A Study of Mental Health of Light and Heavy Indian Undergraduate Social Networking Sites users

Birender Kaur

Akal University, India

Social networking sites (SNS) have become an important part of majority of the world's inhabitants. Manjunatha (2013) documented that social networking sites are popular among students. The objective of research paper is to compare mental health of light and heavy Indian undergraduate SNS users. Descriptive method of research with ex-post-facto design and survey method was used to collect data. The sample comprises of 793 Indian undergraduate SNS users pursuing Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Commerce (B.Com). Social networking sites Addiction Scale by Shahnawaz et al. (2013) were administered on participants to collect quantitative data.Q1and Q3 (Quartile cut-points) was used as basis to find out light and heavy SNS users from 793 Indian undergraduates. Implementation of Quartile cut-points locates 188 light and 189 heavy (those who score less than 70 and more than 90 on Shahnawaz's SNS addiction scale respectively) Indian Undergraduate SNS users. Descriptive statistics and t –test was employed on quantitative data which exposed that light SNS users have good mental health as compared to their opposite counterparts. Findings of research paper can be beneficial to psychologists, educationists and policy makers to have an understanding of how mental health of Indian undergraduate differs with light and heavy SNS usage so that accordingly counseling sessions and policy modifications can be planned and implemented.

Introduction

Humans relies on these networking sites for carrying out purposes like shopping, self-disclosure, to have an acquaintance with what is happening on the other corner of the world, to maintain social networks by communicating with near and far ones etc. Kemp's (2018) survey findings evidenced the popularity of SNS among humans by documenting the fact that 4 billion people are active SNS users. Such dependency of Homo sapiens on virtual tools inspired social scientists to explore their effects on psychological make-up of an individual. How one's psychological processes are related with SNS usage covers good volume in literature.

The differences in time spent on SNS categorized SNS users into heavy and light SNS users. There are handful of researches that compare light and heavy SNS users on psychological variables. In an attempt to fill void in literature, this research paper examines differences (if any) among light and heavy SNS users on mental health (which is chosen to delimit the scope of research paper). Students are future leaders, so it is important to study how they differ on mental health w.r.t. light and heavy SNS usage.

Objective: To compare mental health of light and heavy Indian undergraduate SNS users.

Hypothesis: There exists no significant difference in mental health of light and heavy Indian undergraduate SNS users.

Delimitation: Research paper was delimited to Indian undergraduates pursuing B.A and B.Com falling in the age range from 16-21 years.

Methods and materials

Descriptive method of research (ex-post-facto design) was employed to obtain objective of the paper. Social networking sites addiction scale by Shahnawaz et al. (2013) with 32 items was used to collect data. The universe of paper comprises of first year undergraduate students of Punjabi University, Patiala; Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar and Panjab University, Chandigarh along with their constituent colleges and regional centres. Sample of 793 Indian undergraduates pursuing Arts and Commerce courses & who are active on SNS were selectedHeads of educational institutions received permission to perform surveys on students prior to data collection. An informal consent was also obtained from participants before filling of standardized scale. Descriptive statistics and t-test was applied on quantitative data to test the hypothesis of research paper.

Results

Results of t-test employed to compare mental health of light and heavy Indian Undergraduate SNS users can be seen from Table 1.

Groups	Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio
Light SNS users	Mental Health	188	80.85	9.76	6.45* (significant at 0.01 level of significance)
Heavy SNS Users		189	73.88	11.09	

Table 1 Significance of the differences between mean scores of mental health of light and heavy Indian Undergraduate SNS users.

Table 1 reflects that t –value came out to be 6.45 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance, thus directing that light SNS users were found to possess good mental health as compared to heavy SNS users. Thus the hypothesis, "An Indian heavy health and mental health disparity in light-graduate SNS users is not important," was denied.

Discussion

Heavy Indian undergraduate SNS users possess poor mental health when compared with light SNS users. The reason for low mental health of heavy SNS users can be found in social withdrawal hypothesis suggested by Krout et al., 1998 that disclosed that heavy SNS users have less face- to face interactions that get replaced by superficial virtual contacts which effect social support system hence deteriorating one's mental health. Study recommended that educational authorities and counselors should organize information sessions to aware students about unhealthy aspects of heavy SNS usage. Universities must tailor their environment to include numerous outdoor activities for students to engage in real world. Government of India should reform internet regulatory policies from time to time on the basis of research findings to safeguard mental health of human resources.

References

Manjunatha, S. (2013). The usage of social networking sites among college students in India. International Research Journal of Social Science, 2(5), 15-21.

Kemp, S. (20 May, 2018). Digital in 2018: World's internet users pass the 4 billion mark [Blogpost]. Retrieved from https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018

Shahnawaz,G.,Ganguli,N., & Zou, M.L.(2013). Social Networking Addiction Scale.Shakarpur, Prasad Psychological Corporation.

Kraut, R., Patterson, M., Lundmark, V., Kiesler, S., Mukopadhyay, T., & Scherlis, W. (1998). Internet paradox. A social technology that reduces social involvement and psychological well-being? American Psychologist, 53, 1017–1031.

Kaur,B.(2017). Self-Disclosure, Alienation and Mental Health of users of Social Networking Sites: A Correlational Study. (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis). Department of Education and Community Service, Punjabi University, Patiala, India