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**Abstract**

The present study is an attempt to assess internet addiction and depression among university students. The sample in the study consisted of one hundred thirty university students out of which 70 were males and 60 were females who were selected on the purposive basis from the main campus of Kashmir University. Young's Internet Addiction Scale (IAT), Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI-II 1996) and Demographic Data sheet were used to collect research data from informants. The obtained data were analysed by frequency method, Pearson correlation method and t-test. The results revealed that male university students experienced more internet addiction and depression as compared to the female university students and a significant positive correlation was found between internet addiction and depression.

**Keywords:** Depression; Internet Addiction; University Students.

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**Introduction**

The internet is a new tool that is evolving into an essential part of everyday life all over the world [17] and its use increases especially among young people. In spite of the widely perceived merits of this tool, psychologists and educators have been aware of the negative impacts of its use, especially the over or misuse and the related physical and psychological problems [8]. One of the most common of these problems is internet addiction [16, 20]. Internet addiction is generally defined as an uncontrollable desire for excessive use of the internet, devaluation of time spent without connecting to the internet, intense nervousness and aggression in the case of deprivation and progressive deterioration of social and family life. American Psychiatric Association has defined the internet addiction as a pattern for using the internet which can cause [4] dysfunction and unpleasant internal reactions during a period of two months, and has provided seven criteria for its diagnosis (at least three criteria during two Months): 1-Tolerance, 2-Withdrawal symptoms, 3-The duration which people

use the Internet is more than the time they initially planned to, 4-Constant desire to control the behavior, 5-to spend considerable time for matters related to the Internet, 6-Reduction of social, occupational and recreational activities by using the Internet, 7-Continued use despite the knowledge of negative effects. This problem is a raising phenomenon affecting people with varying frequency around the world and has produced negative impacts on the academic, relationship, financial, and occupational aspects of many lives. Research on internet addiction demonstrated that the greater use of the internet is associated with some social and psychological variables such as, declines in the size of social circle, depression, loneliness lower self-esteem and life, sensation seeking [13], poor mental health [22] and low family function [1]. The authors report that there are a number of emotional factors which may be related to college students' internet addiction [10]. Among these factors the most remarkable are depression, anxiety, and stress.

**Depression and Internet Addiction**

There is a similar incidence of depression among individuals addicted to the internet and of internet addiction among depressive patients [25]. Depression manifests as deep sorrow or grief, insomnia, loss of appetite, unpleasant mood, hopelessness, irritability, self-dislike, and suicidal tendencies [5]. Low self-esteem, low motivation, fear of rejection and the need for confirmation from others, all of which are commonly observed in depressive people, may result in frequent use of the internet, and the interactive functions of the internet may lead to internet addiction in individuals with these characteristics [23]. Research on internet addiction and depression demonstrated that the overuse of the internet, which results in a disruption of the normal lives of an individual and the people around him, was associated with an increase in the frequency of depression [14, 18]. Because, excessive internet use can displace valuable time that people spend with family and friends, which leads to smaller social circles and higher levels of loneli-

ness and stress [18]. Moreover, Davis (2001) proposed depression as the distal necessary cause of pathological Internet use (PIU). Most subsequent researches confirmed that PIU was positively associated with depression [15, 24, 12, 21]. A big scale investigation among high students population found that Internet addiction was related to symptoms of ADHD and depressive disorders. However, it is possible that they may accelerate time online and progress to addiction, if the depression was not well treated [25]. However, a study in Chinese Tai Wan found that depressive tendency was negatively associated with PIU. Students with depression tendency would escape from any relationship and communication including online social interaction, which decrease the possibility to become PIU. As there are inconsistent findings in foreign context, the similar research should be encouraged and is necessary to carry out in Indian context, which could not only add more academic evidence in this field, but also enrich the academic research in India. This study took a group of post-graduate students in Kashmir University to examine their Internet use status and depression, as well as the relationship of internet addiction and Depression. Following are the objectives of the study:

- [1]. To study internet addiction and depression among university students.
- [2]. To study the relationship between internet addiction and depression among university students.
- [3]. To study the difference in internet addiction among university students with respect to their gender and residence.
- [4]. To study the difference in depression among university students with respect to their gender and residence.

### Hypotheses of the Study

On the basis of above mentioned objectives, following hypotheses were formulated.

**Ho1.** There is not a significant correlation between internet addiction and depression among university students.

**Ho2.** There is no significant difference in internet addiction among university students with respect to their gender.

**Ho3.** There is no significant difference in depression among university students with respect to their gender.

### Methodology

#### Participants

The study is based on the sample of 130 university students enrolled in various post-graduate programs at the Kashmir University, Kashmir. Out of 130 university students 70 were males and 60 were females.

#### Tools used

To collect the desired data for the present study, two standardised psychological tests were used.

- [1]. Young Internet Addiction Scale (IAT)
- [2]. Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI-II 1996)

**Young's Internet Addiction Scale (IAT):** Young's questionnaire which contains 20 questions is one the most popular ques-

tionnaire in the majority of researches [7]. The 1998 version of the above mentioned questionnaire was implemented in this study. Yoo & colleagues (2004) found Chronbach Alfa coefficient to be greater than 0.9 as did Whang and colleagues. Dargahi (2006) found the coefficient of stability of this questionnaire to be 0.88 [7]. The 20 questions of this questionnaire are scored on a 5-point scale, (ranging from 1 to 5). The marking range for this test is from 0 to 100, where the higher the mark the greater dependence on the internet.

**Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI-II, 1996):** Beck's Depression Inventory a widely used, validated instrument for measuring depression [2]. This is a self-rated scale, in which individuals rate their own symptoms of depression. It provides a fast, efficient way to assess depression in either a clinical or non-clinical environment. The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) takes just 5-10 minutes to complete. The test contains 21 items, most of which assess depressive symptoms on a Likert scale of 0-3. Each item is a list of four statements arranged in increasing severity about a particular symptom of depression. BDI-II total scores have been correlated with scores on other psychological tests. Clinical interpretation of scores is accomplished through criterion-referenced procedures utilizing the following interpretive ranges: 0-13 - minimal depression; 14-28 - mild depression; and 29-63 - severe depression. Higher total scores indicate more severe depressive symptoms.

#### Procedure

These two measures were in printed form and were administered on each selected subject by assuring them that information provided by them will be kept strictly confidential. Having obtained the data from the subjects, the data were tabulated for giving statistical treatment for obtaining the results.

#### Statistical Analysis

Keeping in view the nature of research problem and to meet the objectives of the study the data collected was analyzed by using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS16.0). Statistical techniques used for analyzing data were: frequencies, percentages, correlation and t-test. The statistical significance value was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

### Results and Interpretation

**Table 1. Showing Frequency and Percentage of Sample Group With Respect to Internet Addiction.**

Level	Range	F	%
Mild	0-49	54	41.53
Moderate	50-79	37	28.47
Severe	80-100	39	30
Total		130	100

Table 1 reveals that out of 130 university students 41.53% were found mild on internet addiction, where as 28.47% were found moderate and 30% were found severe on internet addiction.

**Table 2. Showing Frequency and Percentage of Sample Group With Respect to Internet Addiction.**

Level	Range	F	%
Mild	0-13	55	42.31
Moderate	14-28	50	38.46
Severe	29-63	25	19.23
Total		130	100

Table 2 reveals that out of 100 university students 42.31% were found low on depression, where as 38.46% were found moderate and 19.23% were found severe on depression.

**Table 3. Showing Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient(r) Between Internet Addiction and Depression of the Sample Group.**

Variables Self-regulation	
Internet Addiction	Depression
$r = .809^* (p < 0.001)$	

\*.P<0.05 Level of significance

Table 3 reveals that there is a significant positive correlation ( $r=.809^*$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between internet addiction and depression among university students, indicating “*more the internet addiction, more is the depression and less the internet addiction, less is the depression.*” Thus our null hypothesis  $H_{01}$  which states that, “*There is not a significant correlation between internet addiction and depression among university students.*” Stands rejected.

**Table 4. Showing the Comparison of Mean Scores of Internet Addiction and Depression among University Students with respect to their Gender.**

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	df	t-value
Internet Addiction	Male	70	70.31	19.28	128	<b>7.39*</b>
	Female	60	44.53	20.42		
Depression	Male	70	26.61	14.83	128	<b>4.75*</b>
	Female	60	14.41	14.27		

\* $p < 0.05$  level of significance

The Table 4 reveals that there is a significant difference in internet addiction and depression between male and female university students ( $t = 7.39$  &  $t = 4.75$ ). The results show that males have more internet addiction and depression as compared to their counterparts. Thus, our null hypotheses  $H_{02}$  which states that, “*There is no significant difference in internet addiction among university students with respect to their gender*” and  $H_{03}$  which states that, “*There is no significant difference in depression among university students with respect to their gender*”, stand rejected.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to study internet addiction and depression among university students and the relation of internet addiction with psychological distress. The comparison among university students on internet addiction and psychological distress with respect to their gender has also been examined. The results of the present study revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between internet addiction and depression among

university students.

The earlier research on relationship between internet addiction and depression has mixed results. Several studies are inconsistent with our findings. For example Yen, Ko, Yen, Wu, & Yang, 2007 conducted a study in Chinese Tai Wan and found that depressive tendency was negatively associated with PIU. Students with depression tendency would escape from any relationship and communication including online social interaction, which decrease the possibility to become internet addicted. On the other hand some researchers for example, Kraut et al., 2002; McKenna & Bargh, 2000; and Nie, Hillygus, & Erbring, 2002 found that the overuse of the internet, which results in a disruption of the normal lives of an individual and the people around him, was associated with an increase in the frequency of depression. Moreover, several researchers have found statistically meaningful correlation between internet usage and psychological symptoms as a somatization, obsessive-compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, psychoticism (Koc, 2011). Similarly Kraut et al., (1998) found that greater internet use is associated with reduced psychological Well-being, reduced social support, increased loneliness and depression. Similarly Lee, Oh, Cho, Hong, & Moon, (2001) in their study found that the internet addicts had low self-esteem and depression and were shy and reclusive than healthy people. The findings of this study showed that users addicted to Internet have higher depression than ordinary users. In various studies conducted by [12, 9, 11, 3] it was indicated that prevalence of depression is higher in Internet addicted users than the ordinary users. The exact cause of the relationship between depression and Internet addiction is not known. Perhaps depression, as a mental impairment, predisposes the individual to suffer from the Internet addiction. Some people use Internet in order to reduce their depression so that Internet may provide an alternative to a life without joy for depressed ones. Similarly, depression may occur as a result of Internet addiction, it means that people who are addicted to the Internet, experience the negative consequences such as depression, and this subject requires further studies. Thus, the Internet addiction can be treated better by considering the underlying causes and its consequences such as depression, isolation, low self-esteem, and anxiety; and according to the cognitive theory of Internet addiction, we can prevent this problem.

The results of the study further reveal that there is a significant difference among University students on internet addiction and depression with respect to their gender. The mean score of male students was found high on both internet addiction and depression as compared to the female students. These results are in line with the results of studies conducted by Young, 2004; Chien, & Cheng 2008 and Young, & Rodgers, 1998 who indicated that there is the gender gap in addicting to Internet. Since, the girls are more successful in friendship relationships in social field than boys, perhaps for this reason boys have more free time for using the Internet and have more emotional lacks; in addition, the sexual Websites, which have instinctively more attraction for boys than girls, are the other reason why boys use the Internet more than girls. Similarly, Akman and Mishra (2010) in their study found that male students are more likely to become addicted to internet than are females and pathological internet users are likely to be males. That might be due to the traditional stereotypes of gender roles holding that women are not as technologically oriented as men and computer has been considered stereotypically masculine [19] and females may cultivate a fairly negative attitude towards it and

their mild disinterest [6].

As compared to female students male students were found high on depression. The earlier research on depression among university has mixed results. For example Blazer, Kessler, McGonagle, Swartz, 1994; and Regier, Farmer, Rae, Myers, Kramer, Robins 1993 found that prevalence of depression, the life time risk of depression and anxiety are higher in woman than in their male counterparts. On the other hand some researchers for example, Supe (1998) and Guthrie Black, Shaw, Hamilton, Creed, & Tomenson (1995) found that there was no significant difference in depression between male and female university students.

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