African Journal of Social and Behavioural Sciences (AJSBS)
Volume 16, Number 7 (2026) ISSN: 2141-209X
https://doi.org/10.68442/ajsbs/2026/v16i7.134

INTERNET ADDICTION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING: ROLE OF GENDER AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OYE EKITI

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates internet addiction and psychological well-being: role of gender among undergraduates of Federal University Oye Ekiti. The study was guided by two research questions and two research hypotheses. The study employed a descriptive survey design and a multistage sampling technique to select 600 undergraduates. The instrument that was adopted for the study was a questionnaire titled "Internet Addiction and Psychological Well-being of University Undergraduates". The data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, percentages, t-test, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings showed that undergraduates' psychological well-being was high (Grand mean = 2.51), while internet addiction was also high (Grand mean = 2.94). Also, the results showed that internet addiction is significantly related to psychological well-being among undergraduates ($r(600) = -0.569$ and $p = 0.001$). Moreover, the results showed that gender differences in internet addiction among Federal University Oye Ekiti undergraduates are not significant ($t(598) = 1.86$, $p = 0.064$). The study concluded that there is no significant gender difference in internet addiction and a negative correlation between internet addiction and psychological well-being among undergraduates of Federal University, Oye-Ekiti.

Keywords: Psychological Well-being, Internet Addiction, Gender, Undergraduates

INTRODUCTION

Today's university life revolves around the internet, which has completely changed how students learn, communicate, educate themselves, amuse themselves, and stay in touch with one another. It is increasingly becoming a reality that internet-enabled devices are now becoming integral to the lives of university undergraduates for learning, socialising, academic work, entertainment, and personal communication (Aregbesola & Van der Walt, 2024; Dunne, 2026; Firth et al., 2024; Oladokun et al., 2026; Omar et al., 2025). The Internet can be an educational and social asset, but excessive and poorly controlled use can become a problem with negative consequences for students' functioning and psychology. Thus, excessive or uncontrolled Internet use that causes impairment or distress has emerged as a significant concern in research on university students.

Due to the widespread use of mobile phones, social media, streaming services, online games, and other digital technologies, it is now more crucial than ever to comprehend how problematic Internet use may affect students' psychological functioning.

The vulnerability of excessive use of the internet among University students can be attributed to the fact that they are experiencing academic pressures, social pressures, developmental transitions, and increased personal autonomy (Arogundade et al., 2026; Basri et al., 2022; Gui & Büchi, 2021; Ma et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2020). Students have relatively unrestricted access to the internet at the university, and academic and social activities are increasingly becoming internet-dependent (Lembani et al., 2020; Sato et al., 2023). While there may not be any serious issues with internet use, some problems may occur when students use the internet more than they planned, become preoccupied with internet use, neglect schoolwork or social interactions, have problems sleeping because of internet use, or feel uncomfortable without the internet. These behaviours can lead to problems with their health, wellness habits, social interactions with others, and therefore influence students' psychological well-being.

Psychological well-being is when an individual is functioning positively in their psychology and has the ability to live a meaningful and satisfying life (Martela, 2026). It is not just about the absence of psychological issues, but also about positive evaluations of oneself and one's life, having a sense of purpose and direction, positive relationships with others, personal growth, autonomy and effective life circumstances management (Van Dierendonck & Lam, 2023). Bakker and Mostert (2024) indicated that psychological well-being is of particular importance for university students, as it can have an impact on adjustment to the university, academic engagement, interpersonal relationships, coping with stress, and quality of life. If students' psychological well-being is poor, they may struggle to build positive relationships and confidence, to set goals, or to react appropriately (Osiesi & Arogundade, 2022; Park et al., 2020).

Research interest in the relationship between internet addiction and psychological health has grown. The time spent online could limit opportunities for in-person time, exercise, quality sleep and other activities that are important for healthy psychological functioning (Allred & Atkin, 2020; Dresp-Langley & Hutt, 2022; Kwok et al., 2021). Additionally, students who surf the internet for too long may suffer academically, socially, emotionally, and in their daily lives (Al-Kandari & Al-Sejari, 2021; Kwok et al., 2021; Throuvala et al., 2021). Moreover, lonely students with low self-esteem, an unhappy life and troubles with normal life may seek refuge, entertainment, or regulation on the internet (Iranmanesh et al., 2021). This suggests that there may be intricate connections between psychological well-being and problematic internet use, whereby higher levels of problematic internet use may be linked to worse psychological functioning, and psychological issues may also result in problematic internet use.

Another determinant that could be considered as an important factor in exploring the internet addiction of university students is gender. Females and males can socialise and have different recreational preferences, interpersonal behaviours and academic activities resulting in varying amount, purpose and pattern of internet use. A few studies showed that males may be addicted to the internet more than the females, specifically with respect to internet gaming and internet

recreational activities (Bada et al., 2023; Baloğlu et al., 2020; Chukwuemeka & Nwosu, 2021; Hussaini & Akachukwu, 2025; Niskier et al., 2024; Varchetta et al., 2024; Wartberg et al., 2021), while females may engage in more substantial use of social networking and communication platforms. But the results on gender differences have been inconsistent across populations and locations. Therefore, in light of these considerations, it is necessary to recognise that gender differences need to be studied within specific cultural and educational settings, and not just assume they are the same for male and female students.

With digital technology and internet-based learning gaining a foothold in Nigeria, the relevance of this has risen among University students. Undergraduate students in Nigeria are increasingly turning to the internet for academic research, online learning, social networking, entertainment, communication and other everyday activities (Adeyemi & Ise-Oluwa, 2022; Asibong et al., 2020; Kuliya & Usman, 2021; Onyeka & Obiora, 2021; Sawyerr-George & Agina-Obu, 2023). These opportunities can enrich students' learning experiences, but can also cause difficulties in academic functioning, relationship building, sleep, and psychopathology if used too much. There is still little empirical data on the connection between internet addiction and psychological well-being among Nigerian university students, particularly when gender is taken into account, despite the fact that the rise of digital behaviour has sparked a lot of interest in its relationship with psychological well-being.

Therefore, this study concentrated on undergraduates' psychological health and internet addiction, particularly in relation to gender. The study assessed undergraduate students' psychological well-being, internet addiction, and the relationship between the two. It also considered whether there are any notable differences between male and female students' addiction to the internet. The study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding the abuse of the internet and students' psychological health in a Nigerian academic setting. The results can also serve as evidence for the university management, counsellors, psychologists, teachers, and other stakeholders in creating intervention strategies that will encourage responsible internet use and help university students maintain their psychological well-being.

Statement of the Problem

The growing ubiquity of internet access has revolutionised tertiary education, offering students learning experiences, communication, information and entertainment. But at the university level, excessive internet use is on the increase. A large number of undergraduates spend a great deal of time online, to the detriment of sleep, classwork, interpersonal relations, social interactions and other daily obligations. These patterns of internet use can be correlated with poor psychological health, such as life dissatisfaction, loneliness, problems with interpersonal relationships, lack of purpose, and negative self-evaluation. Internet problems among university students ought not to be overlooked or ignored in the interests of education and socialisation benefits.

Moreover, gender differences could affect how the internet is used and the level of problematic internet behaviours that students experience. There may be variations between male and female undergraduates in terms of how frequently, why, and how they use the internet, although the data

supporting these disparities varies depending on the context. There are few empirical studies in Nigeria that examine gender, psychological health, and internet addiction in college students. Therefore, gender disparities in internet addiction and undergraduate students' psychological wellness are investigated.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of psychological well-being among undergraduates?
2. What is the level of internet addiction among undergraduates?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being among undergraduates
2. There is no significant difference in the level of internet addiction among male and female undergraduates

Overview of Internet Addiction

Internet addiction is defined by Vettriselvan et al. (2025) as excessive, compulsive, and poorly controlled internet usage that negatively impacts an individual's academic, social, and occupational functioning, as well as personal functioning. Though the internet has become a vital component of modern society, the consequential problem of internet use is characterised by difficulty or inability to regulate one's internet use, and the continual use of the internet in spite of the negative consequences they have experienced (Dresp-Langley & Hutt, 2022). Students of the university might be at a special risk due to the frequent use of smartphones, social media, online entertainment, games, and learning programmes. According to Tabish (2025), internet addiction can become a gradual process where people feel a greater need to engage in online activities for social interaction, emotional relief, or entertainment.

Symptoms of Internet Addiction

The symptoms of Internet addiction include using the internet more than intended, being preoccupied with the internet, continually trying to limit one's internet use, and becoming irritable or restless when one is unable to use the internet (Almourad et al., 2020; Burke, 2022; Reddy, 2021). Other symptoms include avoiding schoolwork, sleeping while online, hiding the time spent online, enjoying online activities more than real-world activities, and using the internet to cope with negative moods (Özparlak et al., 2023; Tiamiyu et al., 2024). According to Kolhar et al. (2021), heavy and frequent use can also lead to social withdrawal, less school participation, and psychological problems.

Concept and Components of Psychological Well-being

Van Dierendonck and Lam (2023) defined psychological well-being as "a state of positive psychological functioning, characterised by having a meaningful life, developing positive relationships, a positive self-perception, and effective coping with demands of daily life". It is more than the lack of psychological suffering; it is about being able to function, self-actualise and having a purpose in life. For students at the university level, psychological well-being is especially significant as it has been linked to a variety of adjustment, engagement, interpersonal, and coping outcomes for academic and social stressors (Chaudhry et al., 2024).

In Ryff's concept, psychological well-being is a multifaceted process with six main components (Savahl et al., 2023). Having a good outlook on oneself and accepting both positive and bad aspects of oneself is known as self-acceptance. The capacity to build warm, meaningful, and trustworthy relationships with people is a sign of positive interpersonal relationships. The idea of autonomy is associated with independence and the capacity to regulate behaviour in line with personal beliefs. The ability to handle life's challenges well is known as environmental mastery. Having objectives and a direction in life is what gives it purpose. A willingness to enhance one's potential and skills is known as personal growth. These components are integrated and form a complete picture of students' psychological functioning and well-being.

Empirical Studies on Internet Addiction and Psychological Well-being

Cai et al. (2023) conducted a meta-analytic review of 223 studies involving 498,167 participants and 512 effect sizes to examine the relationship between problematic internet use and various mental health outcomes among students. The findings showed that problematic internet use was positively associated with depressive symptoms (r =.313), anxiety (r =.277), loneliness (r =.252), and other mental health outcomes (r =.289). Importantly, problematic internet use was negatively associated with subjective well-being, with a pooled correlation of r = −.213 (95% CI = −.270 to −.163, p <.001) across 29 studies and 38 effect sizes. This indicates a moderate negative relationship, such that higher problematic internet use was associated with lower subjective well-being. The authors further reported that publication year significantly moderated the relationship between problematic internet use and subjective well-being, whereas school grade, geographical region, measurement instrument, and gender did not significantly moderate this association.

Islam et al. (2021) investigated the impact of psychological well-being and COVID-19-related characteristics on problematic smartphone and social media use among Bangladeshi college and university students. The study discovered that problematic social media use (PSMU) and problematic smartphone use (PSPU) were positively correlated with younger age, poor sleep, social media use, watching television, anxiety, and depression, according to a hierarchical regression study. Additionally, female gender, nuclear family, and urban living were linked with PSMU, while male gender, married, and lower-income families were linked to PSPU.

The frequency of internet addiction and its correlation with demographic factors, depression, anxiety, and psychological well-being among college students were the main topics of the study

by Kumar et al. (2024). According to the survey, 15.9% of respondents had an internet addiction with a cutoff score of 50, 27.4% and 20.5% had anxiety and depression, and 66.7% reported having low psychological well-being. Additionally, it was discovered that internet addiction has a negative impact on psychological well-being and is strongly linked to anxiety and depression. Additionally, internet addiction was independently linked to male students, depression, anxiety, and poor psychological well-being. Additionally, Akhter and Khalek (2020) looked into the relationship between psychological well-being and problematic internet use among Bangladeshi university students. They discovered that social interaction anxiety, psychological well-being and loneliness predict problematic internet use positively, with loneliness showing the strongest association. Additionally, it was demonstrated that male students were more affected by internet addiction than their female counterparts.

According to Zenebe et al.'s (2021) study on the prevalence and contributing causes of internet addiction among Ethiopian undergraduate university students, 85% (n = 466) of the current users had experienced internet addiction. Mental anguish, current alcohol consumption, increased internet usage, and online gaming were linked to internet addiction. Additionally, Shen et al. (2020) studied the prevalence, correlates, and relationship between internet addiction and suicide attempts among Chinese college students. According to the study's findings, 7.7% of Chinese college students had internet addiction. In their investigation of gender disparities in internet addiction among Slovak Republic university students, Rigelsky et al. (2021) discovered that male students had a higher degree of internet addiction. A cross-sectional study on internet addiction among Moroccan high school students, its frequency, and its correlation with subpar academic performance was examined by Mohamed and Bernouss (2020). Severe internet addiction was only found to be associated with low school education, female gender, computer and internet access, excessive online time, and low parental educational attainment.

Theoretical Framework: Cognitive-Behavioural Model of Pathological Internet Use

The study was anchored on Davis' (2001) Cognitive-Behavioural Model of Pathological Internet Use, which explains the development and maintenance of problematic internet use from a cognitive-behavioural perspective. The model proposes that pre-existing psychological difficulties, such as loneliness, depression, social isolation, and negative perceptions of oneself, may predispose individuals to develop maladaptive cognitions about internet use. Consequently, individuals may increasingly use the internet as a means of escaping negative emotions, obtaining social interaction, or coping with difficulties in their offline environment. Persistent reliance on these coping patterns may eventually result in problematic or uncontrolled internet use.

However, Davis' model primarily explains the pathway from psychological difficulties and maladaptive cognitions to problematic internet use, rather than directly proposing that internet addiction causes poor psychological well-being. Therefore, the present study recognises that the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being may be bidirectional. While excessive internet use may be associated with impaired psychological functioning, individuals with poorer psychological well-being may also be more vulnerable to problematic internet use.

https://doi.org/10.68442/ajsbs/2026/v16i7.134

Since the present study employs a correlational design, it does not establish causality or determine the direction of influence.

The model is relevant because it provides a framework for understanding the association between internet addiction and psychological well-being among undergraduates. Nevertheless, gender is not a specific component of Davis' model. Thus, the examination of gender differences in the present study is treated as an empirical issue supported by previous research rather than as a prediction derived from the model. This distinction ensures that the theoretical framework accurately reflects Davis' original proposition while allowing gender differences to be investigated empirically.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive survey research design was employed in the study. The design was appropriate because the study's objectives were to examine the relationship between internet addiction and undergraduates' psychological well-being and to determine whether gender disparities existed in internet addiction without attempting to alter any of the variables under investigation.

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised undergraduate students of Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. A sample of 600 students was selected for the study. A multistage sampling procedure was employed to select the respondents for the study. At the first stage, five faculties were selected from the fourteen faculties in the university using simple random sampling through balloting. At the second stage, two departments were selected from each of the five selected faculties using simple random sampling, resulting in a total of ten departments. At the third stage, undergraduate students were selected from the ten sampled departments using simple random sampling. Sixty students were randomly selected from each of the departments, making a total of 600 respondents. To examine gender differences in internet addiction and psychological well-being, the sample comprised 312 male students and 288 female students. The use of simple random sampling at the different stages gave eligible students an equal opportunity of being selected, while the multistage procedure ensured representation across the selected faculties and departments of the university. There was 100% response rate as the entire questionnaire was recovered.

Instrument for Data Collection

The Internet Addiction and Psychological Well-being of University Undergraduates Questionnaire (IAPWUUQ) was used for data collection. The questionnaire comprised three sections. Section A obtained the socio-demographic information of the respondents. Section B measured internet addiction and was adapted from Young's (1998) 20-item Internet Addiction Test. Fifteen items considered relevant to the objectives and context of the present study were selected, while five

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items were omitted because they were not directly relevant to the study. The items are how often do you prefer the excitement of the internet to intimacy with your partner; how often do you check your email before something else that you need to do; how often does your job performance suffer because of the internet; how often do you become defensive when anyone asks you what you do online; and how often do you block out disturbing thoughts about your life with soothing thoughts of the internet. The response format was modified to a four-point scale ranging from 1 = Rarely to 4 = Always. Consequently, the original cut-off scores and severity classifications of Young's 20-item instrument were not applied. The adapted Internet Addiction Scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.75.

Section C assessed selected dimensions of psychological well-being and was adapted from Ryff's (1989) Psychological Well-being Scale. Although Ryff's model comprises six dimensions, the present study measured three dimensions using 15 items: self-acceptance (items 1–6), purpose in life (items 7–10), and positive relations with others (items 11–15). Autonomy, environmental mastery, and personal growth were not included. Items were rated on a four-point scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree. The adapted scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70.

Face and content validity were established by submitting the instruments to three experts in Counselling Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation. Their recommendations concerning clarity, relevance, and adequacy of the items were incorporated. The instruments were also pilot-tested among 20 undergraduates of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, who were excluded from the main study. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee, Federal University Oye Ekiti. Informed consent was obtained from all participants with assurance of confidentiality. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires. Data were analysed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and independent-samples t-test.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Department	Male	Female	Total
Agric Economics and Extension	30	30	60
Animal Production and Health	34	26	60
English and Literary Studies	32	28	60
History and International Studies	30	30	60
Guidance and Counselling	31	29	60
Library and Information Science	33	27	60
Biochemistry	29	31	60
Microbiology	31	29	60
Accounting	30	30	60
Business Administration	32	28	60

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RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the level of psychological well-being among undergraduates?

Table 2: Level of Psychological Well-being among Undergraduates (N = 600)

S/N	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	S.D.
1	When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out	42 (7%)	94 (15.7%)	228 (38%)	236 (39.3%)	**3.1**	0.907
2	In general, I feel confident and positive about myself	160 (26.7%)	190 (31.7%)	124 (20.7%)	126 (21%)	**2.36**	1.09
3	I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have	166 (27.7%)	326 (54%)	90 (15%)	18 (3%)	**3.07**	0.738
4	I like most aspects of my personality	176 (29.3%)	228 (38%)	122 (21.3%)	74 (12.3%)	**2.16**	0.984
5	When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am	138 (23%)	298 (49.7%)	102 (17%)	62 (10.3%)	**2.15**	0.891
6	In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life	134 (22.3%)	290 (48.3%)	104 (17.3%)	72 (12%)	**2.81**	0.924
7	I have a sense of direction and purpose in life	176 (29.3%)	226 (37.7%)	74 (12.3%)	124 (20.7%)	**2.24**	1.090
8	I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality	214 (35.7%)	176 (29.3%)	90 (15%)	120 (20%)	**2.19**	1.129
9	I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future	142 (23.7%)	306 (51%)	96 (16%)	56 (9.3%)	**2.89**	0.874
10	Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them	180 (30%)	250 (41.7%)	90 (15%)	80 (13.3%)	**2.12**	0.986
11	Most people see me as loving and affectionate	84 (14%)	62 (10.3%)	238 (39.7%)	216 (36%)	**2.17**	0.925
12	Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me	160 (26.7%)	298 (49.7%)	100 (16.7%)	42 (7%)	**2.96**	0.845
13	I enjoy personal and mutual	166	250	110	74	**2.15**	0.966

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	conversations with family members or friends	(27.7%)	(41.7%)	(18.3%)	(12.3%)		
14	People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others	116 (19.3%)	312 (52%)	102 (17%)	70 (11.7%)	**2.21**	0.888
15	I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns	194 (32.3%)	274 (45.7%)	92 (15.3%)	40 (6.7%)	**3.04**	0.863
	Grand Mean					**2.51**	

Responses were analysed using a four-point Likert scale (SD = 1, D = 2, A = 3, SA = 4). A mean score of 2.50 and above indicates a high level, while a mean below 2.50 indicates a low level. Scoring of negative statements is reversed

The highest means were satisfaction with life outcome (3.1) followed by not being moved that many people have gotten more out of life (3.07) and not feeling lonely because of few close friends with whom to share concerns (3.04). Psychological well-being was high (Grand Mean = 2.51). Undergraduates at Federal University Oye Ekiti have a high level of psychological well-being.

Research Question Two: What is the level of internet addiction among undergraduates?

Table 3: Level of Internet Addiction among Undergraduates (N = 600)

S/N	Items	R	O	OF	A	Mean	S.D.
1	How often do you find that you stay online longer than you intended?	44 (7.3%)	68 (11.3%)	200 (33.3%)	288 (48%)	**3.22**	0.92
2	How often do others in your life complain to you about the amount of time you spend online?	140 (23.3%)	108 (18%)	220 (36.7%)	132 (22%)	**2.57**	1.075
3	How often do your grades or school-work suffer because of the amount of time you spend online	184 (30.7%)	126 (21%)	130 (21.7%)	160 (26.7%)	**2.44**	1.182
4	How often do you find yourself anticipating when you will go online again	54 (9%)	78 (13%)	244 (40.7%)	224 (37.3%)	**3.06**	0.93
5	How often do you fear that	54 (9%)	76	194	276	**3.15**	0.962

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	life without the internet would be boring, empty and joyless?		(12.7%)	(32.3%)	(46%)		
6	How often do you snap, yell, or act annoyed if someone bothers you while you are online?	92 (15.3%)	68 (11.3%)	262 (43.7%)	178 (29.7%)	**2.88**	0.92
7	How often do you lose sleep due to being online?	76 (12.7%)	82 (13.7%)	234 (39%)	208 (34.7%)	**2.96**	0.996
8	How often do you feel preoccupied with the internet when offline, or fantasize about being online?	70 (11.7%)	70 (11.7%)	282 (47%)	178 (29.7%)	**2.95**	0.938
9	How often do you find yourself saying just a few more minutes when online?	62 (10.3%)	72 (12%)	278 (46.3%)	188 (31.3%)	**2.99**	.922
10	How often do you try to cut down the amount of time you spend online and fail	60 (10%)	92 (15.3%)	258 (43%)	190 (31.7%)	**2.96**	0.934
11	How often do you try to hide how long you've been online?	84 (14%)	62 (10.3%)	238 (39.7%)	216 (36%)	**2.98**	1.013
12	How often do you choose to spend more time online over going out with others?	48 (8%)	76 (12.7%)	238 (39.7%)	238 (39.7%)	**3.11**	0.913
13	How often do you feel depressed, moody or nervous when you are off-line, which goes away once you are back online?	90 (15%)	56 (9.3%)	228 (38%)	226 (37.7%)	**2.98**	1.036
14	How often do you neglect household chores to spend more time on-line?	86 (14.3%)	76 (12.7%)	268 (44.7%)	170 (28.3%)	**2.87**	0.985
15	How often do you form new relationship with fellow online users	62 (10.3%)	84 (14%)	232 (38.7%)	222 (37%)	**3.02**	0.962
	Grand Mean					**2.94**	

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Responses were analysed using a four-point Likert scale (R = 1, O = 2, OF = 3, A = 4). A mean score of 2.50 and above indicates a high level, while a mean below 2.50 indicates a low level.

Internet addiction was high (Grand Mean = 2.94). The highest means were for spending more time online than going out with others (3.11), staying online longer than planned (3.22), fearing that life without the Internet will be dull, empty, and joyless (3.15), and anticipating when to go online again (3.06). The quantity of time spent online affecting grades or schoolwork (2.44) fell short of the criterion mean. Internet addiction is quite common among Federal University Oye Ekiti undergraduates. Significant percentages reported staying online longer than planned, spending more time online than going out with others, worrying about when to return to the internet, and fearing that life without it would be dull, empty, and joyless. It was less common for grades or schoolwork to suffer as a result of the amount of time spent online.

Hypotheses Testing

Two hypotheses were generated and tested using a t-test and the Pearson product-moment correlation statistical method.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being among undergraduates

Table 4: Relationship between Internet Addiction and Psychological Well-being among Undergraduates

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r.	P
Internet Addiction	600	1.78	0.42		
				-0.569	0.001
Psychological Well-being	600	1.46	0.499		

Level of significance: 0.05

The findings of the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being are compiled in Table 4. This table indicates that the average score for internet addiction is 2.94 with a standard deviation of 0.711, and the average score for psychological health is 2.205 with a standard deviation of 0.688. At the 0.05 level of significance, the correlation coefficient r (600) = -0.569 and the p = 0.001, indicating a negative correlation between internet addiction and psychological well-being. The null hypothesis is rejected since the value of p is smaller than the significance level. There is significant relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the level of internet addiction among male and female undergraduates

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Table 5: t-test Results of the Difference in Internet Addiction among Male and Female Undergraduates

Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	df	t	p
Male	312	2.9949	0.6742	598	1.86	0.064
Female	288	2.887	0.7476			

Level of significance: 0.05

The results in Table 5 indicate that male students had a mean score of 2.9949 and a standard deviation of 0.6742, whereas female students had a mean score of 2.887 and a standard deviation of 0.7476; t(598) = 1.86 and p = 0.064. The hypothesis is retained since the p value is higher than the significance level of 0.05. There is no significant difference in the level of internet addiction among male and female undergraduates.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study revealed that the level of psychological well-being of the undergraduates of Federal University Oye-Ekiti was high, with a grand mean of 2.51. The finding shows that despite the difficulties of university education and the use of the internet, a certain number of the respondents demonstrated positive psychological functioning. Some students had positive self-evaluation and interpersonal functioning as evidenced by their relatively high scores on satisfaction with life outcomes and reduced feelings of loneliness. This result aligns with the definition of psychological well-being as positive psychological functioning characterised by living meaningfully, maintaining positive relationships and coping well with everyday life demands (Van Dierendonck & Lam, 2023). Furthermore, it is consistent with Bakker and Mostert (2024), who stated that psychological well-being is relevant for the adjustment, academic engagement, interpersonal relationships and coping of university students with stress. There are some areas of psychological functioning, however, indicated by the relatively lower scores on purpose in life, personal confidence and some aspects of interpersonal relationships that may require attention.

The study also pointed out that the undergraduates were highly addicted to the internet, with a grand mean of 2.94. The top-ranked behaviours were being online longer than they had intended, spending more time on the internet than with friends, worrying about life without the internet, and looking forward to when they could go online again. This discovery indicates problems in controlling internet use among respondents. This finding is similar to Zenebe et al. (2021) who found that internet addiction was prevalent among Ethiopian undergraduate students. It also aligns with the problematic internet use being defined as a problem with regulating online behaviour despite the real-world negative consequences as described by Dresp-Langley and Hutt (2022).

Besides, there was a significant negative correlation between psychological well-being and internet addiction. Thus, the more the students were addicted to the Internet, the less they were psychologically well. The results are consistent with Cai et al. (2023), who found a negative

correlation between problematic internet use and subjective well-being in their meta-analysis. It is also similar to Akhter and Khalek (2020) who reported that loneliness and psychological well-being are among the factors that are related to problematic internet use. However, the present correlational design does not allow concluding that internet addiction leads to poor psychological well-being.

Finally, there was no difference detected between male and female undergraduates with regard to internet addiction. There was no significant difference in the mean score between males and females, but males scored slightly higher. The study results are in contrast with Rigelsky et al. (2021), Kumar et al. (2024), and Akhter and Khalek (2020), who found that male students were more likely to be internet addicted than their female counterparts. This difference may suggest that gender is different across cultural and educational settings and that it is important to look at the gender dimension in specific settings, and not assume uniform differences between males and females.

Conclusion

The study reveals that the psychological well-being, as well as the level of internet addiction among undergraduates of Federal University Oye-Ekiti, is high. There was a significant negative correlation between internet addiction and psychological well-being, which means that the more problematic internet use was, the less psychological functioning was. But, there was no significant difference between genders in internet addiction. The results suggest the need to promote responsible internet use and reinforce psychological wellness among university students by providing proper counselling, awareness and supportive interventions.

Recommendations

1. Regular awareness programmes should be conducted among students on the risks of excessive internet usage and healthy usage, time management, face-to-face interactions and recreational activities.
2. Counsellors and academic advisers should identify students showing signs of internet addiction and provide early support or referrals where necessary.
3. The institution should reinforce psychological wellness through supportive interventions.

Limitations

This study was limited to one university. Self-report measures may introduce response bias, while the cross-sectional design limits causal inference. Additionally, shortened and rescaled instruments, and measurement of only three of Ryff's six dimensions, may limit comprehensive assessment.

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