

**Association between Internet Addiction and Reading Attitude**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study investigates the relationship between internet addiction and reading attitudes among 502 university students in Lahore, Pakistan, using a quantitative, correlational design. Results indicate a statistically significant yet small positive association, which suggests that higher internet use provides access to diverse reading materials and slightly improves reading attitudes. However, the findings require cautious interpretation due to the small effect size and potential confounding factors. The study emphasises the need for balanced digital habits to enhance academic and personal development. It offers implications for educators and policymakers to nurture positive reading behaviours while addressing internet addiction.*

**Keywords:** Internet addiction, Reading attitudes, University students, Digital habits, Pakistan, Academic development

**INTRODUCTION**

In contemporary cultures, the development of digital technology and internet accessibility has integrated a noticeable level of revolution. Internet comes with various advantages like access to information and timely updates of real-time incidents globally, and it is used widely for educational and business purposes. Besides their advantages, various disadvantages of the Internet are also present, for instance, addiction and a high influence on reading attitudes (Smith, 2021). Addiction can be of two different types i.e. behavioural and physical. In the context of internet usage, behavioural addiction is observed. Behavioural addiction could be by spending an ample amount of time surfing the internet. Moreover, behavioural addiction also leads towards issues in the social settings adversely affecting the personal and professional life of an individual. The advent of smartphones has also increased internet addiction among people which keeps the people engaged in different activities through their phones and they have less focus towards the outside world. However, researchers have highlighted that there is no universal definition present that could be used to understand internet addiction (Griffiths, 1998). Besides this, physical addiction can be understood through different reading attitudes. The reading attitudes are associated with the reader's emotions and mind. A change in the reading attitude can be observed based on the changing circumstances or personal interests based on the person's feelings at that time (Martinez, 2008; McKenna, 2001; Smith and Li, 2020).

Based on the aforementioned facts, this study aimed to evaluate the variations and similarities associated with reading attitudes and internet addiction among college students in Lahore, Pakistan. Furthermore, the objective of this research is to analyse the correlation between reading attitudes and internet addiction and to determine its predictive association. The broad viewpoint will be used for the development of a thorough knowledge of the multifaceted relationship between reading habits and internet addiction. This will allow to development of various tactics and treatments that could be customised based on the local situation.

### **THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS & LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this study, three theoretical orientations are considered for exploring the relationship between internet addiction and reading attitudes. The first is Cognitive-Behavioural Model that examines how self-regulation issues, cognitive biases, and dysfunctional internet use influence patterns of behaviour and preferences for reading (Griffiths, 2005). Next is the The Socio-Cultural Theory, which highlights the impact of cultural norms, social interactions, and societal expectations on shaping attitudes towards reading (Rosenblatt, 1978). Since this theory essentially consider cultural element, it can be helpful for this study given its focus on the cultural context of university students in Lahore, Pakistan. The third theoretical orientation being considered in this study is Self-Determination Theory. It postulates that intrinsic psychological needs (i.e. competence, autonomy, and relatedness) drive the motivations for reading (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Thus, it can be said that unmet needs can negatively affect attitudes in context of the focus of this research.

Around the world, there are number of studies that have consistently highlighted the negative effects of internet addiction on reading attitudes. Johnson et al. (2020) found that excessive internet use in the US is correlated with declining enthusiasm for reading. In the similar manner, Chen et al. (2018) observed that overuse of social media reduced the interests of students in reading. Apart from these scholars, Park and Kim (2017) in South Korea and Li and Chen (2020) in China have also reported that internet and smartphone addiction negatively influenced the reading motivation and engagement among students. To strengthen these arguments, the cross-cultural research conducted by Xin et al. (2019) further confirmed these trends across China, South Korea, and the US. In Turkey, Esgin and Karadag (2000) found limited leisure reading among college students, while Aksaçlıolu and Yılmaz (2007) noted that visual media habits further reduced reading interest.

In another study, similar declines in the US were also noted among youths as they preferred popular magazines over traditional books (Hughes-Hassel and Rodge, 2007). In the local context, Pakistani studies also tend to exhibit the similar pattern. Ahmad & Shahzad (2015), Anwar & Basit (2016), Javed et al., (2019) and Waheed et al., (2020) have shown that there is a significant prevalence of internet addiction among university students which leaves adverse effects on academic engagement and reading behaviours. Thus, a link can be created between excessive internet use and poor reading attitudes that is also identified in the study by Shahzad & Ali (2018). On the flipped side, it can also be assumed that addicted students demonstrate reduced reading frequency. Some of the studies also enlightened the negative psychological and academic impacts of internet addiction that corroborate the association with declining reading attitudes (such as Rasool et al., 2016).

Along this discussion, the literature have also shown that gender plays a vital role in internet usage patterns. For instance, the studies indicated that men, who use the internet compulsively for leisure, show higher addiction rates compared to women (Masaeli & Farhadi, 2021; Sun & Wilkinson, 2020). Thus, the study addresses a significant gap in understanding the relationship between internet addiction and reading attitudes in the Pakistani context and presents the following hypothesis:

**H1:** There would be a significant negative association between internet addiction and reading attitude

**H2:** There would be a predictive association between internet addiction and reading attitude

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study has used quantitative, correlational research design to the relationship between internet addiction and reading attitudes among university students in Lahore, Pakistan. It has 502 students as the sample, who are aged between 18-25 years. They were selected using the convenient sampling from private and

government universities. Inclusion criteria required participants to be internet users, own smartphones, and be enrolled in undergraduate programs, while individuals with diagnosed mental disorders or physical disabilities were excluded.

The instruments used for data collection consist of the Internet Addiction Test (IAT; Young, 1998), which is a 20-item Likert scale with high reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.91$ ), and the Young Adult Reading Attitude Scale (Smith, 1989) to assess reading attitudes. To analyse the results, Statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficients, and linear regression analyses were utilized to test hypotheses and these measures ensured a detailed examination of the relationship between internet addiction and reading attitudes. In terms of ethical considerations, the study adhered to strict ethical guidelines by obtained informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and providing voluntary participation. Furthermore, participants also had the right to withdraw at any stage without repercussions. Collection of data took place with the permissions from the institutes and involved the completion of demographic and assessment questionnaires.

## RESULTS

Table 1: Relationship between reading attitude and internet addiction in university students (N=502)

| Variables             | 1     | 2     |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|
| 1. Reading Attitude   | 1     | .13** |
| 2. Internet Addiction | .13** | 1     |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table 1 shows the positive and statistically significant correlation coefficient between reading attitude and internet addiction with  $r = .130$  and  $p < .01$ . It is implied from the result that a weak positive relationship exists between reading attitude and internet addiction among university students.

Table 2: Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Reading Attitude from Internet Addiction in University Students (N=502)

| Variables             | B     |       | 95 %CI |  | SE(B) | B   | Sig  | R <sup>2</sup> | $\Delta R^2$ |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|--------|--|-------|-----|------|----------------|--------------|
|                       | LL    |       | UL     |  |       |     |      |                |              |
| Constant              | 20.14 | 19.36 | 20.92  |  | .39   |     | .000 | .02            | .02          |
| Internet<br>Addiction | .02   | .01   | .04    |  | .01   | .13 | .004 |                |              |

Note. N=502; CI = confidence interval, LL = lower Limit; UL = upper limit

Predictors: (Constant), internet addiction

Dependent Variable: ReadingAttitude

The table 2 presents linear regression analysis of relationship between reading attitude (dependent variable) and internet addiction (independent variable) in a sample of university students. In the regression equation, the internet addiction is 20.14 that suggests the score of expected reading attitude when the internet addiction score is zero. The regression coefficient (B) for internet addiction is 0.02, which implies that the reading attitude score is expected to increase by 0.02 units as each unit increases in internet addiction. 0.01

as the standard error (SE) for the regression coefficient suggests the average amount of error in predicting the reading attitude score based on the internet addiction variable. With the 0.00 value of significance level (Sig) for the regression coefficient, it is implied that the predictive relationship between internet addiction and reading attitude is statistically significant.

## **DISCUSSION**

By analysing the association between reading attitudes and internet addiction among college students in Lahore, Pakistan, a connection has been witnessed between reading attitudes and internet addiction based on a predictive relationship. The hypothesis devised for analysing the negative impact of internet addiction and reading attitudes was rejected. An interesting level of relationship has been identified among these two variables. A positive correlation has been identified between reading preferences and internet addiction. This positive correlation was witnessed because the internet provides a wide range of reading materials that could be accessed by the readers. College students who are highly engaged with the internet have noticeable engagement with academic resources, blogs and e-books which positively influence their learning habits (Smith, 2023, para. 3).

Several other studies also support the aforementioned claim in which a high level of internet addiction was observed because readers have sufficient favourable views of reading. Besides this, the study of Zhang and Wang (2021) has highlighted that high internet engagement and reading habits have made college students reluctant to be engaged in traditional activities. This claim lends credence to the notation that the reading attitudes of college students can be affected because of high internet addiction. Moreover, the comprehension abilities of college students were also examined through internet addiction in the study of Kim and Lee (2020). The internet addiction has shown a negative correlation with lower comprehension levels. The students engaged in both offline and online reading have shown favourable reading attitudes towards online reading. Furthermore, the relationship between reading motivation and internet addiction was also examined in a study by Chen and Fu (2019) among college students. However, low intrinsic reading motivation was associated with higher degrees of internet addiction. Besides this, enhanced enthusiasm has been observed among the students engaged in reading educational content on various online channels. These students have shown a higher level of interest in participating in online book clubs.

The engaging and interactive elements of online content have been recognised as one of the key factors highlighting the positive correlation between reading attitudes and internet addiction. The use of multimedia on online platforms along with user-generated content and interactive features significantly enhances engagement through online content. All these factors are appealing to college students and make online reading immersive. Based on all the engaging and entertaining factors, the quality of online content results in a high level of addiction among college students and they show a positive attitude towards online reading (Ku et al., 2013; Li and Chung, 2006).

The implications of the internet have significantly changed the way people interact with content and information. The easy availability of the internet specifically for adolescents has been significantly influenced by digital technology and an ease in accessing online platforms is witnessed. The internet has been recognised with both positive and negative consequences because of the high-level exposure to digital media which has significantly changed the reading attitudes of college students (Biancarosa & Griffiths, 2012; Chen & Yan, 2016; McMahon et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2018).

## CONCLUSION

From this study, a statistically significant but small positive association is revealed between internet addiction and reading attitudes among university students of Lahore, Pakistan. The findings of the study have suggested that excessive and higher use of internet though offer access to diverse reading materials (such as blogs and e-books), which foster slightly more favourable reading attitudes. Yet, it is also implicitly highlighted that caution is required in interpreting these results, as other unexamined factors may influence reading behaviours. As the recommendation, the study suggests that balanced use technology is crucial in order to use online resources effectively together with promoting traditional reading habits. Moreover, future studies can adopt longitudinal designs to further elucidate the mechanisms behind this relationship.

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## Appendices

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire

Appendix 2 – Ethical Approval Form

Appendix 3 – Participants Information Sheet

Appendix 4 – Permission Letters

Appendix 5 – Demographic Information of Participants

Table 3: Lists the demographics of the 502-person study sample

| Variables             | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>Gender</b>         |           |            |
| Male                  | 253       | 50.4       |
| Female                | 249       | 49.6       |
| <b>Religion</b>       |           |            |
| Muslims               | 500       | 100        |
| <b>Family Status</b>  |           |            |
| Nuclear               | 349       | 69.5       |
| Joint                 | 153       | 30.5       |
| <b>Birth Order</b>    |           |            |
| First Born            | 124       | 24.7       |
| Middle Born           | 223       | 44.4       |
| Last Born             | 130       | 25.9       |
| Only Child            | 25        | 5.0        |
| <b>Marital Status</b> |           |            |
| Single                | 500       | 99.6       |
| Married               | 2         | 0.4        |
| <b>Mother Tongue</b>  |           |            |
| Urdu                  | 307       | 61.2       |
| Punjabi               | 150       | 29.9       |
| Pashto                | 12        | 2.4        |
| Sindhi                | 2         | 0.4        |
| Siraiki               | 16        | 3.2        |
| Others                | 15        | 3.0        |