

Digital Distractions: Assessing the Relationship between Parent-Adolescents Communication and Internet-Addiction among NCR Adolescents

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ABSTRACT:

Adolescence is a sensitive developmental stage characterized by emotional, behavioural, and social changes. Parent-adolescent communication plays an important role in shaping adolescent behaviour and psychological well-being. The present study examines the effect of parent-adolescent communication on internet addiction among adolescents in Delhi NCR. The study adopts a quantitative descriptive-analytical research design. A sample of 150 adolescents aged 12-18 years was selected through stratified random sampling from secondary and senior secondary schools. Standardized tools, including the Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (PACS) and Internet Addiction Test (IAT), were used for data collection. Statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and the t-test were applied using SPSS. The findings indicate a significant relationship between parent-adolescent communication and internet addiction. Gender differences were also observed in internet addiction among adolescents. The study concludes that healthy communication between parents and adolescents contributes to healthier digital behaviour among adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescents, Gender differences, Internet Addiction, Parent-adolescent communication.

1. Introduction:

The Psychosocial Landscape of Adolescence:

Adolescence (ages 13-19) is an important stage characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, and emotional changes. During this time of forming identities and shifting boundaries, the family environment, particularly parent-adolescent communication, plays a key role in psychological adjustment and behavioral health.

Core Research Variables Parent-Adolescent Communication:

Open and supportive communication helps with emotional regulation and boosts self-esteem. On the other hand, authoritarian control or emotional distance is strongly associated with psychological distress and poor coping strategies. Humans communicate to relate and exchange ideas, knowledge, feelings, and experiences and for many other interpersonal and social purposes (APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.).

Internet Addiction: Internet Addiction is a pattern of behavior in which person usage the

internet excessively which affects the person's daily life activities, well-being and also relationships. "Internet addiction" refers to excessive Internet use that causes significant psychological and social disturbance along with functional impairment (Patel et al., 2023).

Gender Differences: Gender also influences differences in internet use and addiction patterns.

The Context: Delhi-NCR Continuous urbanization in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR). Earlier Indian context was very different in term of family dynamics and parenting but now metro cities have changed family dynamics. Fast pace living, high income households, extreme academic pressure are significantly declining the quality of communication or interaction between the family members. In results children, adolescents are feeling isolated due to declined quality interaction with parents. Due to spending maximum time all alone without supervision of parents adolescents are inclining towards internet and social media.

Study Rationale & Significance

However, there are various studies which shows the impact of parent-adolescent communication on positive well-being of children as well as adolescents, there is dearth in researches which connects the dots between internet addiction and family dynamics related to parent-child communication in urban Indian setting specifically in Delhi-NCR. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring how parent-child communication affects internet addiction among adolescents in Delhi NCR. This study also explores the effect of gender differences in terms of internet addiction and parent-child communication. The major goal of finding the insights is to form intervention strategies for the challenging and increasing issues of Internet addiction, which is increasing rapidly not only at the global level but also in Delhi-NCR. Parent-adolescent communication is a major factor in psychosocial development during adolescence. The quality of these interactions significantly influences behavioral and emotional outcomes:

Constructive Communication:

Constructive communication between parents and adolescents is very effective for monitoring as well as for voluntary disclosure. When parent does open and supportive along with non-confrontational communication with adolescent it is more likely to positive outcomes than parental control and surveillance. It fosters emotional closeness and trust between a parent and an adolescent which indirectly acts in reducing the delinquency behaviors (Lionetti et al., 2019). Family functioning and its composition plays critical factor in the mental health of an adolescents. family communication not only reduce the behavioral concerns in girls but also in boys. Non-intact (divorced- separated) families have significantly higher issues related to behavioral and emotional problems. Family support and open communication with parents linked to lower levels of emotional and behavioral problem (Paclikova et al., 2018). Internet adaption is inversely correlated with internet addiction. Adolescents who are exposed to stronger cultural adaptation s values and communication norms shows the lower addiction levels and better coping mechanism. Boys are more prone to these addictions in compare to girls. When it comes to rural and urban rural shows higher addiction but lower cultural adaptations when compared with urban adolescents. High school students showed higher addiction and negative adaptation as compared to middle school students. Study suggested that the positive or negative behavioral outcomes or addictions are not limited to one culture and strong cultural adaptation skills can help in prevention of internet addiction and improve the adolescents' adjustments issues(Yue et al., 2023).

Destructive Communication:

Communication which is having avoidance, low emotional response or aggressive tone is discussed as destructive communication. It shows that when a parent-child communication is hostile, poor or conflictual the adolescents show higher aggression. Effective parenting requires balanced discipline and constructive communication and dialogue-based relationship

helps child's moral development.(Rus et al., 2025).

Internet addiction is recognized as increasingly clinical issues studies found studies related to internet addiction and other behavioral problems or substance addiction shows similarity in maladaptive behavioral patterns. Family factors including poor parental communication and monitoring are having high risk of problematic internet usage. When an adolescent is not feeling connected with the families and experience destructive communication patterns at home, often turn to the internet to seek the validation and safety (Kuss & Lopez-Fernandez, 2016). Understanding the relationship is important to address the maladaptive behavior and addictions. Various studies have proved the family dynamics plays an important role in behavioral patterns whether behaviors are positive or negative. According to previous studies internet addiction is excessive and continuous engagement despite the negative impacts because of generalized hyperactive rewarding by the brain.(Xu et al., 2021). Around 1 in 4 people worldwide affected by at least some type of digital addiction. Data also suggest that geographical differences also affect the rate of internet addiction and male shows high number of internet and game addiction as compare to female. Study finding suggest that the intervention and prevention is very much required (Meng et al., 2022). Medication is important in case of intervention related to internet addiction as it comes with anxiety, depression and reduced coping but at the same time impact of family based therapeutical intervention plays a significant role. Family dynamics plays a crucial and central role in both things' prevention as well as in treatment (Wang et al., 2024). Parental monitoring is important in case of adolescent adjustments and behavioral concerns. When a parent does strict control but less communication than it brings the behavior concerns more but when a parent foster the trust and parent child communication that it is linked to reduced behavioral issues, improved adjustments and lower the risk of substance use or delinquency behavior (Lionetti et al., 2019).

Talking about the intervention and treatment is important before in depth study to know the various factors affecting the internet addiction in adolescents and this is preliminary research in this area to know more.

2. Methodology

Design: The study design serves to indicate that it is a quantitative, descriptive- correlational study used to investigate the connections between adolescent's internet addiction and parent-adolescent communication. It describes the study design, sampling, the variables, the tools used which were standardized, the ethical factors and statistical methods to be used to test systematically the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the relationship between parent-adolescent communication and internet addiction among adolescents.
- To examine gender differences in internet addiction among adolescents.

Hypotheses of the Study

H₁: There would be significant relationship between parent-adolescent communication and internet addiction among adolescents.

H₂: There would be significant difference between male and female adolescents with respect to internet addiction.

Participants/Sample: The study population entails those adolescents aged 12-18 years and in secondary and senior secondary schools in the (NCR). The target age group is adolescents because it is much more susceptible to behavioral dysregulation and dysfunctional digital usage. The study sample consists of 150 adolescents.

The stratified random sampling is employed to assure the representation in terms of gender and type of school. Stratified sampling makes the sample more representative and minimizes sampling bias, especially with a heterogeneous population.

Instruments:

Table 1
Standardized Instruments Used for Data Collection

Instrument	Developer / Year	Purpose	No. of Items	Scale & Scoring	Reliability & Validity
Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (PACS)	Barnes & Olson (1985)	Assesses the quality of communication between parents and adolescents, focusing on openness and communication problems	20 Items	5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)	Demonstrates good internal consistency in previous studies (Cronbach's alpha typically > .70)
Internet Addiction Test (IAT)	Young (1998)	Assesses the level of internet addiction	20 items	6-point Likert scale (0 = Never to 5 = Always)	Cronbach's alpha = 0.91 in the present sample, indicating high reliability

Parent Adolescent Communication Scale has been used by major studies till 2022 related to studies of parent and child communication(Zapf et al., 2022). For internet addiction, the internet addiction test by Dr. Kimberly Young was used mainly in studies related to internet addiction (IAT; Young, 1998).

Procedure: Formal approval was obtained from school authorities prior to data collection. Informed consent was secured from parents, along with assent from all the participant adolescents. Survey instrument was administrated using paper-based questionnaires. All participants were briefed on the study. Researchers provide the guarantee of confidentiality; all responses remain anonymous and participants have right to withdraw any time without any terms and condition. All methodological and data collection procedures adhere strictly to the ethical guidelines established by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017).

Data Analysis: Data analysis is conducted using the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)**.

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) summarize demographic and study variables.

An **independent samples t-test** is employed to ascertain whether there are statistically significant gender differences in adolescent's internet addiction.

Multiple regression analysis assesses how parent-adolescent communication predicts internet addiction.

3. Results

The statistical analysis of the data obtained among adolescents is conducted and the results discussed in the context of the stated objectives and hypotheses. The findings are explained through descriptive and inferential statistics and are further debated in terms of the already existing theoretical frameworks and reference literature.

Table 2**Descriptive Statistics of Parent-Adolescent Communication, Aggression, and Internet Addiction**

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	S. D
Parent-Adolescent Communication	150	2.05	4.70	3.7793	.35870
Aggression	150	2.69	4.21	3.6867	.26136
Internet Addiction	150	2.10	4.70	3.7657	.32585
Valid N (listwise)	150				

Table 3**Respondents' demographic profile (N = 150)**

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	75	50.0
	Female	75	50.0
Age (years)	13-14	48	32
	15-16	82	54.7
	17-18	20	13.3
Type of School	Private	150	100
Family Type	Nuclear	90	60.0
	Joint	60	6.7

Table 4**Descriptive Statistics of Parent-Adolescent Communication, and Internet Addiction**

Descriptive Statistics					
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Internet Addiction	150	2.10	4.70	3.7657	.32585
Valid N (listwise)	150				

A descriptive analysis was conducted to examine the central tendencies and dispersion of the study's core variables among the sample of 150 adolescents.

- **Parent-Adolescent Communication:** Participants reported moderately high levels of

perceived communication quality with their parents. Scores ranged from a minimum of 2.05 to a maximum of 4.70, with an average score of 3.78 ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.36$).

- **Internet Addiction:** Similarly, the sample exhibited medium-to-high tendencies

toward internet addiction. Scores are ranging from 2.10 to 4.70, average score is closely associated with metric ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.33$).

Overall Interpretation:

Research finding shows that the adolescents are experiencing above-average levels of both parent-adolescent communication and internet addiction. Low standard deviation of both the

variables (below.40 for parent-child communication and internet addiction) suggest that the adolescents' responses are uniform and closely structured around the mean.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between **parent-adolescent communication and internet addiction** among adolescents.

Table 5

Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.836 ^a	.698	.696	.24555
a. Predictors: (Constant), Parent-adolescent communication				

Table 5 shows a substantial link between parent adolescent communication and internet addiction ($R = 0.836$). Parent-adolescent communication

explains 69.8% of internet addiction variation, indicating a significant predictive association.

Table 6

ANOVA for Regression Model Predicting Internet Addiction from Parent-Adolescent Communication

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20.650	1	20.650	342.488	.000 ^b
	Residual	8.923	148	.060		
	Total	29.573	149			
a. Dependent Variable: Internet Addiction						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Parent-adolescent communication						

Table 6 demonstrates that the regression model itself differs significantly ($F = 342.488$, $p < .001$), demonstrating that parent-adolescent

communication is a strong predictor of adolescent's internet addiction.

Table 7

Regression Coefficients for Internet Addiction Prediction in Parent-Adolescent Communication

Coefficients					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t
		B	Std. Error	β	
1	(Constant)	.256	.213		1.201
	Parent-adolescent communication	1.038	.056	.836	18.506
a. Dependent Variable: Internet Addiction					

Table 7 indicates that parent-adolescent communication significantly predicts internet addiction ($\beta = 0.836$, $t = 18.506$, $p < .001$). The results show that changes in communication

patterns are significantly associated with internet addiction levels. Therefore, Hypothesis H1 is accepted.

H₂: There is a significant difference between male and female adolescents with respect to internet addiction.

Table 8

Gender-Specific Mean and Standard Deviation of Internet Addiction

Gender	N	M	S. D	S.E.M
Internet Addiction	Male	75	3.5787	.49927
	Female	75	3.7547	.36698

Note. M =mean, S. D= Std. Deviation, and SEM: Std. Error Mean

As demonstrated in Table 8, the mean scores of internet addiction ($M = 3.75$) exhibited by female adolescents are high when compared to the mean scores of internet addiction ($M = 3.58$) depicted

by male adolescents, showing that there are certain gender-related variations in the outcomes of adolescent behavior.

Tabel 9

Independent Samples t-Test for Disparities by Gender in Internet Addiction

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances					
t-test for Equality of Means					
F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	

Internet Addiction	Equal variances assumed	6.276	.013	2.460	148	.015
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Table shows a significant gender difference in internet addiction ($t = 2.460$, $p = .015$). The disparities between male and female teenagers are statistically significant because the p -values are below 0.05 ($t = 2.460$, $p < .001$). Therefore, Hypothesis H₂ is accepted.

4. Discussion

This study investigates the relationship in internet addiction in adolescents and parent-adolescents communication. The findings of this study closely aligned with existing literature and the hypothesis. The findings suggest significant relationship between the quality of parent-adolescent communication and internet addiction. Non-supportive and ineffective communication creates emotional distance and conflicts and also divert the adolescents towards internet usage for comfort.

Problematic internet usage is linked to mental health issues, family conflicts and poor parent-adolescent relationship quality. Whereas open communication and positive parent-adolescent relationship are associated with lower levels of conflicts and problematic internet usage. Parent-adolescent communication quality strengthens the positive relationship between them and associated with mental health issues which is also helpful in preventing the internet addiction (Ozaslan et al., 2021). Parent-adolescent communication increases the bond between the parents and relationship qualities like disclosure, prosocial behavior, warmth etc. and therefore lowers the levels of problematic internet usage. It also enhances the mental health and reduces conflicts. It also enhances the coping mechanism and problem-solving attitude of an adolescent. Whereas excessive use of internet is linked to mental health challenges like anxiety and depression. Positive family dynamics plays vital role in internet use behaviors and mental health outcomes.(S. Zhang et al., 2025).

Parent-adolescent communication also works as protective factor in rejection sensitivity and internet addiction. Positive communication also has significant role in school engagement and cognitive, emotional and behavioral engagement.(Li et al., 2021). Internet addiction shows similarity with substance addiction and adolescents is a habit-forming period which is potential of shaping long-term addictive behaviors, lower parental monitoring increases the social-media usages but at the same time if parent-adolescents conflict is there than it is also linked to diversion of adolescents towards the social media and internet. It starts with play engagement later converts into internet addiction. Early parental involvement and monitoring by positive and supportive communication shows the long-term effect on negative behavior of adolescents as compare to restrictions and restrictive usage of internet and impacts the lifelong habits.(Demers et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the findings are consistent with extensive systematic reviews (Kuss & Lopez-Fernandez, 2016), which confirm that a lack of supportive and positive family communication works as a primary catalyst for excessive and compulsive internet usage. Maltreatment history links towards depression, anxiety and negative emotions which indirectly diverts an adolescent towards internet which later becomes internet addiction. Hence supportive family, better peer relationship buffers against the negative mental health (Pandey et al., 2020).

Overall, the data suggests that effective and positive open parent-adolescent communication serves as a crucial protective factor against unhealthy internet behaviors. The study underscores the necessity of positive family dynamics in safeguarding adolescents' digital habits and overall emotional well-being. Adolescents are spending lot of time in social

media, internet, games and peer-interaction via internet. Adolescents see this as cause of connection but this is also a cause of stress and distraction. Lack of parental monitoring makes the internet usage vulnerable. It often starts with exposure from peer and peer interaction than becomes addiction because of peer-pressure and fear of missing out right approach of parental monitoring and parent-adolescent communication intervene and prevent them to become addicted (Taddi et al., 2024).

Internet-addiction or social media addiction is rising day by day in adolescents as compare to adults, parent-adolescents relationship influences the family-centered approach and reduce the usage behavioral patterns, gender moderates the relationship and male and female have different attitude towards parent-adolescent communication and internet usage. Female adolescents are more proactive in reducing the social media addiction as compared to male adolescents (Gupta et al., 2025). Negative emotions also predict the problematic technology use and related to higher problematic internet usage. When family communication is ineffective there is conflict, distance and avoidance in the parent-adolescent relationship it strengthens the negative emotion cycle and increase the internet usage, whereas open and supportive communication creates the protective buffer and becomes the reason of prevention (Su et al., 2025; Huang et al., 2025).

While summarizing the findings highlights the importance of comfortable and supportive communication between the adolescents and parents acts as a bubble of buffer against the problematic internet use. Parents should focus on providing the comfortable and supportive communication rather than strict surveillance as poor family communication inhibit the problematic internet usage, loneliness, depression and other mental health concerns (D. Zhang et al., 2024). This study strongly emphasizes on deep positive family communication and relationship and on respectful and mutual open communication between parent and adolescents.

Open communication is key: Adolescents must feel heard and safe rather than judged, they like to share their struggles to an online friend or use a technology to find out the answer which may drag them to cyberbullying, internet addiction, anxiety or towards the wrong directions. They need timely and constructive guidance by the parents so its must to have open and supportive communication with them.

Holistic Emotional Support: family dynamics are very important in foundation of not only good habits, moral values and psychological well-being but also important to prevent and adolescent from the ill-habits and future addictions which is very much important factor of healthy adult.

5. Conclusion

This study investigates the relationship between a parent-child communication and internet addiction in adolescents of Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) along with the gender differences. Findings reveal that the parent-adolescent communication is psychosocial factor of adolescent's internet addiction or problematic internet usage. Findings confirms that the quality of parent-child communication predicts the variance in internet addiction levels. Adolescents who experience poor or emotional distant communication with parents are at higher risk for social media or internet addiction.

Poor communication is linked to higher internet addiction which is significantly different in male and female. Family communication act as preventive faction and support adolescents' well-being (Monteiro et al., 2023).

This study finds that positive and open parent-adolescent communication has as a vital protective factor against problematic internet use. The results emphasize on the need to family-centered communication along with the modern interventions to promote healthy digital habits and overall mental health wellbeing of adolescents. into modern interventions aimed at promoting healthy digital habits and overall psychosocial adjustment in adolescents (Zapf et al., 2024).

In accordance with the results of the research, the following recommendations are offered:

Parental Training: Parent trainings should be organized for engaging in open, and supportive communication with their adolescents. parent can seek help from family counseling so that they can understand the need and ways of creating better understanding between the parent and adolescents.

School-Based Interventions: The school must run life-skills education and family-engagement program which focuses on problem solving attitude, ways of responsible internet usage and emotional resilience.

Gender-Sensitive Approaches: School and community programs ought to be tailored to gender specific behavioral patterns, as studies shows the gender differences in terms of internet addiction, patterns of communication and other mental health issues.

Limitations and future implications:

In future research, it will be better to have a larger number of sample size, different socio-economic status and different cultural dynamics. It can be

further performed as longitudinal so that the links of parent-adolescent communication and behavior outcome can be studies with time too. Inclusion of other variables may be use like peer influence, parenting, academic stress, mental health indicators to understand in-depth.

Data Availability Statement

The original data included in the study is procured and can be inquired further from the correspondent author.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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