THE EFFECT OF INTERNET ADDICTION ON PERSONALITY AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Anu[1] and Prof. (Dr.) Babita Singh[2]
[1]Research Scholar , Faculty of Education, Motherhood University, Roorkee, U.K.
[2]Supervisor, Dean. (Faculty of Education), Motherhood University, Roorkee, U.K.

ABSTRACT:

Internet addiction has become a widespread phenomenon, especially among adolescents, due to increased access to digital technology. This study investigates the impact of internet addiction on the personality traits of senior secondary school students. Using quantitative methods, the study explores how various levels of internet use influence characteristics like emotional stability, extroversion, and conscientiousness. The findings aim to contribute to understanding the relationship between online behaviour and adolescent development.

KEYWORDS: *Internet Addiction, Personality, Senior Secondary School, Emotional & Social.*

INTRODUCTION:

The internet has become an integral part of everyday life, transforming how individuals interact, learn, and socialize. Adolescents, particularly senior secondary school students, spend a significant amount of their time online for educational purposes, entertainment, and social interaction. However, excessive internet use has given rise to concerns about internet addiction, a behavioural problem where users struggle to control their online activity.

Internet addiction can significantly affect adolescents' mental, emotional, and social well-being. With personality development being crucial during adolescence, it is important to explore how internet addiction influences various personality traits. Personality traits, such as emotional stability, openness, extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, shape how individuals perceive and respond to their environment. This study aims to investigate the relationship between internet addiction and personality traits among senior secondary school students.

LITERATURE REVIEW
1. Understanding Internet Addiction

Internet addiction, often referred to as problematic internet use or compulsive internet use, is characterized by excessive or poorly controlled preoccupations, urges, or behaviours regarding internet use that lead to impairment or distress. According to **Young (1998),** internet addiction is comparable to other forms of addiction, such as gambling, where the individual experiences withdrawal symptoms, tolerance, and a preoccupation with the activity. Internet addiction is often divided into subtypes, including gaming, social media, and information-seeking behaviours.

Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to internet addiction due to their developmental stage, which includes a search for identity, the desire for social validation, and peer influence. Internet

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addiction can have negative consequences on academic performance, physical health, and interpersonal relationships **(Kuss et al., 2014)**.

2. Personality Traits and Adolescence

Personality traits are relatively stable characteristics that influence how individuals think, feel, and behave. The Five-Factor Model (FFM) is a widely used framework for understanding personality and includes five broad dimensions: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. These traits play a critical role in shaping adolescent behaviour and interactions.

Research indicates that personality traits can influence an individual's susceptibility to internet addiction. For example, individuals high in neuroticism may use the internet as a way to cope with anxiety and stress, making them more prone to addictive behaviours **(Andreassen et al., 2013)**. On the other hand, individuals high in conscientiousness are likely to exhibit self-control and thus have a lower risk of developing internet addiction.

3. Relationship between Internet Addiction and Personality

Several studies have explored the association between internet addiction and personality traits. **Wang et al. (2011)** found that high levels of neuroticism and lower levels of conscientiousness were associated with increased internet addiction among adolescents. Extroverts may engage in excessive social media use as a way to connect with peers, while introverts may turn to the internet as a means of avoiding face-to-face interactions **(Correa et al., 2010)**.

In addition, adolescents with high levels of openness to experience may use the internet as a platform for exploration and seeking novel information. However, the relationship between personality traits and internet addiction is complex and may vary depending on the type of internet use (e.g., social networking, gaming). Therefore, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how internet addiction affects the personality traits of senior secondary school students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
1. Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey method. The purpose is to determine the relationship between internet addiction and personality traits among senior secondary school students. The survey method is chosen for its ability to collect data from a large sample size, making it possible to generalize the findings to the larger population.

2. Sample Selection

The target population for this study includes senior secondary school students aged 16-18 years. A total of 300 students from senior secondary schools of Ghaziabad were selected using a stratified random sampling technique. This method ensured representation across different grades (11th and 12th) and gender to provide a balanced view of the effect of internet addiction.

3. Instruments
The study utilized two standardized instruments for data collection:

- **Internet Addiction Test (IAT)**: Developed by Young (1998), the IAT is a 20-item scale that measures the degree of an individual's internet addiction. Responses are scored on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "1 = Rarely" to "5 = Always." Higher scores indicate a greater level of internet addiction.
- **Big Five Inventory (BFI)**: The BFI is a widely used 44-item scale that assesses the five personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale from "1 = Strongly Disagree" to "5 = Strongly Agree."

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4. Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed to the selected students. Participants were briefed on the study's objectives and assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Consent was obtained from the school authorities and the participants before the survey was conducted.

5. Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize the data. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to assess the relationship between internet addiction and each of the five personality traits. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which personality traits predict internet addiction among senior secondary school students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
1. Descriptive Statistics

The mean age of the participants was 17 years, with a balanced representation of males (52%) and females (48%). The average score on the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) indicated that approximately 30% of students were at risk of moderate to severe internet addiction, while the remaining had low levels of internet use.

2. Correlation between Internet Addiction and Personality Traits

Pearson's correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between internet addiction and certain personality traits. High levels of neuroticism were positively correlated with internet addiction ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that students who are emotionally unstable are more likely to develop addictive behaviours towards internet use. In contrast, conscientiousness was negatively correlated with internet addiction ($r = -0.39$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that students who are more disciplined and self-controlled tend to regulate their internet use effectively.

Extroversion showed a weaker positive correlation ($r = 0.20$, $p < 0.05$) with internet addiction, reflecting that extroverted students may use the internet more frequently for social interactions. Openness to experience had a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.30$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that students who are curious and open to new experiences may engage more with online content. However, agreeableness did not show a significant correlation with internet addiction ($r = -0.05$, $p > 0.05$).

3. Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis indicated that neuroticism and conscientiousness were the most significant predictors of internet addiction among the sample. Together, these two traits accounted for 38% of the variance in internet addiction scores. This finding aligns with previous studies, emphasizing the role of emotional stability and self-control in managing internet use.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the impact of internet addiction on the personality traits of senior secondary school students. The findings suggest that students who exhibit high levels of neuroticism are more prone to internet addiction, potentially using the internet as a coping mechanism. Conversely, students with higher levels of conscientiousness tend to exercise greater control over their online activities. The results underline the need for educational programs that promote healthy internet use among adolescents. Schools and parents should work together to monitor online behaviour and encourage balanced internet use, fostering emotional stability and self-regulation skills in students. Future research could explore the long-term impact of internet addiction on personality development, as well as potential interventions to reduce the risk of addiction.

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