
A Study on Internet Addiction and Moral Foundation among Young Adults

Ms. Sreya Mukherjee^{1*}, Mrs. Rooprekha Baksi²

^{1*}Student, M.A Applied psychology, Amity University, Kolkata

²Assistant Professor, Psychology department, Amity University, Kolkata

Corresponding Email: ^{1*}mukherjeesreya007@gmail.com

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Abstract: *The purpose of the study is to understand the role of internet in the present scenario with respect to moral foundation among young adults. Objectives for the present study is to find out the characteristics of the sample in terms of moral foundation with respect to internet addiction. Sample for the present study is considered to be N =100, where 69 are students and 31 are fresher in profession. Purposive sampling is used in order to conduct the research. Online survey is used to collect the data and conduct a quantitative analysis. Finding for the present study is that though the percentage of people involved in internet addiction is more than normal level of internet usage but there is no or less variation among the participants with respect to moral foundation. Implications is the most important thing in every research. In the present study it can be seen that our youth is heading towards digitalized world. Internet addiction creates no variation in morality.*

Key word: *Internet addiction, moral foundation, young adults.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Problematic Internet use or internet addiction is characterized by excessive or poorly controlled preoccupation, urges, or behavior regarding internet use that leads to impairment or distress. In the past few years the use of internet have increased dramatically with one of its main advantage to get all information at everyone's fingertip. The pros have not come alone. Researchers have found several comorbidities among people who are indulged with internet addiction (Wei, 2012). The addiction of internet can be disorder, was first stated by (Young, 1998) and Griffiths afterwards they have conducted various researches on this field. Internet addiction disorder or IAD is considered as a problematic disorder or it may be seen as a repeated compulsion in order to stop the pain of boredom or to escape oneself to face the real problem in one's life. IAD has not been recognized as a disorder neither by ICD-11 nor by DSM-5. In a way, ICD-11 diagnosis consider gaming disorder to be a pertinent disorder. While there is no official category for diagnosing internet addiction but one of the early empirical



study carried out by (Young, 1998) have identified five categories of internet addiction. There are cybersex addiction which is one of the most pleasure seeking internet addiction. Which might consist of sites that display adult scenes, kinds of pornography, website contains adult features etc. An obsession with any one of these services can be harmful and can fully distort the individual's ability to form a real-life sexual relationship. Net compulsion which is one of the interesting activities which includes gambling, stocking, online auction and online shopping. Such compulsive behavior to stop the obsessive arousal can disturb one's financial stability and can ruin the personal-professional balance. Cyber (online) relationship addiction- With the modern era, this is the new trend of developing and maintaining a relationship through the help of various application. This might increase the gap between ideal relationship and thereal relationship. Compulsive information seeking Internet in today's world have provided allinformation in everyone's fingertip. Which have reduce the work force to search for more manual information. This have created problem for obsessed people with information to gather more and more information rather than organizing the old information. Computer or gaming addiction people growing with nuclear family have more access to this solitary games to deal with their loneliness. This have increased the problem of selfishness and understanding the magic of playing together. (Young, 2001) have approached five phases of internet addiction process, they are discovery, experimentation, escalation, compulsion and hopelessness. No addiction is good so as internet addiction. Like all other addiction, internet addiction creates major impact. It can be broadly categories under physical impact, emotional impact and societal impact. Under physical changes, people with internet addiction experience backaches,loss of vision, to a extend hearing problem, weight gain/loss etc. Under emotional changes, people with internet addiction experience insecurity, anxiety, social pressure, detachment fromfamily members or near ones. Under social changes, people with internet addiction experiencelack of true friends, lack of maturity, have lower morality. Though addiction is bad for any individual but internet helps to improve our skills and growing efficiency on that skill one such research explains that but it also says work, psychological, behavioural and interpersonal problems are more among young adult male than female (Alam, Ahmed, Hashim & Wel, 2014).

Morality refers to a set of standards that the individual determines to be right or acceptable. It is very much subjective in nature on the other hand ethics refers to a set of standards that the society determines to be right or acceptable. It is objective and written code of conducts. So, the difference between ethics and morality is that while morals define our own character, ethics dictates the inner working of a social system (Gert, 2008). Ethics are based on moral codes adopted by members of a given group (Gert, 2008). Humans cannot grow with empty moral and ethics but they grow within a particular moral tradition (Reiss, 1999).

Many researches have been conducted on change in morality across the age. Adults and preschool children both reacted similarly towards a perpetrator but children where more into idea of giving punishment even if it has happened through accidentally (Decety, 2011). According to Piaget (1932) the peck of moral development can achieved during mid-teens in its formal operation stage. This concept was tested in a research by taking three age groups – teens, middle adulthood and old age. Where the result showed old aged people responded in a more high level approach than middle hood, who in turn responded better than teenagers'

(McDonald & Hamilton, 1996). Morality have also changed drastically over the years (1900-2000). The research have showed that their was a drastic decrease in morality of all forms since 1900 but after 1980 the morality of pure and harm got an even upward slop (Haslam, Mc Grath & Wheeler 2019). Lawrence Kohlberg (1969, 1971a) have stated that his moral stages are culturally universal. A cross-cultural study was conducted on Kohlberg's moral stages where the study concluded that cross-cultural difference have nothing to do with relative moral worth or adequacy of moral judging (Edwards 1986).

Lawrence Kohlberg (1958) describes moral development as a process of discovering universal moral principles, and is based on a child's intellectual development (Mc Leod 2015). His theory of moral development is divided into three levels – pre-conventional , conventional and post conventional. Where each of the levels are split into two stages. It says that people moves through this stages in fixed order with respect to the cognitive development of an individual. Kohlberg accepted the principles of Piaget's moral development (1932) but he wanted to enhance his ideas and activities further (Mc Leod, 2013).

Piaget (1932) conceptualizes moral development as a constructivist process, whereby the interplay of action and thought builds moral concepts (Mc Leod, 2015). Piaget (1932) have identified two main types of moral thinking heteronomous morality and autonomous morality , which are used to understand the three main components of child's moral issues . They are Children's understanding of rules; Children's understanding of moral responsibility ; Children's understanding of justice. In Piaget's opinion, children after the age of 10 or 11 are able to significantly distinguish among subjective facts and internal responsibility.

The moral foundation theory is a theory of social psychology which is first proposed by psychologist Jonathan Haidt. It tends to explain the variations in human moral reasoning based on the innate modular foundation. The research have mentions it's four claims they are nativism; cultural learning; institutionism and pluralism (Graham et. al 2013). The theory proposes five moral foundation under the claim pluralism – care/harm; cheating/fairness; loyalty/betrayal; authority/subversion and liberty/oppression. Primarily the work focuses on cultural difference later it shifted to political ideology of liberals and conservatives over moral foundation.

The initial work of moral foundation is done in Brazil and Philadelphia in 1989. To see its cross cultural effect a research is conducted in Orissa, India in 1993. It stated that morality indeed vary with cultures but not much as other societal factors. The working class Brazil children as well as the children of collectivist country thought violation of rules and inflection of harm to be morally wrong. Adults of the Western society are more individualistic and creates a distinction between harm inflicting morality and violation of conventions. Another research suggested that women are high with care, fairness and purity principles of morality across 67 cultures (Mohammad et. al 2020). There are many studies moral foundation which are conducted on Indian population among them one of the research states that Indian respondents scored relatively higher than European respondents to group identity, authority, religious purity and dignity (Renner, 2015).



The purpose of the present study is to understand the role of internet in the present scenario. From every household there is a common complain coming for internet usage among the younger age group. As the current pandemic have elevated the use of internet. Thus it becomes a prime concert to know that current situation have elevated the use of internet more or not. It is being also said that addition creates change in moral personality. Moral foundation is something, the personality gets to form. Thus the present study wants to focus on both the variable internet addiction and moral foundation keeping in mind the current problems of the society.

The present study wants to focus on moral foundation among young adults, keeping in mind the new generation trend of internet addiction. The major implication of this study is to understand the change in morality among young adults with respect to the influence of internet. Which is a prime concern of this digital world. This study might help us to prevent the domination of technology over mankind by providing prior education to guide the use of technology. The main objectives of the study are: - Firstly to find out the percentage of the sample falling under different levels of internet addiction. Secondly to find out the percentage of the sample falling under different dimensions of moral foundation. Thirdly to find out the characteristics of the sample in terms of moral foundation with respect to the levels of internet addiction.

Literature Review

Age related changes in performance on Piagetian moral reasoning task was conducted by (McDonald & Hamilton, 1996). 110 subjects were taken of three age range adolescent, middle adulthood and old age. Result shows that Piaget have overestimated all levels of age. It has clearly showed that older people are better with moral reasoning than middle adulthood people. Who in turn are better than adolescence.

The impact of cultural norms values on the moral judgement among Malay and American adolescent have been conducted by (Jaafar et. al 2004) . They took samples of 134 adolescent of 15 to 18 years of age. The result of the first objectives is that there exist a significant difference in the stage of moral reasoning between adolescent of two places. The result of the second objectives is qualitative in nature and it shows that there is a difference in the content of the moral judgement between the two groups of adolescent. The result of the third objectives showed that the response of the Malay adolescent are of higher level moral reasoning than American adolescent. Further Malay females responded better than American females.

A systematic study to find out the association between online gaming, social phobia and depression was conducted in the year (Wei1, Chen1, Huang2 & Bai, 2012). The result came out as longer the gaming hours more severe the depression, social phobia and internet addiction symptoms. It is also said that females with addiction tended to have more severe somatic, pain and social phobia symptoms. This data was collected and interpreted by evaluating on 722 online gamers.

A study was conducted (Strohminger & Nichols, 2013) in order to understand the most



important parts of one's personal identity. 148 American subjects were taken for the same and they were involved in between subject design. The results of the research were in line with the prediction. Research suggests that change in moral attributes seems as major changed as a person than if they differ in terms of almost any other identity relevant traits: basic cognition, memory, personality, desire and preferences and even scene perception.

A study on positive and negative impact of internet addiction among young adults in Malaysia (Alam et. al 2014) was initiated. A cross sectional research study was examined on 200 young adults. The results showed that individuals with more internet use have experienced interpersonal problem, behavioral problems, psychological problems and problems related to daily life. Secondly the results also suggest that internet use have helped young adults to enhance their skills in a better way. Thirdly it also says that symptomatic problems are more to males than females in respect to indulgence in addiction but females are into more physical problems.

A study was conducted (Weinstein, Dorani, Elhadif, Bukovza & Yarmulnik 2015) on internet addiction is associated with social anxiety among young adults. Where 120 students were divided into 2 samples of 60 males and 60 females. We got a significant association between internet addition and social anxiety. Secondly there is no difference between males and females on internet addition level. Thirdly the study showed that there is no association between high anxiety level and a preference for social network.

A cross-cultural study (Renner, 2015) on globalization and Indian youth: a findings from moral foundation theory. 336 Indian youth and 163 European youth were taken respectively to make comparative study between Indian and European moral foundation to study the influence of globalization. It was a cross cultural study. The study had two objectives. The result of the first objectives shows that Indian respondents had scored significantly higher than European respondents pertaining to group identity, authority, religious purity and dignity. Thus moral foundation of Indian people are more in all aspects than European people. The result of the second objectives shows that Indian individual trends to solve moral problems in a more utilitarian approach, which mean they tend to check moral principles for the seek of societal wellbeing rather they ignore personal advantage.

A longitudinal research was conducted among adolescent and emerging adults on internet use and problematic internet use on 29 students(Anderson, Steen & Stavropoulos 2017).The result suggest the effects of individual factors are more researched and demonstrated significant relationship with adolescent and emerging adults of problematic internet use. According to them more research needs to be done on activity related factors.

Every research has some gaps, which leads a path for a new research to grow and have its implication for the society. The literature reviews suggest that the present generation is suffering from internet addiction which is creating many difficulties for the youth to manage their day to day life hassles. It is also said that the moral foundation these days have changed from the previous generations. So, the present research is trying to fill up the gap and understand both the variables in a more interrelated and realistic manner.

2. METHODOLOGY

Description Of The Scale – The internet addiction test (IAT; Young, 1998) it consist of 20- items Dr. Kimberly Young, a professor at St. Bonaventure University and director of the center for Internet Addiction Recovery , developed the IAT to assess symptoms of Internet addiction and compulsivity in a variety of test settings . The 20 - item questionnaire measures characteristics and behaviors associated with compulsive use of the internet that include compulsivity , escapism , and dependency . Each of the questions present in the questionnaire are marked on a Likert five point scale continuum which has a range from 0 to 5 where, 0 = less extreme behavior and 5= most extreme behavior. The scoring is same for all the items. The Moral Foundations Questionnaire (full version, July 2008) by Jesse Graham, Jonathan Haidt, and Brian Nosek is an 32 item scale which studies why morality varies so much across cultures yet still shows so many similarities and recurrent themes.

Characteristics Of The Sample - Purposive Sampling was used while conducting this research . It is a kind of non probability sampling, where the investigator beliefs that sample being handpicked is the actual representative of the population. Purposive Sampling has some advantages :- a.) It does not involve any random selection process , it is somewhat less costly and more readily accessible to the investigator . b.) It is a very convenient method of sampling as compared to other methods of non – probability sampling. c.) Such sampling guarantees that those individuals will be included in the sample that are relevant to the research design. The investigator does not get such guarantee in any other methods of non-probability sampling . The sample for this present study consist of 100 participants which are divided into 69 students and 31 fresher in occupation.

Mode Of Data Collection – There are various ways of Data Collection. The present data has been collected via the mode of Online Survey Method due to Covid19, & Lockdown held nationwide. There are various kinds of advantages of online surveys. A.) They are faster , simpler & cheaper. b.) The entire data collection is entirely shortened as all data can be collected and processed in short span of time. c) They are less intrusive, as they lack social desirability effects.

Scoring Pattern - To find out the total score obtained by the candidate in IAT, the summation of all the ratings has to be done in order to understand that candidate's level of internet addiction. Each of the item in the questionnaire is rated in a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 5. The maximum score is 100 points and the minimum score is 0. The higher the score is, the higher is the severity of your problem. Total scores that range from 0 to 30 points are considered to reflect a normal level of Internet usage; scores of 31 to 49 indicate the presence of a mild level of Internet addiction; 50 to 79 reflect the presence of a moderate level; and scores of 80 to 100 indicate a severe dependence upon the Internet. To score the Moral Foundation Questionnaire, one can copy their answers according to the five dimensions of moral foundation. Finally summing all the numbers obtained from each of the dimension of moral foundation. The scores obtained from each of the items for there respective dimension is the total score for each of the dimensions. The box then shows us

score on each of 5 psychological “foundations” of morality. Scores run from 0- 30 for each foundation. Item no. 6 and 22 are used just to catch the individual who are faking their original response.

Statistics Used - The statistical tools used for this research are Measures Of Central Tendency i.e. – Mean , Standard Deviation & Students t-test , .Mean – It is the ‘average’ i.e. - it’s the addition of all the numbers and then dividing it by number of cases present . Standard Deviation – It is a measure of variance in which the values are dispersed. Students T-test – When the researcher wants to test the significance of difference between two means, t-test is used.

Reasons For Using Statistics - The reasons for using the above statistical tools are due to its merits / advantages which are as follows : Mean – i) Arithmetic Mean is Simple to Understand & easy to calculate. ii) It takes into account all the values in the series. It helps us to find the average score for the sample in respect to the appropriate scale chosen for the study . Standard Deviation – i) It is the measure which suites best for dispersion. ii) It is rigid in nature. SD guides us to understand the deviation of raw scores from mean. T-test – i) The results obtained from t-test are useful to find out whether the data is accurate or not and belongs to the entire population. ii) With the help of independent samples it is very easy to interpret the output. iii) Assuming that two populations are normally distributed and have the same variance in independent samples .It gives us the knowledge about mean difference between two groups from the sample.

Hypothesis – (Ho) there is no mean difference between students and fresher in occupation in terms of internet addiction.

3. RESULTS

The following research has obtained few results from 100 participants among the age group (18-30) (Erickson, 2002). In case of internet addiction, 35% of participants have normal level of internet usage. 43% of participants have the presence of mild level of internet addiction. 21% of participants have the presence of moderate level of internet addiction. 1% of participants have severe dependence on internet usage. The mean for internet addiction for the four respective levels are 21.14, 38.95, 59, and 91 respectively. In case of moral foundation, 100 participant’s moral foundation has been categorized under five dimension i.e. Harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, in-group/loyalty, authority/respect and purity/sanctity. Percentage of scores obtained by 100 participants in each of the category are 21.87% , 21.58% , 19.18%, 19.66% and 17.71% respectively. The mean for moral foundation in each of the category are 20.06, 19.79, 17.59, 18.03 and 16.24 respectively.

Sample of normal level of internet use have certain moral foundation like 20.54% in harm/care, 20.81% in fairness/reciprocity, 20.54% in in-group/ loyalty, 20.81% in authority/respect. 17.31% in purity/ sanctity. People with mild level of internet addiction in the following categories of moral foundation are 21.31%, 20.15%, 21.31%, 20.15% and 17.09% respectively. People with moderate level of internet addiction reacted in the following categories of moral foundation as 20.62%, 21.53%, 20.62%, 21.53% and 15.70% respectively.



People with Severe dependence on internet have reacted in the following categories as 23.17%, 14.63%, 23.17%, 14.63%, and 24.39% respectively.

T- Test for internet addiction among student and fresher’s in an occupation is (-1.242) where the sig. value is 0.217 at df 98, which is more than 0.05 thus the result is not significant. T- Test for in-group/loyalty, one of the dimension of moral foundation where divided among Students and fresher's in an occupation is (-2.345) where the sig. Value is 0.021 at df 98, which is less than 0.05 Thus the result is significant.

Tables and Figures

Table-1. 1 demographic description

Demographic characteristics	Category	Frequency
Age	18- 21	16
	22-30	84
Gender	Female	85
	Male	15
Occupation	Students	69
	Fresher in profession	31

Table 1.2 percentage of sample categorized among different levels of internet addiction

Levels of internet addiction	Percentage of the sample
Normal level of internet addiction	35%
Mild level of internet addiction	43%
Moderate level of internet addiction	21%
Severe dependents on internet addiction	1%

Table 1.3 depicts percentage of sample categorized among different dimension of moral foundation.

Dimension of moral foundation	Percentage of the score obtained by sample
Harm/ care	21.87%
Fairness/ reciprocity	21.58%
In-group / loyalty	19.18%
Authority/ respect	19.66%



Purity/ sanctity	17.71%
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Table -1. 4 percentage of score obtained in moral foundation by sample categories indifferent levels of internet addiction.

Internet addiction levels	Harm / care	Fairness/ reciprocity	In-group/ loyalty	Authority/ respect	Purity/ sanctity
Normal	20.54%	20.81%	20.54%	20.81%	17.31%
Mild	21.31%	20.15%	21.31%	20.15%	17.09%
Moderate	20.62%	21.53%	20.62%	21.53%	15.70%
Severe	23.17%	14.63%	23.17%	14.63%	24.39%

Table 2.1 t-test for internet addiction among students and fresher in profession.

	T	df	Sig. 2-tailed
Internet addiction	-1.242	98	0.217

Table – 2.2 t-test for different dimension of moral foundation among students and fresher in profession.

Dimension of Moral foundation	T	df	Sig. 2-tailed
Harm/ care	-1.410	98	0.162
Fairness/reciprocity	-0.939	98	0.350
In-group/ loyalty	-2.345	98	0.021
Authority/ respect	-1.972	98	0.051
Purity/ sanctity	-1.837	98	0.069

4. DISCUSSION

The recent years have increased the use of internet due to covid-19 pandemic. This have raised the concept of work from home and use of internet at a more regular basis from toddler to old age. The form of work, entertainment and relaxation is through the mode of internet. The only concern in today’s date is that if addiction changes man's morality. Let us discuss about the present topic in a more realistic manner which might help the society to understand its present structure by reaching its depth.

For measuring internet addiction among young adults (Erickson, 2002). A questionnaire of internet addiction test (Young, 1998) was used. The test have divided 100 participants into four levels of internet addiction where, n1 = 35; n2 = 43; n3 = 21; n4 = 1 as normal level of internet usage, mild level of internet addiction, moderate level of internet addiction and sever dependence on internet. The respective percentage of summation for this four levels are as 19.76%, 44.73%, 33.08% and 2.43%. The mean for internet addiction test are 37.45. The above result shows that not much people had developed a sever internet addiction in this newly formed digital world but the percentage of participants got addicted to internet is



more than normal internet usage. This may be due to either of too much work going on from home or working with internet have reduced the liking for internet. (Anderson, Steen & Stavropoulos, 2017) have conducted a research and found out that adolescent 12-19 and emerging adults are the two groups who are prone to internet addiction as this group use internet more than any other age group. In the present study not much participants have severe addiction to internet among young adults.

The moral foundation questionnaire (Haidt, 2008) was administered on N = 100 participants in five categories under five dimensions: harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, in-group/loyalty, authority/respect and purity/sanctity. Scores for 2006, 1979, 1759, 1803 and 1624. Respectively. The mean of these following categories are 20.06, 19.79, 17.59, 18.03 and 16.24. From the above scores it can be clearly understood that for the selected sample the category of harm/care is the most important moral foundation followed by fairness/reciprocity, authority/respect, in-group/loyalty and lastly purity/sanctity.

Participants with normal level of internet addiction have scored as 20.54% , 20.81% , 20.54%, 20.81% and 17.31% in the five dimensions of moral foundation. Participants with mild level of internet addiction have scored as 21.31%, 20.15%, 21.31%, 20.15% and 17.09% in the five dimensions of moral foundation. Participants with moderate level of internet addiction have scored as 20.62%, 21.53%, 20.62%, 21.53% and 15.70% in the five dimensions of moral foundation. Participants with severe level of internet addiction have scored as 23.17%, 14.63%, 23.17%, 14.63% and 24.39% in the five dimensions of moral foundation. Thus it can be seen that there is no such variation in moral foundation in relation to changes in internet addiction. The level of internet addiction has not disturbed the moral foundation. In comparison to participants with normal level of internet use, the moral foundation of participants with internet addiction are quite similar. There are many researches, which suggest that addiction can create a major change in a person's life. (Paul, 2014) conducted a research on internet addiction, he stated that addiction can make a person worse than any other factors. It also says to have behavior changes towards addiction. Which is leading the generation towards unproductivity. There is another research conducted on the related topic. (Strohinger & Nichols, 2014) claimed that change in moral aspect in an individual creates the major change in the eye of an outsider than any other identity relevant changes. But in the present study no huge addiction is found across the participants at a larger rate neither a diverse moral foundation is found across the participants. This may be due to the present pandemic situation, which has increased the use of internet but decreased the pleasure out of internet. Thus, the moral foundations are quite similar across the participants.

Participants were divided into students and freshers in a profession. T-test was conducted among them to understand whether there exist any mean difference between students and freshers on internet addiction where the sig. value is 0.217 at df=98, thus the value is more than 0.05 so, it can be said to be not significant. Which means, there exist no mean difference between students and freshers with respect to internet addiction. The addiction levels are irrespective of occupation. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. In case of moral foundation, it is found that there exist a mean difference between student and fresher with respect to in- group/loyalty dimension of moral foundation. The sense of in-group or



loyalty comes with professional ethics.

5. CONCLUSION

In the times of COVID-19 and the concept of digital India have raised the use of internet in different spheres of life but have decreased the addiction or pleasure out of internet for most of the young adults. The result of the present study is that though the percentage of participants addicted to internet is more than normal level of internet usage but percentage of participants who are severely dependent over internet is just 1%. It also shows that for the present sample harm/ care is the most important moral foundation among the young adults followed by others. Thirdly the result shows that not much variation in moral foundation is found with respect to different levels of internet addiction. The result of the hypothesis shows the addiction levels are irrespective of occupation.

IMPLICATIONS – The research on addiction in internet needs to be done more and more in order to understand the changes in society with the coming of new generation and the trend of network. The research has few important implication they are: - Firstly addiction creates no or little variation in morality. Secondly the youth is heading towards more digitalized world.

CHALLENGES – There are many challenges faced during while conducting this study. Firstly the selected moral foundation questionnaire is little difficult for the youth to understand about their own moral decision. Secondly unable to collect data from different locations. Thirdly unable to collect data from more males.

FUTURE SCOPES – This study can be extended to the age group below 18 mainly adolescent age group and other age group as well. Different people from different locations and different age groups might show some difference in moral foundation as well. More data needs to be collected from different locations as well as from different gender and age groups.