

Sensation Seeking and Internet Addiction among College Students- users and non-users of Dating applications/sites

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Abstract

Internet is a boon and a bane, It facilitates mass and personal communications and has enhanced global competitiveness, However its excessive, uncontrolled, and problematic use results in a condition called Internet Addiction, One personality trait consistently found to determine internet addiction is sensation seeking which is also found to be associated with the practices of online dating. Within this backdrop, this study aims to examine the influence of levels of sensation seeking on internet addiction among college students-users and non-users of online dating apps. Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS-V) and Internet addiction test was administered on 400 (200 male and 200 female) college students. The results revealed that levels of sensation seeking has a significant influence on internet addiction and there is a significant interaction effect between levels of sensation seeking and online dating on internet addiction among males and females, However no significant influence of online dating was found on internet addiction.

Keywords: Internet addiction, Sensation Seeking, Online dating, College students, users and non users.

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Introduction

Internet is a dynamic and pervasive tool that permeates all sectors of society, along with all other individuals its impact is also felt on college students such as increased use of the Internet, changes in mood, an inability to control the amount of time spent on the Internet, withdrawal symptoms when not engaged, a diminishing social life, and academic consequences. (Brenner, 1996; Lin and Tsai, 2002).

Kandell (1998) found college students as a group more problematic internet users than any other groups, as most university students move away from home for academic purposes due to which they have more freedom in exploring the internet, their personal needs may lead them to explore the enormous social network provided by the Internet. The Internet and the practices associated with it are addictive in nature, many researchers have found the significance of personality traits in determining internet addiction, and one such trait is sensation seeking, The concept of sensation seeking originated in the work of Marvin Zuckerman, sensation seeking trait has been defined as "The need for varied, novel, and complex sensations and experiences and the willingness to take physical and social risks for the sake of such experience" (Zuckerman, 1979). Surfing the

Internet and many other online activities are considered equivalent to global high tech adventure and therefore could be considered a form of sensation seeking. (Lin and Tsai, 2002) Sensation seeking traits have also been found to be involved in making dating choices. Sautter et al. (2010) defined online dating as "the use of websites that provide a database of potential partners typically in close geographical proximity that one can browse and contact" According to the Pew Research Center (2016) 15 percent of the whole U.S. adult population had used an online dating site as of 2015. Remarkably, usage among people in their late teens and early twenties jumped threefold, and that among people in their late fifties and early sixties doubled between 2013 and 2015.

Chakraborty (2019) studied the components impacting the intention to use dating applications in India and found out that online dating apps have a potential market throughout the world and India is also trying to capture this particular market through various apps like Tinder, Woo, TrulyMadly and so on. A study of Internet-based romantic relationship formation revealed that 23.7% of graduate students and 12.8% of undergraduate students reported meeting someone in person whom they had first met on the Internet, and 61.8% of

graduate students and 42.1% of undergraduates reported that they knew someone who began or developed a committed relationship online (Donn & Sherman, 2002). Individuals who were found to be addicted to the internet were also found to enjoy friendships and relationships that they established through the internet that is called "online friendships" or "online dating". (Kim, Kown & Lee, 2009). People who are oriented towards having more online friends, online communications are at an increased risk for internet addiction (Smahil et al.,2012).

High sensation seekers anticipate less risk in finding partners online as compared to low sensation seekers. (Henderson et al., 2005). High sensation-seekers as compared to low sensation seekers are likely to seek novel and sensational experiences, and sensation-seeking is predictive of young people's risk taking behaviour, and online interaction provide emerging adults an opportunity to meet their novel, dramatic and unconventional needs due to which they end up spending more time online searching for potential partners and creating a dependency on the internet (Zimmerman et al, 2007). The Internet allows adult and teen men and women more freedom to deviate from typically constraining gender roles that are often automatically activated in face-to-face interactions (Cooper & Sportolari, 1997). Both men and women use the internet for dating purposes, both genders use online dating to seek thrill and varied experiences (Lawson & Leck, 2006). Sensation seeking, Internet addiction and online dating are highly researched areas in western context, whereas in the Indian context a very limited amount of research has been done. These factors are of great importance in Indian context as well as our society is rapidly changing with the advancement of technology

Materials and Methods

Design. The current study utilized a quantitative non-experimental 3x2 factorial Research design. This study attempts to understand the influence of levels of sensation seeking on internet addiction among college students who are users and non users of dating sites/apps.

Participants. The Sample constituted of 400 college students aged between 18-25 years residing in different parts of India pursuing either graduate or post-graduate studies, 200 females (100 users of dating apps, 100 non users) and 200 males (100 users of online dating apps and 100 non-user) . The sample was recruited using convenience and snowball sampling.

Measurement tools. Standardized questionnaires were used in this study which comprised of three sections. In the first section, demographical and personal information related to online dating status of the participants were obtained. The second section comprised of a standardized Sensation seeking scale (SSS V) by Marvin Zuckerman (1978) a 40 item forced choice scale, The SSS-V can be scored as a general measure of sensation-seeking, but can also be split into four 10-item factors: (1) Thrill and Adventure Seeking (2) Experience Seeking (3) Disinhibition and (4) Boredom Susceptibility. The third section included a standardized scale of internet addiction test constructed by Kimberly Young (1998) It is composed of 20 elements its total score ranges, with the higher the score representing the higher level of severity of Internet compulsivity and addiction

Procedure. The data was collected through google forms, and individual administrations. An informed consent form was placed at the beginning of the online forms, and after the participants read and approved this form, the data collection forms were made accessible to them. Before administering the standardized scales on the participants, data about the participant's demographics and online dating status was collected through a socio-demographic form after that SSS form V and IAT questionnaire were administered on the participants to measure the level of sensation seeking and internet addiciton. The data was analysed using Descriptive statistics and Two-way analysis of variance between groups measure. It is used to determine if there is any statistically significant difference between the means of two or more independent or unrelated groups.

Results

Table 1: Mean, SD, Skewness and Kurtosis of the female participants Sensation seeking and Internet addiction scores.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Total_score_sensation seeking	200	21.12	5.687	-.047	.172	-.240	.342
Internet_addiction_score	200	35.23	12.770	.477	.172	.154	.342
Valid N (listwise)	200						

Table 1 presents the Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis of the female participants. For sensation seeking (M=21.12, SD=5.687) and internet addiction (M= 35.23, SD= 12.770)

Table 2: Mean, SD, Skewness and Kurtosis of the male participants Sensation seeking and Internet addiction scores.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Total_score_sensation seeking	200	23.49	5.661	-.135	.220	.210	.437
Internet_addiction_score	200	45.13	20.523	.163	.220	-.900	.437
Valid N (listwise)	200						

Table 2 presents the Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis of the male participants. For sensation seeking (M=23.49, SD=5.661) and internet addiction (M= 45.13, SD= 20.523)

Table 3 : Two way ANOVA tests of between subject effects for females

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Sensation seeking	1912.407	2	956.203	9.009	.001
online_dating_status	276.005	1	276.005	2.600	.108
online_dating_status * sensation_seeking	417.490	1	417.490	3.933	.049
Error	20697.259	195	106.140		
Total	253173.000	200			
Corrected Total	25697.875	199			

Table 3 shows the results of two way ANOVA for females, For sensation seeking, $F=9.009$, $p<.05$, this indicates that there is a significant influence of levels sensation seeking on the internet addiction of female college students. For online dating, $F=2.600$ and, $p>.05$ this indicates that there is no significant influence of online dating on Internet addiction. The results also revealed an interaction effect $F= 3.933$, $p<0.05$ between online dating and levels of sensation seeking on internet addiction.

Table 4 : Two way ANOVA tests of between subject effects for males

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Sensation Seeking	1685.311	2	842.655	3.545	.031
online_dating_status	510.547	1	510.547	2.148	.144
online_dating_status * sensation_seeking	5869.363	1	5869.363	24.689	.000
Error	46357.611	195	237.731		
Total	322940.000	200			
Corrected Total	64171.820	199			

Table 4 shows the results of two way ANOVA for males, $F=3.545$, $p<.05$, this indicates that there is a significant influence of levels sensation seeking on internet addiction, For online dating, the $F=2.148$, $p>.05$ indicating that there is no significant influence of online dating on Internet addiction. The results also revealed an interaction effect $F=24.689$, $p<.05$, between online dating and levels of sensation seeking on internet addiction

Post Hoc Analysis. In the interest of exploring the interaction effect, for both males and females, it was found that there is a significant difference ($p < .05$) between medium and low sensation seekers and, there is also a significant difference ($p < .05$) between high and low sensation seekers with respect to internet addiction.

Discussion

The present study was conducted in order to assess the influence of levels of sensation seeking on internet addiction among college students-users and non-users of online dating apps. Table 3 and 4 shows the results of Two way ANOVA between groups for both male and female college students, It was found that levels of sensation seeking has a significant influence on Internet addiction, There is also an interaction effect between levels of sensation seeking and online dating on internet addiction, however no significant influence of online dating was found on internet addiction among males and females.

Descriptive data for both males and females represented in table 1 and 2 indicates that all participants have a 'medium' level of sensation seeking and a 'mild' level of internet addiction. It was observed that male participants scored slightly higher on sensation seeking as compared to female participants.

Two ANOVA results for female participants presented in table 3 suggests that levels of sensation seeking has a significant influence on internet addiction among female college students supporting the 1st hypothesis, This finding can be explained by a study conducted by Rahmani and Lavasani (2011) which revealed a positive significant relationship between internet dependency with overall sensation seeking and subscales of disinhibition and boredom susceptibility, However the results does not support the 2nd hypothesis which suggests that online dating has a significant influence on internet addiction, no significant influence of online dating was found on internet addiction among female college students, Many researches have highlighted the importance of factors like self-esteem, self disclosure, and trust mediating online dating and internet addiction. A research study conducted by Kim, Kwon, and Lee. (2009) reveals that there is an impact of Self-Esteem, Involvement, and Sociability on the Use

of Internet Dating Services. Kang & Hoffman (2011) found out that trust and the total number of tasks that a person performs on the Internet were significant predictors of the likelihood of online dating usage.

The 3rd hypotheses was supported as there is a significant interaction effect between levels of sensation seeking and online dating on internet addiction among female college students. The results could be explained under the limelight of the study conducted by Chan (2017) which revealed sensation-seeking and smartphone use had a direct relationship with the intent of using dating applications. Lin and Tsai, (2002) in their study revealed Making friends through the Internet has become a popular activity among people, potentially leading to its excessive internet use and internet dependents scored significantly higher on overall sensation seeking and disinhibition than internet non-dependents. Use and gratification theory by Blumer and Katz (1974) explains the internet has something suitable for everyone, be it information-seeking, inter-personal communication, entertainment, or escapism.

Table 4 presents Two way ANOVA results for male college students, and it was found that there is a significant influence of levels of sensation seeking on internet addiction among male college students supporting the 4th hypotheses, This finding is supported by Lavin and colleagues (2000) study, It was found that Internet addiction is positively correlated with sensation seeking. Internet dependents scored significantly higher than non-dependents in terms of overall sensation seeking, thrill, and adventure-seeking, as well as experience seeking that contradicted original expectations. Lavin and colleagues (2000) then further explained their finding by suggesting that sensation seeking of Internet dependents might not be physical, as measured by the Zuckerman scale, but rather mental or virtual.

The 5th hypotheses suggesting that there is a significant influence of online dating on internet addiction is not supported as no significant influence of online dating was found on internet addiction of male college students. Chakraborty (2019) demonstrated that there are many factors that are mediating online dating and Internet

addiction, It was found that playfulness is the most impactful factor when compared to others. The study has also found that trust does not have any impact on utilizing dating apps. The study also implies that consumers mainly enjoy dating apps, and they have very little trustworthiness towards these apps. In the Indian culture, the act of online dating varies a bit from other countries, It has also been observed that the online dating app users are mostly male in India 76 percent (Singh, 2018).

The 6th hypotheses was supported as there is a significant interaction effect between levels of sensation seeking and online dating on internet addiction among male students. Brym and colleagues (2001) found out online dating has many advantages as it gives its user's control over many activities like self-presentation, self-disclosure, anonymity, these kinds of pleasures arise from sensation seeking components like seeking novel and varied experiences which have addictive properties that lead users to spend more time on the Internet (Brym & Lenton, 2001; Fiore & Donath, 2004). Surfing the Internet and online dating activities are considered equivalent to global high tech adventure and therefore could be considered a form of sensation seeking and are addictive in nature. (Lin and Tsai, 2002). Despite the challenges and unsafe nature of some dating sites or applications, some individual still takes part in the online dating activity, such individuals are seen to have higher sensation seeking tendencies. High sensation seekers tend to gauge risk as lower than do low sensation seekers, even for activities that they have never tried (Zuckerman, 1994). Moreover, high sensation seekers anticipate feeling less anxiety in risky situations than do low sensation seekers (Hovarth & Zuckerman, 1993).

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