

## Internet Usage and Its Relationship to Happiness – As an Indicator to Well-Being

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### ABSTRACT

Well-being includes many aspects such as happiness, energy, leisure, peace with oneself, contentment and sensitivity to the environment. It is a sense of balance between different aspects of life - from physical to emotional to spiritual and the much researched psychological well-being. The domain of the psychological well-being lies in the everyday experiences of people. To say the Internet is an important component of human life is a statement that is not exaggerated. Typically the human race would come to a standstill or become non-existent without the usage of internet, be it in mobile /computer to surf and check Facebook, Whatsapp, and other social media. A report by UK's chartered institute of IT (BCS) found that 35,000 people who use the internet reported that it made them feel happier and better about their lives (BCS, 2010). Happiness is a gregarious feeling and is usually multiplied with better communication channels and robust interaction among people leading to an integrated well-being in individuals. Technology in the form of Internet helps in a large amount of communication and interaction, which can happen in a minuscule time. The purview of the present research is to analyse the relationship between Internet Addiction and Happiness in relation to Well-being. The sample consists of 150 Internet users both male and female. Internet Addiction Test (IAT; 1998) by Dr. Kimberly Young and The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ; 2002) by Peter Hills, Michael Argyle were used to measure Internet addiction and Happiness respectively. The results thus obtained were subjected to statistical analysis.

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### Introduction

Well-being includes many aspects such as happiness, energy, leisure, peace with oneself, contentment and sensitivity to the environment. It is a sense of balance between different aspects of life - from physical to emotional to spiritual and the much researched psychological well-being. The domain of the psychological well-being lies in the everyday experiences of people. To say the Internet is an important component of human life is a statement that is not exaggerated. The Web will be a magic wand in today's changing trends. Life has become easier than before after the onset of Internet. But it can also cause trouble if it is not used properly or excessively. The excessive use of internet makes people focus almost entirely on the internet rather than on satisfying and happiness yielding interrelationships and broader life events. The unique characteristics of the internet such as its 24 hour availability, simple working, low cost, anonymity usage etc. have welcomed many people throughout the world to its realm. Individuals, especially the adolescents of today would come to a standstill or become non-existent without the usage of internet, be it in mobile /computer to surf and check Facebook, Whatsapp, and other social media. It has become a universal tool for users ranging from professionals to casual surfers. For young children, it forms the basis of addiction because it delivers some more enjoyable tools like entertainment, shopping, and social sharing applications.

The academic use of Internet is primarily intended for learning and research and has become an important part of student life. According to Van Ameringen (2016) students who screened positive for internet addiction on both scales had more trouble in dealing with everyday activities. More and more students are addicted to the internet, spending lots of time surfing the internet when, such indulgence damages their health, sleep, studying family relationship and their overall well-being. Technology in the form of Internet helps in a large amount of communication and interaction, which can happen in a minuscule time. Happiness is a gregarious feeling and is usually multiplied with better communication channels and robust interaction among people leading to an integrated well-being in individuals. According to Wikipedia, Happiness is a mental or emotional state of well-being defined by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. A study from Stanford University (2012) on technology affecting happiness and emotional development of girls between the ages of 8-12 revealed that individuals who spend a considerable amount of time using multimedia are found to be less happy and less socially comfortable than peers who spend less time on screens. – The New York Times. This exponential increase in online usage and its impact on individual's well-being has prompted curiosity and speculation about the relationship between the technology and individual's happiness.

### Objectives of the study

1. To find out if there is any significant difference between Internet usage and Happiness among Internet users.
2. To find out if there is any relationship between Internet usage and Happiness among internet users

### Research design

The Research design is Ex post facto, cross-sectional and bivariate in nature.

### Sample

The sample consisted of 200 Internet users of which 100 are Men and the remaining 100 are women in the city of Chennai in the age group of 18 to 35 years. Snowball sampling technique is used to select the sample.

### Tools used

#### Internet Addiction Test (IAT) (1988) by Dr. Kimberly Young.

Internet Addiction Test (IAT) is a reliable and valid measure of addictive use of Internet, developed by Dr. Kimberly Young. It consists of 20 items that measures mild, moderate and severe level of Internet Addiction. Scores from **20 – 49 points**, refer to the average on-line user, **50 – 79 refers** to occasional or frequent problems because of the Internet **80 – 100** refers to significant problems in one's life. The rationale for choosing Young's diagnostic questionnaire for the study was that it is the first global psychometric measure and hence has been extensively and frequently used across many studies globally, is self-completed, has been validated in adult and adolescent populations, and has good internal consistency reliability as well as concurrent validity. In a recent meta-analysis study drawing from a large sample of studies conducted to determine the overall value for the reliability YIAT20, the mean differences showed that it is more reliable in college students and probably in Asia. The overall Cronbach's computed from the studies was 0.889 [95% confidence interval (CI) 0.884-0.895]. The standard deviation of the alpha was low, at 0.049.

#### The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (2002) by Peter Hills & Michael Argyle

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (2002) is a self-report measure consists of 29 items to be rated on a six-point scale. items 2,3,4,7,8,9,11,12,15,16,17,18,20,21,2,25,26 are scored directly (1,2,3,4,5,6) and items 1,5,6,10,13,14,19, 23,24,27,28,29 are scored in reverse manner(6,5,4,3,2,1.) The Internal reliability using Cronbach's coefficient value is 0.92 and test- retest reliability is 0.73 respectively concurrent validity was found to be 0.73. Higher the score higher is the happiness.

### Statistics used

Independent t-test (C.R) and Pearson's Product Moment correlation were used to analyse the data.

### Results and discussion

**Table 1. Indicating Relationship between Internet addiction and Happiness in men.**

Variable	N	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level
INTERNET ADDICTION	100	- 0.203	0.05
HAPPINESS IN MEN	100		

The correlation coefficient is significant indicating a negative relationship between Internet Addiction and Happiness in Men. The negative relationship indicates that as the internet addiction increases, the happiness index comes down in men. This research is supported by the research conducted by Hossein Ansari in the year 2015, which indicates that internet addiction in men was associated with unhappiness.

**Table 2. Indicating Relationship between Internet addiction and Happiness in women.**

Variable	N	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level
INTERNET ADDICTION	100	- 0.384	0.01
HAPPINESS IN WOMEN	100		

The correlation coefficient is significant at 1% level indicating a negative relationship between Internet Addiction and Happiness in Women. The negative relationship indicates that if women have addiction to internet it leads to unhappiness in them. A study done by Clifford Nass from Stanford University (2012) on technology affecting happiness and emotional development of girls between the age of 8-12 revealed that individuals who spend considerable amount of time using multimedia are found to be less happy and less socially comfortable than peers who spend less time on screens. (Reported in The New York Times, January 25, 2012)

The table 3 indicates the difference in Internet addiction between men and women. The mean values indicate both men and women are average Internet users. It is also noted that there is a higher addiction rate among women, which signifies that women are primarily communicators, networkers and facilitators be it in a family, social or the workplace. The t value computations indicating that Internet addiction are found in men is much lesser than women. A study conducted by Zeynep, Oktug (2012) in the University of Istanbul Kultur on Gender Differences in Internet Addiction and Tendency to Express Emotions supports the results of the present research that internet addiction among women is higher than men.

**Table 3. Indicates Mean, standard deviation, 't' value (CR) and level of significance on Internet addiction in men and women.**

Variable	Nature of Sample	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	C.R. value	Significance Level
INTERNET ADDICTION	MEN	100	38.14	11.38	2.715	0.01
	WOMEN	100	43.45	15.89		

**Table 4. Indicates Mean, standard deviation, 't' value (CR) and level of significance on Happiness in men and women.**

Variable	Nature of Sample	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	C.R. value	Significance Level
HAPPINESS	MEN	100	119.84	18.29	2.324	0.05
	WOMEN	100	113.89	17.91		

**Table 5. Indicates Mean, standard deviation, 't' value (CR) and level of significance on Internet addiction in people with single sibling and in people with more than one sibling.**

Variable	Nature of Sample	N	Mean	StandardDeviation	C.R. value	Significance Level
INTERNET ADDICTION	SINGLE SIBLING	119	41.04	14.51	0.305	NS
	MORE THAN 1 SIBLING	81	40.43	13.40		

Table 4 indicates the scores on Happiness of men and women. The mean scores indicate the men are happier than women. Women experience moderate level of happiness while men experience high level of happiness. There is significant difference in happiness levels of men and women. This is supporting with the study conducted by Anke Plagnol at the University of Cambridge and University of Southern California, published in the *Journal of Happiness Studies* (2008) report greater levels of unhappiness later in women compared to men in later parts of life.

In Table 5, the mean values of internet addiction in people with single sibling and people with more than one sibling can be interpreted that both the groups are average Internet users. Though the difference between the two groups indicate that the people with single sibling are slightly more addicted than people with more than one sibling; the difference between them is not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that number of siblings does not affect the usage and addiction to internet. The compulsion to use internet for academic and social necessities is high in today's context. Therefore presence or absence of a sibling does not have an effect on the internet usage.

Table 6 indicates the scores on Happiness in people with single sibling and in people with more than one sibling. The mean scores indicate that individuals with single siblings are happier than the people with more than one sibling. Both the groups experience moderate level of happiness. There is significant difference in happiness levels of men and women. The research conducted by Gundi Knies at Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex (2010) supports the study indicating that individuals with single sibling are much happier than individuals with more than one sibling.

In table 7, the mean value of internet addiction based on hours of internet usage indicates higher amounts of addiction in people who use internet for longer periods of time. The usage of 0-4 and 5-8 hours can be interpreted that the group is an average Internet user. The values indicate a significant difference between the two groups based on hours of Internet usage. A research conducted by Karin Helmersson Bergmark

(2011), A Swedish survey on Internet use (n = 1,147) also support the present research. Most Swedes (85%) do use the Internet to some degree. Respondents in the Swedish study spend (mean value) 9.8 hours per week online at home; there are both positive and negative social effects at hand. Many respondents have more social contacts due to the use of Internet, but there is a decline in face-to-face contacts. About 40% of the respondents indicate some experience of at least one problem related to Internet use, but only 1.8% marked the presence of all problems addressed. Most significant predictors for problem indicators, except for age, relate to "time" and time consuming activities such as gaming, other activities online or computer skills.

Table 8 indicates the mean of Happiness in people who use internet for 0-4 hours and 5-8 hours can be interpreted that the users experience moderate level of happiness. Further statistical analyses have indicated that there is no significant difference between the two groups. Though our earlier analyses have indicated a negative correlation between happiness and internet usage, the present data unveils the fact that hours of working at internet have no effect on happiness.

In table 9, the mean of Internet addiction in people who use internet for majority of hours during their spare time indicates that they are addicted to internet though they are average Internet users. The mean of Internet addiction in people who use Internet for a lesser amount during their spare time is interpreted that they are average Internet user. The CR value indicates a significant difference in Internet addiction, which may be due to the fact that people who use less of internet may have other hobbies to pursue during their free time. People who spend majority of their free time on internet lack an opportunity to explore other hobbies and other varied interests

Table 10 indicates the mean of Happiness in people who use internet for majority of hours and lesser amount during their spare time indicates moderate level of happiness. There is no significant difference between happiness with respect to amount of time used on Internet during spare time. This may be due to the fact that people tend to do things that make them happy in free time. Hobbies are created only because of the interest that they develop in them.

**Table 6. Indicates Mean, standard deviation, 't' value (CR) and level of significance on Happiness in people with single sibling and in people with more than one sibling.**

Variable	Nature of Sample	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	C.R. value	Significance Level
HAPPINESS	SINGLE SIBLING	119	119.00	18.33	2.032	0.05
	MORE THAN 1 SIBLING	81	113.71	17.90		

**Table 7. Indicates Mean, standard deviation, 't' value (CR) and level of significance on Internet addiction with respect to hours of using Internet.**

Variable	Nature of Sample	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	C.R. value	Significance Level
INTERNET ADDICTION	0-4 HOURS	106	36.12	12.36	5.288	0.01
	5-8 HOURS	94	46.06	14.02		

**Table 8. Indicates Mean, standard deviation, 't' value (CR) and level of significance on Happiness with respect to hours of using Internet.**

Variable	Nature of Sample	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	C.R. value	Significance Level
HAPPINESS	0-4 HOURS	106	118.30	19.97	1.195	NS
	5-8 HOURS	94	115.24	16.17		

NS-Not significant

**Table 9. Indicates Mean, standard deviation, 't' value (CR) and level of significance on Internet addiction with respect to usage of Internet during spare time.**

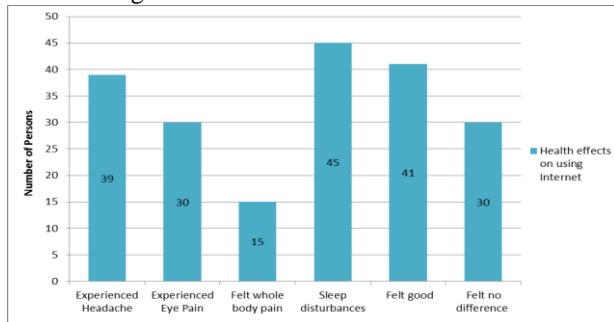
Variable	Nature of Sample	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	C.R. value	Significance Level
INTERNET ADDICTION	Majority usage of spare time on internet	101	45.65	13.24	5.26	0.01
	Doing activities other than internet during majority of spare time	99	35.83	13.13		

**Table 10. Indicates Mean, standard deviation, 't' value (CR) and level of significance on Happiness with respect to usage of Internet during spare time.**

Variable	Nature of Sample	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	C.R. value	Significance Level
HAPPINESS	Majority usage of spare time on internet	101	115.98	18.66	0.69	NS
	Doing activities other than internet during majority of spare time	99	117.76	17.98		

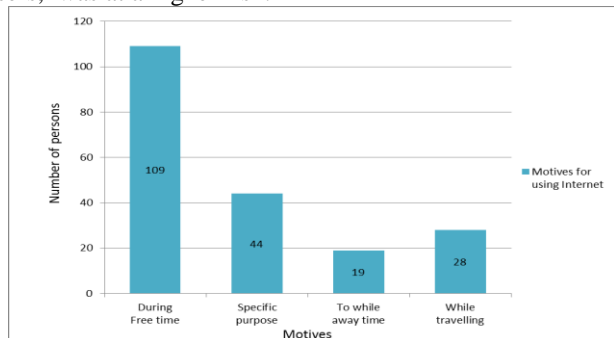
NS-Not significant

Therefore, the group that spends major amount of free time on the internet seems to be pursuing their hobby, which is internet usage.



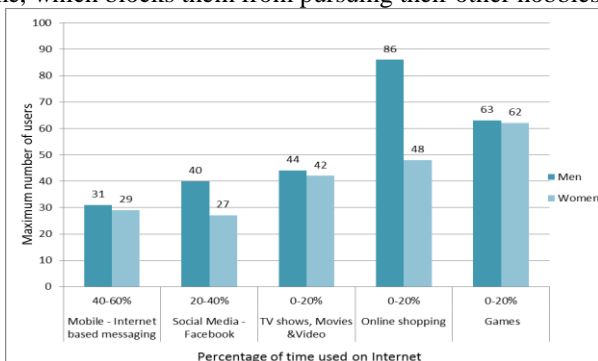
**Graph1. Indicates Health effects on using Internet.**

About one fourth of participants experienced sleep disturbances as the negative effect of internet usage followed closely by another one fourth of them feeling good about it. 39 participants experienced headache, 30 of them experienced eye pain, and 15 of them felt whole body pain. There were about 30 of the participants who felt no difference at all after using internet. A research done by Nastiezaie Nasser (2009) also indicates that the general health of internet-addicted users in comparison with ordinary users, was at a higher risk.



**Graph 2. Indicates motives for using Internet.**

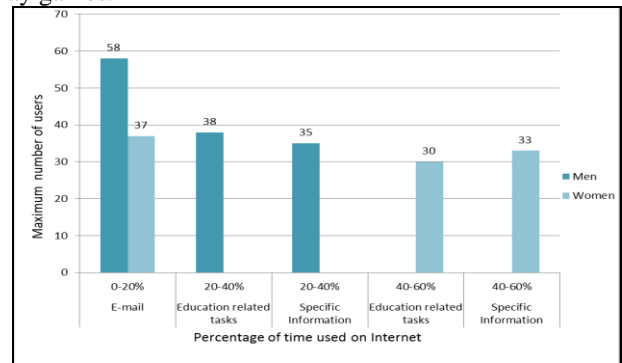
109 participants use Internet during their free time, 44 participants uses Internet for specific purpose, 19 users use it to while away time and 28 of them use while travelling. More than 50 % of the participants use internet during their free time, which blocks them from pursuing their other hobbies.



**Graph 3. Indicates Percentage of time used on Internet for each by maximum number of Internet users.**

As a result, it may lead to internet addiction and further unhappiness.

Men and Women indicate Mobile phone based Internet messaging, phone calling etc for 40-60% of their time used for Internet. Men indicate a higher proportion of Social media usage than women for 20-40% of their time used for Internet. Men and women use significantly lesser amount of time 0-20% for watching TV shows, movies and videos. Number of women is proportionately lesser than women in Online shopping for 0-20% which indicates that women are involved in online shopping to a higher level than men. Men and women use 0-20% of time in their usage of Internet to play games.



**Graph 4. Indicates Percentage of time used on Internet for each by maximum number of Internet users.**

Men and women use E-mail for 0-20% of their time used on Internet. Women are significantly higher in the usage of Internet for education related tasks and in search of specific information for 40-60% while men indicate 20-40% of their time in Education related tasks and in search for specific information. This research is supported by Eric B. Weiser (2004) studied Gender Differences in Internet Use Patterns and Internet Application Preferences: A Two-Sample Comparison. The results showed that males use the Internet mainly for purposes related to entertainment and leisure, whereas women use it primarily for interpersonal communication and educational assistance.

**Conclusion**

1. A negative relationship exists between Internet addiction and Happiness among Internet users which indicate that as the internet addiction increases, the happiness index comes down.
2. There is a significant difference in the Internet addiction and Happiness in men and women. Women are slightly higher in Internet addiction while Men are higher in Happiness index.
3. Happiness level is higher in users with a single sibling than users with more than one sibling.
4. Internet addiction did not differ significantly with respect to a number of siblings while there was a significant difference in Happiness with respect to a number of siblings.
5. Internet addiction differed significantly in the hours of Internet usage and usage of Internet during the spare time.

6. Happiness did not differ significantly in the hours of using the Internet and using Internet during spare time.
7. The Internet addicted users indicated as experiencing general health problems.
8. The majority of users use Internet during their spare time indicating a higher chance of being addicted.
9. Men indicated that they use Mobile phone for Internet-based texting, voice calling followed by social media in their majority of time while using Internet
10. Women indicated use of Mobile phone for Internet-based texting, voice calling followed by search of specific information and education related tasks in their majority of time while using the Internet.

#### Limitations

1. The Research was done with only 200 Internet users.
2. The Pattern of usage of internet in different age groups could have been studied.
3. The geographical area was restricted to the state capital - Chennai.

#### Suggestions

1. A larger sample could have been used.
2. Other psychological variables related to Happiness and Internet Addiction could have been used.

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