
A Correlational Study of Peer Relationships and Internet Usage of Adolescents.

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ABSTRACT:

The present study was conducted to study the correlation between peer relationships and internet usage of adolescents. Descriptive survey method of research was employed to conduct the research. Results of the study revealed that Commitment dimension of peer relationships has significant correlation with time spent online and total internet usage scores. General internet usage scores were found to be significantly correlated with time spent online dimension of internet usage, purpose of using internet and total internet usage scores. Purpose of using internet has significant correlation with negative content viewed online, also with total internet usage scores. The study has useful implications that peer relationships of the adolescents are important guiding factor behind their internet usage.

KEYWORDS: *Peer relationships, Internet usage, adolescents*

INTRODUCTION:

Adolescents are heavy users of new communication forms such as instant messaging, e-mail, and text messaging, as well as communication-oriented Internet sites such as blogs, social networking, photo and video sharing sites such as YouTube, interactive video games etc. Now the questions abound as to how such online communication affects adolescents' social development, in particular their relationship to their peers.

It is during the adolescent period that peer relationships arguably hold the greatest importance for individuals' social and behavioural functioning. The quantity of peer interactions and the intimacy in friendships rise dramatically during this time. Increasingly, a significant

proportion of these important peer interactions occur online; for many adolescents making them relevant for researchers to characterize.

The templates that peer relationships establish in early adolescence may further become critical in early adulthood as peers become primary sources of support. Early adolescents' patterns of face-to-face communication with peers may be replicated in an online medium as young adults.

Wellman, Haase, Witte, and Hampton (2001) and Shklovski, Kraut and Rainie (2004) argued that adolescents use online communication as an additional communication source to enhance the quality of friendships. This, again, may connect to the idea that adolescents have interacted with friends regardless of levels of media usage. The result from the number of close friends touches on the same fact that peer and/or friends remained as the strong predictor of Internet usage.

INTERNET AND PEER RELATIONSHIPS:

The need to form and maintain strong interpersonal bonds has been described as a fundamental need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and one that is critical to healthy development (Sullivan, 1953). Research on young adults has found that feeling close and connected to others on a daily basis is associated with higher daily wellbeing, and in particular, feeling understood and appreciated and sharing pleasant interactions are especially strong predictors of well-being (Reis, Harry T et al. 2000). As outlined by Reis and Shaver (1988), intimacy is developed and sustained through social exchanges with responsive others (e.g., pleasant interactions and feeling understood). Intimacy emerges as an expectation for peer relationships in late childhood or early adolescence (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Sullivan, 1953), and the expectations and meanings of friendships remain constant throughout adolescence and adulthood. Thus close and meaningful interactions with peers are likely to be at least as important to adolescent well-being as they are to adult well-being. Indeed, research affirms that close peer relationships contribute positively to adolescent self-esteem and well-being, whereas peer relationship problems such as peer rejection and a lack of close friends are among the strongest predictors of depression and negative self-views (Hartup, 1996). From the perspective of intimacy theory (Reis & Shaver, 1988), Internet use could undermine

or foster well-being, depending on whether it supplants (Kraut, Robert et al., 1998) or expands opportunities for meaningful, daily contact with close peers.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

Mesch (2001) examined the relationship between youth leisure activities, peer relations, and pro-social attitudes and the frequency of Internet use among adolescents. It was found that the lower an individual's level of attachment to close friends and the less pro-social attitudes he/she expressed, the higher was the likelihood of his/her being a frequent Internet user.

Gross (2004) found that adolescents use internet to stay in touch with their offline friends rather than making unknown people friends online. For the most part, adolescent boys' and girls' online activities have become more similar than different. On average, boys and girls alike described their online social interaction.

Esen and Mehmet (2010) conducted a study to investigate the relationships between internet addiction, peer pressure and social support among adolescents. The results showed that the lower the peer pressure, internet addiction decreases. Moreover, the more the parental and teachers' support increase, internet addiction scores of the adolescents decreases. Furthermore, it was observed that the internet addiction scores of the girls were lower than that of boys.

EMERGENCE OF THE PROBLEM:

Internet use among teenagers has grown exponentially in the last decade. The increasing amount of time children are spending on computers at home and school has raised questions about how the use of computer technology may make a difference in their lives—from helping with homework to causing depression to encouraging violent behaviour (Subrahmanyam, Kaveri, et al, 2000).

Research studies have shown that self-esteem, parental emotional support, attachment to friends, and the number of close friends are variables significantly related to Internet usage

(Lee, 2005). Adolescents who already had strong social relationships were more likely to use online communication, which in turn predicted more cohesive friendships (Lee, 2009).

The attachment to friends is also relevant when examining Internet usage with other factors. The greater the attachment to friend's adolescents feels, the more likely are they to spend time on the Internet. The Internet has improved friendships (Lenhart, Amanda et al., 2001). Enhancing the quality of friendships is therefore a reasonable purpose to use the Internet (Lenhart, Amanda et al., 2001). The assumption is that adolescents are communicating to friends online. Lin, Sunny S. J. and Tsai, Chun chung, (2002) have also found that adolescents who are heavily dependent on the Internet believe that their excessive Internet use enhances their peer relationships.

Many research studies have been conducted in western countries of the world to determine the different factors related to internet usage of adolescents. But very few research studies have been found in the Indian context, which could find the factors responsible for internet usage of adolescents. Therefore present study was undertaken to study the correlation between internet usage and peer relationships of adolescents.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the relationship between different dimensions of peer relationships and internet usage of adolescents.
2. To compare peer relationships of male and female adolescents.
3. To compare internet usage of male and female adolescents

HYPOTHESES:

1. There is no significant relationship between different dimensions of peer relationships and internet usage of adolescents.
2. There is no significant difference in peer relationships of male and female adolescents.

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3. There is no significant difference in the internet usage of male and female adolescents.

DELIMITATIONS:

1. Present study is delimited to 100 students of government model senior secondary school of Chandigarh.
2. Sample was collected from a local school of Chandigarh.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY:

Descriptive exploratory method of research was employed to study the relationship among the variables.

SAMPLE:

The sample for the study consists of 100 students (50 boys and 50 girls each) of Classes 11th from government model senior secondary school sector 22 Chandigarh (affiliated to CBSE Board) to study the relationship between different dimensions of peer relationships and internet usage of adolescents. Random sampling technique was used to select the sample.

TOOLS USED:

The following tools were used to collect the relevant data

1. Inventory of parent and peer attachment by Armsden and Greenberg (1990)
2. Internet usage questionnaire was developed by the investigator herself.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED:

- ❖ Descriptive statistics like mean, SD
- ❖ Inferential statistics: t-test
- ❖ Correlation : Pearson product moment correlation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Correlation analysis

Table: 1 showing inter correlation matrix between different dimensions of peer relationships and internet usage of adolescents.

Variable	Trust	Comm	Alien	PR	Gen	Time	Purpose	Effect	IU
Trust	1	.746**	.499**	.904**	.114	.097	.055	.043	.084
Comm		1	.453**	.871**	.094	.215*	.143	.038	.231*
Alien			1	.746**	.024	.159	.068	.086	.126
PR				1	.089	.189	.106	.024	.169
Gen					1	.260**	.301**	.196	.401**
Time						1	.677**	.244**	.902**
Purpose							1	.277**	.887**
Effect								1	.430**
IU									1

The inter correlations matrix shows the correlations between different dimensions of peer relationships and internet usage of adolescents. Trust dimension of peer relationships is not significantly correlated with any dimensions of internet usage viz., general internet usage, time spent online, purpose of using internet, negative content viewed online and also total internet usage scores.

Commitment dimension of peer relationship questionnaire has significant correlation with time spent online ($r = .215^*$) and total internet usage scores ($r = .231^*$) as well.

Alienation dimension of peer relationships is not significantly correlated with any dimension of internet usage and total internet usage scores.

Peer relationships (total scores) was also not found to be significantly related with total internet usage scores and any of its dimension.

General internet usage scores were found to be significantly correlated with time spent online dimension of internet usage ($r = .677$). A significant correlation was also found between general internet usage scores and purpose of using internet ($r = .301^*$) and also with total internet usage scores ($r = .401^*$).

Time spent online dimension of internet usage has significant correlation with purpose of using internet ($r = .677^*$), negative content viewed online ($r = .244^*$), Total scores on internet usage ($r = .902^*$).

Purpose of using internet has significant correlation with negative content viewed online ($r = .277^*$), also with total internet usage scores ($r = .887^*$). Negative content viewed online has significant correlation with total internet usage scores.

INFERENCEAL ANALYSIS

Table 2: T - test Analysis of Peer relationship Score among Male & Female Students

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	S.E of mean	T test	Significance
Peer relationship scores	Male	50	95.74	19.86260	2.80900	2.716**	S
	Female	50	1.0524	14.73793	2.08426		

In table 2 peer relationships scores of male and female adolescents have been compared with the help of t ratio. Result reveals significant differences between the scores of male and female adolescents. As the calculated value is found to be significant at 0.01, level of confidence. Therefore the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in peer relationships of male and female adolescents was rejected at the specified level. Table 1 shows that male adolescents have higher mean than female adolescents.

Table 3: T - test Analysis of Internet usage Score among Male & Female Students

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	S.E of mean	T test	Significance
Internet Usage Score	Male	50	75.9800	18.02095	2.54855	3.104**	S
	Female	50	64.3000	19.57847	2.76881		

In Table 3, internet usage scores of male and female adolescents have been compared with the help of t ratio. Results show that there is significant difference between male and female adolescents on internet usage scores. Therefore the null hypothesis that there is no significant

difference in internet usage scores of male and female adolescents was rejected at the specified level. Table 3 shows that male has higher mean than female adolescents.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:

On the basis of the findings of the study, following conclusions can be drawn:

- Trust dimension of peer relationships is not significantly correlated with any dimensions of internet usage.
- Commitment dimension of peer relationship questionnaire has significant correlation with time spent online and total internet usage scores.
- Alienation dimension of peer relationships is not significantly correlated with any dimension of internet usage and total internet usage scores.
- General internet usage scores were found to be significantly correlated with time spent online dimension of internet usage, purpose of using internet and total internet usage scores.
- Time spent online dimension of internet usage has significant correlation with purpose of using internet, negative content viewed online, Total scores on internet usage.
- Purpose of using internet has significant correlation with negative content viewed online, also with total internet usage scores.
- Negative content viewed online dimension of internet usage has significant correlation with total internet usage scores.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS:

From the above findings we can infer that internet usage plays significant role in shaping the peer relationships of the adolescents. Commitment in friendships leads to more time spent online with friends.

Present Study also reveals that when adolescents are alienated or feel isolated from their friends, their internet usage declines significantly. Communication among adolescents is

related with time spent online i.e. adolescents use internet to stay in touch with their present friends.

A significant correlation was found between Purpose of using internet and negative content viewed online. This means that adolescents use internet to watch negative content on internet.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The present study has useful implications in terms of peer relationships being an important factor responsible for adolescents' internet usage. All the problems associated with adolescents Internet usage like internet addiction, watching negative content online etc can be solved if we analyse the peer relationships of the adolescents and give them proper guidance to make healthy use of internet.

CONCLUSION:

Internet is a wonderful source of information in the present era. It has become part and parcel of everyone's life. Present study has shown that adolescent's relationships are being influenced by their internet usage. i.e. internet helps in maintaining relationships with peers, but peers are an important factor that motivates the adolescents to watch inappropriate content on internet. Therefore a major challenge before the research is to understand how to enhance the benefits offered by internet while mitigating some of the dangers that it presents.

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