social isolation, loneliness, and interpersonal conflict have been linked to decreased well-being and increased psychological discomfort (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

2.2 Family Environment

Family dynamics, such as emotional warmth, communication patterns, and parental support, are important in shaping psychological well-being, especially during adolescence and early adulthood. Dysfunctional family situations marked by conflict, neglect, or emotional invalidation can harm well-being and emotional development (Keyes, 2002).

2.3 Peer Influence

Peer interactions have an impact on self-esteem, emotional adjustment, and feelings of belonging. Positive peer connections improve psychological well-being, whereas peer rejection, social comparison, and pressure can cause emotional pain and poor well-being, particularly in academic and social situations.

3. Environmental and contextual factors

3.1 Academic and Occupational Stress

Academic workload, performance pressure, and vocational expectations have a major impact on psychological well-being. High stress levels, a lack of autonomy, and an imbalance between responsibilities and resources can all contribute to burnout and emotional tiredness. In contrast, supportive educational and work settings foster competence, motivation, and well-being (Keyes, 2005).

3.2 socioeconomic status

Socioeconomic factors determine access to resources, opportunities, and social support, all of which have an impact on psychological well-being. Financial insecurity and limited access to education or healthcare are linked to chronic stress and decreased well-being, whereas stable socioeconomic situations promote psychological health and life satisfaction (Keyes, 2002).

3.3 Cultural and Social Factors

Cultural values, social conventions, and societal expectations all influence people's feelings of success, autonomy, and meaning in life. Cultural support for emotional expression, community belonging, and personal development improves psychological well-being. In contrast, societal pressures and stigma associated with mental health might impair well-being and help-seeking behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

4. Lifestyle and Behavioural Factors

4.1 Health Behaviours

Healthy lifestyle habits including regular physical activity, proper sleep, and balanced nutrition all have a positive impact on mental health. Poor sleep habits, sedentary behaviour, and unhealthy coping strategies are linked to decreased well-being and increased psychological distress (Ryff & Singer, 1998).

4.2 Technology and Daily Habits

In today's environment, excessive screen time and digital engagement might have an impact on psychological well-being. While moderate technology usage might help people connect, excessive or maladaptive use is linked to emotional weariness, decreased life satisfaction, and diminished psychological functioning.

IX. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNET ADDICTION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

As the internet and digital technology continue to expand, our socializing, learning, and play patterns are all changing in response. The internet provides many benefits, but when internet use becomes too much and out of control, questions arise about what this means for psychological well-being. Internet addiction, also known as problematic or pathological use, has increasingly demonstrated links to problems with emotions, social relationships, and general mental functioning, making the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being a popular topic of research. Psychological well-being is the healthy, positive functioning of the mind: having self-acceptance, a sense of purpose, autonomy, opportunities for self-growth, mastery over one's environment, and warm, constructive relationships with others (Ryff, 1989). In contrast, internet addiction

is characterized by an overwhelming preoccupation with internet use, a loss of control, tolerance, withdrawal, and continued use despite negative consequences (Young, 1998; Griffiths, 2005). In theory and practice, these two constructs seem to move in opposite directions: the more internet addiction, the less psychological well-being.

One of the most important ways that internet addiction relates to psychological well-being is through the process of emotional dysregulation. People who are stressed, lonely, or depressed often turn to the internet as a convenient way to escape from painful emotions. Feeling better for a moment can be short-lived, and over time, excessive internet use can take the place of real-life responsibilities and relationships, leading to a loss of overall well-being (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014). Findings clearly demonstrate that internet addiction is related to lower levels of self-acceptance and a lack of purpose. When internet use becomes too much, it can interfere with self-reflection, goal-directed behavior, and the development of identity, particularly in adolescents and young adults. Those who are high in internet addiction tend to experience feelings of emptiness, dissatisfaction, and a lack of direction, all of which indicate a lack of psychological well-being (Caplan, 2007). Social functioning is at a critical juncture between internet addiction and psychological well-being. As internet addiction becomes a problem, individuals tend to withdraw from offline social interactions, reduce their social circles, and perceive their relationships as worsening. Online communication can provide a sense of social support, but it tends to lack the depth and emotional complexity required to support psychological well-being, leaving individuals lonelier and with poorer positive associations (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

From a psychological well-being perspective, a clear association between internet addiction and psychological distress is evident in the literature, with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress being evident alongside internet addiction. Psychological well-being can be both a cause and a consequence of internet addiction, implying a two-way relationship. Individuals with lower psychological well-being may turn to the internet for emotional solace, and excessive internet use may contribute to poor psychological well-being (Keyes, 2005). Neuropsychological and behavioral addiction theories provide further insight into the issue, suggesting difficulties with executive

control and reward system dysfunctions associated with excessive internet use. These difficulties can contribute to problems with autonomy, environmental mastery, and personal growth, which are fundamental aspects of psychological well-being, and, in turn, contribute to maladaptive internet use (Brand et al., 2016).

In summary, the literature suggests a negative and significant relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being. Understanding this relationship is essential for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies that promote healthy internet use and improve psychological well-being, particularly in the student population.

X. THEORIES OF INTERNET ADDICTION

The issue of internet addiction has been addressed using a variety of theoretical approaches that have been borrowed from psychology, behavioral sciences, and neuroscience. These theories aim to interpret the causes, mechanisms, and effects of maladaptive and excessive internet use.

1. Behavioral Addiction Theory

The behavioral addiction theory views internet addiction as a type of non-substance addiction, which has common features with substance-related addictions. This theory holds that excessive internet use is maintained through operant conditioning, where pleasant activities such as entertainment, social reinforcement, or escape from stress serve as rewards that maintain compulsive behavior.

Griffiths (1996) suggested that behavioral addictions have six common features: salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse. Internet use becomes addictive when it becomes the primary focus of an individual's thoughts and behavior, when it leads to mood modification, when it requires escalation of use to maintain satisfaction, and when it leads to distress when its use is reduced. This theory focuses on the role of reinforcement schedules and habitual behavior in maintaining internet addiction. This theory has played an important role in establishing internet addiction as a clinical and psychological issue, especially by emphasizing its similarities with gambling and gaming addiction.

2. Cognitive-Behavioral Theory

The cognitive-behavioral theory views internet addiction as the result of maladaptive thinking combined with rewards for behavioral actions. Davis (2001) differentiated between generalized and specific pathological internet use. The theory proposes that maladaptive thinking, such as “I am only valued on the internet” or “the internet is the only place where I feel capable,” is a significant factor in the development of addiction. These distorted cognitions increase emotional dependence on the online world, while the immediate reward of gratification and the reduction of anxiety through internet use acts as a reinforcement mechanism. Over time, the cycle reinforces compulsive use and reduces time spent in the offline world. The theory emphasizes that the problem is not the technology but the way in which it is thought about and used. It is also the basis for clinical interventions, which include cognitive-behavioral techniques aimed at modifying distorted cognitions and promoting more adaptive coping mechanisms.

3. Social Skills Deficit Theory

The social skills deficit theory proposes that individuals with poor social skills, social anxiety, or interpersonal problems are more likely to develop internet addiction. Caplan (2002) proposes that the internet environment is perceived as a safer and more controllable environment than the offline world, particularly for individuals with social anxiety and fears of rejection and negative judgment. The theory proposes that excessive internet use is a compensatory mechanism for offline social deficiencies by providing anonymity, reduced social cues, and control over self-presentation. Although internet use may initially alleviate feelings of loneliness, excessive dependence on internet communication can further deteriorate offline social skills, perpetuating a cycle of loneliness and internet dependence. This theory focuses on the interpersonal and emotional underpinnings of internet addiction, which explains why socially anxious individuals are at a higher risk of developing the addiction.

4. Uses and Gratifications Theory

The uses and gratifications approach views internet addiction as a consequence of using media with specific intentions in mind to fulfill psychological and social needs. From a communication theory

perspective, it posits that we choose the internet to fulfill entertainment, socialization, information search, or emotional escape needs (Katz et al., 1973; later applied to internet use). When the internet becomes the primary or sole source for fulfilling these needs, internet addiction can creep in. Over time, reliance on internet pleasures can displace more wholesome offline pursuits and contribute to addictive behavior. The approach moves the lens from pathology to individual motivations, which can account for why different people become hooked on different internet activities gaming, social networking, or streaming.

This approach is particularly useful for understanding addiction related to specific online content.

5. Neurobiological Theory

The neurobiological approach views internet addiction as a disorder that has its roots in the alterations of the reward system and executive control of the brain. Advances in neuroscience suggest that internet addiction can activate the dopamine reward system, similar to what is observed in substance use disorders. Brand et al. (2016) observed difficulties with inhibitory control, decision-making, and reward seeking in people with internet use disorders. Regular engagement with rewarding online experiences can enhance the neural pathways associated with craving and compulsive behavior, suppressing self-regulation. This biological perspective can account for why internet addiction persists despite its negative consequences and why internet addiction should be recognized as a legitimate behavioral disorder.

XI. THEORIES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Psychological well-being (PWB) is at the heart of positive psychology and mental health studies. Well-being represents how well individuals function psychologically and how happy they are with their lives. Over the years, various theoretical approaches have attempted to articulate what constitutes well-being and how it develops. These theories differ in their treatment of pleasure, meaning, self-actualization, and social relationships, but collectively, they enhance our understanding of psychological well-being.

1. Hedonic Theory of Well-Being

Hedonism conceptualizes well-being in terms of pleasure and the absence of pain. Going back to ancient Greek philosophy Aristippus and later Epicurus this approach links well-being to happiness and the subjective experience of living.

In contemporary psychology, this is expressed in the concept of subjective well-being (SWB), which encompasses life satisfaction, the presence of positive affect, and the absence of negative affect (Diener, 1984). The assumption is that individuals experience greater well-being when they experience frequent positive emotions and perceive their lives as positive. Although the hedonic approach has been influential because of its simplicity and operationalizability, it has been widely attacked for its failure to consider deeper aspects of human functioning, such as purpose, development, and morality.

2. Eudaimonic Theory of Well-Being

Eudaimonia conceptualizes well-being as the actualization of one's true potential and living in harmony with one's true self. This approach, rooted in Aristotle's concept of eudaimonia, emphasizes meaning, virtue, and self-actualization over pleasure. From this perspective, well-being is the pursuit of excellence, engagement with meaningful activities, and actualization of one's potential.

It focuses on long-term personal development, autonomy, and a sense of purpose and helped inform later models of psychological well-being. This approach views well-being as a process rather than a state.

3. Ryff's Theory of Psychological Well-Being

Ryff's theory represents a major paradigm shift in understanding psychological well-being from a eudaimonic perspective. In 1989, Ryff proposed six fundamental aspects of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, having positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, having a sense of purpose in life, and personal growth. The theory combines concepts from humanistic, developmental, and clinical psychology and emphasizes the degree to which an individual can function at their optimal level rather than just feeling happy.

In Ryff's opinion, psychological well-being is evident when an individual is able to maintain positive relationships, act independently, cope effectively with

life's challenges, and continue to develop and grow. The theory has been widely used in research and receives robust empirical support, making it a cornerstone of well-being research.

4. Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) connects well-being to the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), well-being is achieved when autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied. Conditions that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness enhance well-being, while conditions that undermine needs are likely to cause distress and maladjustment.

SDT emphasizes intrinsic motivation and human agency as core drivers of well-being and has been supported by empirical evidence across cultures and contexts, including education, work, and mental health.

5. Flourishing and PERMA Theory

Flourishing views psychological well-being as more than the absence of disease; it is the process of thriving. Seligman (2011) proposes the PERMA model of well-being, which highlights five core aspects of psychological well-being: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. According to this theory, well-being is a complex construct that is influenced by a variety of emotional, cognitive, and social processes.

The PERMA model combines hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives and emphasizes that well-being is a state of feeling good and functioning well. The PERMA model has been influential in designing positive psychology interventions to enhance overall well-being.

CHAPTER II

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Weinstein et al. (2015)

Weinstein and his team examined the relationship between internet addiction and social anxiety in young adults. The results revealed that individuals with high levels of internet addiction had more severe symptoms of social anxiety and emotional suffering. The authors proposed that excessive internet use could be an unhealthy way for individuals to cope with feelings of discomfort in social situations, ultimately leading to

poor psychological well-being. The significance of this study is that it identifies the early psychological processes underlying the problematic use of the internet and emotional problems.

2. McNicol and Thorsteinsson (2017)

This study examined the relationship between internet addiction and psychological distress, as well as the ways in which individuals cope with these issues, including both adolescents and adults. The findings revealed that higher levels of internet addiction were strongly associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. Individuals with internet addiction also had a tendency to use more avoidant coping styles, which contributed to poor psychological well-being. The significance of this study is that it identifies the ways in which maladaptive coping styles can contribute to internet addiction and poor psychological well-being.

3. Anand et al. (2018)

Anand et al. conducted a multicenter study among medical college students in India to analyze internet use patterns and psychological distress. They observed a significant positive correlation between problematic internet use and depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms. The authors concluded that excessive internet use negatively impacts emotional regulation and mental health, particularly in challenging academic environments, among young adults.

4. Sharma and Sharma (2018)

This Indian study explored the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being among college students. It showed a significant negative correlation between internet addiction and psychological well-being dimensions such as autonomy, environmental mastery, and positive relationships with others. The authors concluded that excessive internet use negatively impacts overall psychological functioning and life satisfaction, posing a concern for student mental health in the Indian scenario.

5. Kuss and Lopez-Fernandez (2016)

In an extensive review, Kuss and Lopez-Fernandez analyzed international evidence on internet addiction and its psychological effects. The review systematically associated internet addiction with depression, anxiety, loneliness, and reduced subjective

well-being. The authors proposed that self-regulation and reward dysfunctions are primary contributors to addiction, making this article a useful theoretical framework for psychological well-being.

6. Laconi et al. (2019)

Laconi and his team examined problematic internet use among young adults and its connection to emotional well-being. They concluded that individuals with higher levels of internet addiction experienced lower levels of emotional regulation, increased stress, and lower life satisfaction. The study indicates that emotional dysregulation is the mediator between internet addiction and reduced psychological well-being.

7. Elhai et al. (2020)

This study investigated problematic internet and smartphone use and their connection to mental health indicators such as anxiety, depression, and stress. The findings indicated that problematic internet use predicted lower psychological well-being and increased emotional distress. The researchers indicated that excessive internet use affects everyday functioning and emotional stability, particularly among young adults.

8. Alheneidi et al. (2021)

Alheneidi and his team investigated internet addiction and mental health outcomes among university students. They found high correlations between internet addiction and depression, anxiety, and lower psychological well-being. The researchers concluded that internet addiction is a factor that leads to emotional exhaustion and social isolation, which negatively affect students' mental health.

9. Li et al. (2022)

Li et al. conducted a meta-analysis on the relationship between internet addiction and mental health outcomes. The findings verified a strong negative correlation with psychological well-being, with strong associations with depression, anxiety, and stress across cultures. This meta-analysis offers strong empirical support for the negative effects of excessive internet use on mental health.

10. Jaishy et al. (2023)

This community-based study conducted in India examined the relationship between internet addiction

and psychological well-being. The findings revealed that people with higher levels of internet addiction had significantly poorer psychological well-being and increased psychological distress. The study highlighted internet addiction as a growing public health issue in India, emphasizing the need for preventive mental health interventions.

11. Montag et al. (2019)

Montag et al. investigated problematic internet use from a neuropsychological and psychological perspective. The findings revealed that excessive internet use was associated with decreased emotional well-being, impaired impulse control, and increased susceptibility to anxiety and depressive symptoms. The study suggests that internet addiction is more than a behavioral issue, as it is a manifestation of underlying emotional and cognitive dysregulation that has a profound effect on psychological well-being.

12. Cheng & Li (2014)

One of the earliest large-scale studies, Cheng and Li examined the prevalence of internet addiction and its relation to mental health. The study revealed that individuals with internet addiction experience significantly poorer psychological well-being. This study paved the way by conceptualizing internet addiction as a global mental health concern with distinct psychological outcomes.

13. Ho et al. (2014)

Ho et al. conducted a meta-analysis on the relationship between internet addiction and psychiatric symptoms. The results revealed strong associations between internet addiction and depression, anxiety disorders, ADHD, and stress. The study emphasized that psychological well-being is impacted in individuals with internet addiction, emphasizing the need for early intervention and mental health support.

14. Young & Rogers (2015)

The study examined the psychological correlates of internet addiction, specifically examining mood disturbances. The study revealed that individuals with internet addiction experience higher levels of depressive symptoms and emotional instability, leading to poor psychological well-being. The authors proposed that excessive internet use exacerbates emotional fragility and impedes effective coping mechanisms.

15. Kim et al. (2016)

Kim and his team investigated internet addiction and psychological well-being in university students. The findings revealed that students who scored higher in internet addiction had lower life satisfaction and emotional well-being, as well as higher levels of perceived stress. The study concluded that problematic internet use affects emotional equilibrium and has a negative impact on subjective well-being.

16. Błachnio et al. (2016)

This cross-cultural study investigated the relationship between internet addiction and self-esteem and psychological well-being. The findings revealed that internet addiction is negatively related to self-esteem and well-being. This indicates that individuals who have lower self-esteem are at a higher risk of developing internet addiction. The study emphasized the importance of self-concept in the development and maintenance of internet addiction.

17. Fineberg et al. (2018)

Fineberg and his team defined internet addiction as a type of behavioral addiction. The review highlighted the significant relationship between internet addiction and poor psychological well-being, emotional dysregulation, and comorbid mood disorders. The study supported the definition of internet addiction as a type of behavioral addiction with serious implications for mental health.

18. Panayides and Walker (2018)

The research examined internet use and psychological coping among young adults. The results showed that higher scores of internet addiction were associated with more emotional distress, loneliness, and poor psychological well-being. The authors proposed that spending too much time online might displace more substantial offline social interactions, making individuals feel less emotionally satisfied.

19. Demir and Kutlu (2018)

Demir and Kutlu examined the relationship between internet addiction and life satisfaction and overall well-being among university students. The authors found a very strong negative association between internet addiction and well-being indicators such as happiness and emotional stability, thus confirming that excessive online behavior can impair positive psychological functioning.

20. Ramesh et al. (2019)

This Indian research examined internet addiction and psychological distress among college students. The results showed that students with higher levels of internet addiction reported higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, as well as poor psychological well-being. This study is particularly important for the Indian setting and confirms the growing concern about excessive internet use among young adults.

21. Pontes, Szabo, and Griffiths (2015)

Pontes and colleagues investigated the relationship between problematic internet use and psychological distress in young people. The authors found that excessive internet use was strongly associated with depression, anxiety, and poor psychological well-being, illustrating the ways in which problematic internet use can interfere with emotional regulation and adaptive functioning during young adulthood.

22. Özdemiş, Kuzucu, and Ak (2014)

This study explored the relationship between internet addiction and psychological adjustment in adolescents and young adults. The findings indicated that higher levels of internet addiction were associated with poor emotional regulation, loneliness, and poor well-being. The authors suggested that internet addiction can negatively impact social integration, which is essential for positive psychological development.

23. Kardefelt-Winther (2017)

Kardefelt-Winther presented a critical analysis of the conceptualization of internet addiction and its relationship to psychological distress. This study suggested that excessive internet use is a coping strategy for pre-existing problems such as stress, loneliness, and poor well-being, conceptualizing internet addiction through a psychosocial coping model paradigm rather than a pathological behavior paradigm.

24. Anderson, Steen, and Stavropoulos (2017)

This review examined internet use disorders and their impact on psychological well-being. The review concluded that problematic internet use is always associated with emotional regulation difficulties, mood issues, and impaired mental functioning. The authors highlighted that young adults are particularly vulnerable to these issues due to continuous developmental processes and increased internet use.

25. Mihara and Higuchi (2017)

Mihara and Higuchi conducted a review of the current literature on internet addiction. They found significant correlations between internet addiction and poor mental health outcomes, such as depression and anxiety. The authors emphasized that the severity of internet addiction is directly related to the deterioration of psychological well-being, making it a significant public health concern.

26. Wang et al. (2018)

Wang and his team examined problematic internet use among university students and its relationship to psychological distress. They concluded that excessive internet use was significantly related to depressive symptoms, stress, and life satisfaction. The authors emphasized that maladaptive internet use patterns are detrimental to psychological well-being.

27. Hawi and Samaha (2019)

This research investigated the impact of excessive internet use on mental health and well-being in university students. The findings revealed a negative correlation between internet addiction and happiness and psychological well-being, and a positive correlation between internet addiction and stress and emotional exhaustion. The study emphasized the importance of self-control in mitigating these negative impacts.

28. Dhir et al. (2020)

Dhir et al. investigated the relationship between problematic internet use and stress and psychological well-being. The results revealed that stress mediates the relationship between excessive internet use and poor psychological well-being, providing valuable information on the underlying mechanisms.

29. Lin et al. (2021)

Lin et al. examined the relationship between internet addiction and mental health outcomes in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that increased internet dependence was related to increased depression and anxiety and decreased psychological well-being in young adults. The findings demonstrated the role of situational stressors in exacerbating the negative mental health consequences of excessive internet use.

30. Su et al. (2022)

This longitudinal study examined the relationship between problematic internet use and psychological well-being over time. The findings showed that increased levels of internet addiction were predictive of poor psychological well-being, including decreased life satisfaction and emotional stability. The authors concluded that chronic internet addiction has long-term negative consequences for mental health.

31. Ryding & Kaye (2018)

Ryding and Kaye examined problematic internet use and mental health issues in young adults, specifically examining compulsive internet behaviors. The results indicated that increased internet addiction was associated with increased anxiety, depression, and poor psychological well-being. They emphasized that the compulsive use of the internet affects every day functioning and emotional stability, particularly during the stage of emerging adulthood.

32. Zhao et al. (2020)

Zhao and his group examined the relationship between problematic internet use and emotional regulation and psychological well-being in university students. The findings indicated that university students with high levels of internet addiction experienced poor emotional regulation, which was a strong predictor of poor psychological well-being. Emotional regulation was identified as a mediator between internet addiction and psychological well-being.

33. Balhara et al. (2020)

Balhara and his group investigated internet addiction among Indian adolescents and young adults. The study found a significant relationship between internet addiction and psychological problems such as anxiety and depression, emphasizing the increasing mental health problems associated with excessive internet use among Indian youth.

34. Gao et al. (2021)

Gao and his team examined internet use and psychological well-being in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed that excessive internet use was associated with greater stress, more depressive symptoms, and poor psychological well-being. This study indicated that situational stressors such as social isolation can

exacerbate the negative psychological consequences of internet addiction.

35. Bhandari et al. (2021)

Bhandari and his team carried out a cross-sectional study on South Asian college students, including Indians, to investigate the relationship between internet addiction and mental health outcomes. High levels of internet addiction were associated with greater stress and anxiety and poor psychological well-being, emphasizing the need for preventive mental health interventions in educational institutions.

36. Servidio (2021)

Servidio explored the relationship between problematic internet use, self-esteem, and psychological well-being. The findings showed that individuals with high levels of internet addiction had lower self-esteem and poor psychological well-being. Self-esteem was identified as a protective component that could mitigate the negative psychological consequences of excessive internet use.

37. Arslan et al. (2022)

Arslan et al. examined the relationship between internet addiction, emotional distress, and psychological well-being in university students. They found that internet addiction is predictive of lower psychological well-being, and that emotional distress partially mediated this relationship. The study confirms that internet addiction is a risk factor for poor mental health.

38. Alimoradi et al. (2022)

Alimoradi et al. completed a systematic review and meta-analysis on the relationship between internet addiction and mental health outcomes. Their findings demonstrate strong and consistent associations between internet addiction and depression, anxiety, stress, and poor psychological well-being in diverse cultural contexts. The study provides robust empirical support for the negative psychological consequences of excessive internet use.

39. Kumar et al. (2024)

Kumar et al. examined the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being in Indian college students. They found a clear negative association between internet addiction and psychological well-being, as well as higher levels of

depression and anxiety in those with problematic internet use. The study provides recent Indian empirical findings that are pertinent to youth in urban settings.

CHAPTER III I. METHODOLOGY

Aim: Investigating internet addiction and its impact on the psychological well-being of young adults in Delhi, India.

Objectives: Investigating the relationship between internet addiction and the psychological well-being of young adult residents in Delhi, India.

Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being among young adults in Delhi, India.

Research design: The research is quantitative in nature. This type of research is often based on statistical analysis to identify relationships between variables.

Variables

In an experiment, the independent variable is the one that is observed or changed to determine its effect on the dependent variable. The dependent variable is the one that is affected by the independent variable. It may or may not be related to the independent variable. In simpler terms, the dependent variable is the thing you are trying to predict or explain. Also known as the response, effect, or criterion variable (VandenBos, 2015). For this research:

- Independent variable: internet addiction
- Dependent variable: psychological well-being

Sample and its selection

The study involves 200 participants, 100 males and 100 females, aged 18 to 30. The sampling criteria have been used, and the sampling frame is non-probability-based. This makes the approach non-random. The research involves 200 young adults in Delhi, India.

Tools Employed

The tools used in the study were Internet Addiction Test (IAT) and General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12).

IAT

The Internet Addiction Test (IAT), developed by Dr. Kimberly Young in 1998, is one of the most widely used standardized instruments to assess the presence and severity of internet addiction. The format of the test is based on diagnostic criteria adapted from pathological gambling and is suitable for use with both adolescents and adults, including college students and young adults. The test is a 20-item self-report measure that focuses on problematic and compulsive internet use and its consequences. The major domains that are assessed are:

- Preoccupation with internet use
- Loss of control over internet behavior
- Neglect of work, educational, or social responsibilities
- Emotional dependence on the internet
- Psychological distress due to excessive use

The respondents are required to rate the frequency of each statement as it applies to them.

Reliability

The IAT has high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.88 to 0.93, which is a reflection of its high reliability across diverse populations (Young, 1998; Widyanto & McMurran, 2004).

Validity

The IAT has construct and concurrent validity, as it is significantly related to depression, anxiety, stress, and psychological well-being in international and Indian samples (Chang & Law, 2008; Nath et al., 2016).

GHQ-12

The GHQ-12 was developed by Goldberg in 1972. It is a widely used screening instrument designed to measure general psychological distress and mental health in the community and clinical settings. The GHQ-12 consists of 12 items that measure symptoms of anxiety, depression, social dysfunction, and loss of confidence. It uses a 4-point Likert scale.

Reliability

The GHQ-12 has good to excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.78 to 0.95 in various populations,

including Indian samples (Goldberg & Williams, 1988; Patel et al., 2008).

Validity

The GHQ-12 has construct and criterion validity, as it can distinguish between people with psychological distress and non-clinical samples. It is also significantly related to anxiety and depression scales (Goldberg & Williams, 1988; Hu et al., 2007).

Procedure

The questionnaire used to determine the variables was selected based on the criteria and included the IAT and GHQ-12. These were valid and reliable. The Google Forms survey was developed with three parts based on the questionnaires. Before the survey was taken, consent and access to the questions were requested. The data was collected through random sampling. After collection, the questionnaire and instructions for scoring were used as a guide for scoring.

Statistical Analysis

The data will be analyzed using SPSS Statistics 21. Correlation of the scores obtained from the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) and the General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12) will be used to determine the relationship between the two variables. Means and standard deviations will also be determined.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study will be sought from the institutional review board (IRB). Informed consent will be sought from the participants before they participate.

CHAPTER IV RESULTS

1.1 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

This research examined the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being among young adults in Delhi, India. Internet addiction was measured by the Internet Addiction Test (IAT), and psychological well-being was measured by the General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12). The study had a sample of 201 participants, with no missing data.

1.1.1 Internet Addiction

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Internet Addiction Test (IAT) Scores (N = 201)

Statistic	Value
Mean	66.88
Standard Deviation	15.63
Variance	244.14
Minimum	10
Maximum	88
Range	78
Standard Error	1.10

Interpretation:

The mean score of the IAT was 66.88, with a standard deviation of 15.63, which indicates moderate to high levels of internet addiction. The large standard deviation reveals that there is considerable variation in the use of the internet among the participants. The scores ranged from 10 to 88, which indicates that some participants had low levels of problem use, while others had high levels of internet addiction.

1.1.2 Psychological Well-Being

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for GHQ-12 scores (N = 201)

Statistic	Value
Mean	23.35
Standard Deviation	4.99
Minimum	5
Maximum	33
Range	28
Standard Error	0.35

Interpretation:

The mean score for GHQ-12 was 23.35, with a standard deviation of 4.99. The fact that a higher score on GHQ-12 indicates more distress suggests that the level of distress is moderate. The lower standard deviation indicates that the scores for well-being were more concentrated than the scores for internet addiction.

1.2 Correlation Between Internet Addiction and Psychological Well-Being

To examine the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was conducted.

Table 3: Correlation Between Internet Addiction and Psychological Well-Being (N = 201)

Variables	1	2
1. Internet Addiction (IAT)	1	.598
2. Psychological Well-Being (GHQ-12)	.598	1

Note. $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

Interpretation:

The findings revealed a strong and significant correlation between internet addiction and GHQ-12 scores, with a correlation coefficient of $r = .598$ and $p < .01$. In other words, individuals with high levels of internet addiction are likely to exhibit higher levels of psychological distress, which means lower levels of psychological well-being. The R-squared value of .358 indicates that internet addiction can explain approximately 35.8% of the variance in psychological well-being.

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION

This research examined the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being in young adults in Delhi, India. To determine the level of internet addiction, the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) was employed, and to determine psychological well-being, the General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12) was employed. The findings revealed moderate to high levels of internet addiction and moderate levels of psychological distress. Most importantly, a statistically significant moderate to strong positive relationship between internet addiction and psychological distress was found ($r = .598$, $p < .01$).

The mean score for the IAT was 66.88 (SD = 15.63), which indicated that a considerable number of participants were prone to problematic internet use. Given that the population was comprised of young urban adults, this may be indicative of their increased usage of the internet for academic and professional purposes. In a fast-paced urban environment such as Delhi, the internet is an integral part of everyday life. However, when used to an excessive degree, it can interfere with sleep patterns, interpersonal relationships, academic achievement, and emotional functioning.

The mean GHQ-12 score was 23.35 (SD = 4.99), which suggested a moderate level of psychological distress. Young adulthood is a stage of identity

formation, occupation choice, social comparison, and economic difficulties, which can increase vulnerability to psychological distress. In combination with excessive internet use, this can further erode psychological well-being.

The strong positive correlation between internet addiction and GHQ-12 scores suggests that internet addiction is strongly associated with psychological distress. With $r^2 = .358$, 35.8% of the variance in psychological well-being is explained by internet addiction, which is a large effect size in psychological research and a reminder that internet addiction is a significant correlate of mental health in young adults.

There are a number of reasons why this association may be found. Excessive internet use may reduce opportunities for offline socializing, increase unrealistic social comparisons on the internet, and interfere with sleep-wake cycles as a result of late-night internet use. In addition, the internet may be used as an avoidant coping strategy for stress or negative emotions, which can serve to maintain addictive behavior. The association may be reciprocal, such that psychological distress maintains or increases internet use, which in turn maintains or increases psychological distress.

In general, the results are consistent with the growing body of research that has found problematic internet use is associated with poor psychological well-being. The results underscore the need for awareness programs and mental health screening in educational institutions to address the issue of excessive internet use among young adults.

CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION

In our research, we examined the impact of internet addiction on the mental well-being of young adults in Delhi. The findings revealed that a large number of participants experience internet addiction at a moderate to high level, and there is a clear level of psychological distress among them. Most importantly, we found a strong positive correlation between internet addiction and psychological distress, and as the scores on internet addiction increase, the level of psychological well-being decreases.

Internet addiction was found to account for a significant amount of variance in psychological well-being, which underscores the real psychological

consequences of internet addiction on young adults. As digital technology becomes more and more integrated into everyday life, it is more important than ever to understand and address problematic internet use.

VII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Potential Bias in Gender Representation

Although the sample of participants included an equal number of men and women, other gender identities were barely included. Therefore, it is difficult to make any conclusive statements about the impact of gender on internet addiction and psychological well-being. Different gender identities may have different experiences and behaviors online, influenced by cultural norms of expected behavior online and strategies for dealing with problems. Therefore, the results of this study may not be generalizable to the larger population and may overlook important details about gender.

Future studies should aim to be more representative of gender to see if the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being changes across different genders.

2. Age Group Homogeneity

The age group of our sample is predominantly young adults, specifically those aged 22 to 27 years old. The problem with this is that it is difficult to compare development from adolescence, young adulthood, to older adulthood. Internet use and psychological well-being can change considerably with age due to increasing responsibilities, emotional maturity, and social roles. Since the focus of our study is on emerging adults within a specific age range, it is not possible to generalize findings to adolescents and older adults.

3. Limitations of a Quantitative Research Design

This research remains strictly on a quantitative track, using normative self-report measures. This approach allows one to run the numbers, find correlations, and generalize findings, but it neglects the subjective, personal aspects—the motivations, experiences, and situational factors that lie beneath the reasons and ways of using the internet. Correlations can indicate the existence of a relationship between variables, but

they cannot indicate the direction of the cause-and-effect relationship.

Furthermore, correlation analysis can indicate the existence of a relationship between variables, but it cannot indicate the direction of the cause-and-effect relationship. To better understand the underlying psychological mechanisms that are at work in the relationship between internet addiction and well-being, a mixed-methods approach would be helpful.

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Appendix A

Internet Addiction Test

Name-

Gender- Male/Female

Age-

Years Online-

Do you use the Internet for work? (Yes/No)

This questionnaire consists of 20 statements. After reading each statement carefully, based upon the 5-point Likert scale, please select the response (0, 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) which best describes you. If two choices seem to apply equally well, circle the choice that best represents how you are most of the time during the past month. Be sure to read all the statements carefully before making your choice. The statements refer to offline situations or actions unless otherwise specified.

0 = Not Applicable

1 = Rarely

2 = Occasionally

3 = Frequently

4 = Often

5 = Always

1. How often do you find that you stay online longer than you intended?

2. How often do you neglect household chores to spend more time online?

3. How often do you prefer the excitement of the Internet to intimacy with your partner?
4. How often do you form new relationships with fellow online users?
5. How often do others in your life complain to you about the amount of time you spend online?
6. How often do your grades or school work suffer because of the amount of time you spend online?
7. How often do you check your email before something else that you need to do?
8. How often does your job performance or productivity suffer because of the Internet?
9. How often do you become defensive or secretive when anyone asks you what you do online?
10. How often do you block out disturbing thoughts about your life with soothing thoughts of the Internet?
11. How often do you find yourself anticipating when you will go online again?
12. How often do you fear that life without the Internet would be boring, empty and joyless?
13. How often do you snap, yell, or act annoyed if someone bothers you while you are online?
14. How often do you lose sleep due to being online?
15. How often do you feel preoccupied with the Internet when off-line, or fantasize about being online?
16. How often do you find yourself saying "just a few more minutes" when online?
17. How often do you try to cut down the amount of time you spend online and fail?
18. How often do you try to hide how long you've been online?

19. How often do you choose to spend more time online over going out with others?

20. How often do you feel depressed, moody, or nervous when you are off-line, which goes away once you are back online?

Appendix B

The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) 12

The next questions are about how you have been feeling over the last few weeks.

Q1. Have you recently been able to concentrate on whatever you're doing?

1. Better than usual
2. Same as usual
3. Less than usual
4. Much less than usual

Q2. Have you recently lost much sleep over worry?

1. Not at all
2. No more than usual
3. Rather more than usual
4. Much more than usual

Q3. Have you recently felt that you were playing a useful part in things?

1. More so than usual
2. Same as usual
3. Less so than usual
4. Much less than usual

Q4. Have you recently felt capable of making decisions about things?

1. More so than usual
2. Same as usual
3. Less so than usual
4. Much less capable

Q5. Have you recently felt constantly under strain?

1. Not at all
2. No more than usual
3. Rather more than usual
4. Much more than usual

Q6. Have you recently felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?

1. Not at all
2. No more than usual
3. Rather more than usual
4. Much more than usual

Q7. Have you recently been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities?

1. More so than usual
2. Same as usual
3. Less so than usual
4. Much less than usual

Q8. Have you recently been able to face up to problems?

1. More so than usual
2. Same as usual
3. Less able than usual
4. Much less able

Q9. Have you recently been feeling unhappy or depressed?

1. Not at all
2. No more than usual
3. Rather more than usual
4. Much more than usual

Q10. Have you recently been losing confidence in yourself?

1. Not at all
2. No more than usual
3. Rather more than usual
4. Much more than usual

Q11. Have you recently been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?

1. Not at all
2. No more than usual
3. Rather more than usual
4. Much more than usual

Q12. Have you recently been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered?

1. More so than usual
2. About the same as usual
3. Less so than usual
4. Much less than usual