

The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Internet Addiction Among Youth and Adults

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Abstract

This study aimed to compare emotional intelligence (EI) levels and Internet addiction (IA) by gender and age groups and to assess the predictive relationship between EI and IA. One thousand four hundred thirteen young people and adults participated in the study. Participants were between 17 and 81 years old ($M = 38.70$ years old, $SD = 13.72$ years old); 42.2% were male, whereas 57.5% were female. We used a sociodemographic questionnaire, the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte, Malouff, & Bhullar, 2009), and the Internet Addiction Test (Young, 1998) as data collection instruments. Results showed that there is a weak, but statistically significant, negative relationship between EI and IA. We found higher levels of EI in older people and in women than in the youngest participants and in men. No relevant prevalence of IA was found in the participants of this study.

Keywords: adults, emotional intelligence, internet addiction, youth

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence and Internet addiction are inversely associated, as indicated by several studies showing that individuals with high emotional intelligence levels are less likely to be addicted to the Internet (Beranuy, Oberst, Carbonell, & Chamarro, 2009; Hamissi, Babaie, Hosseini, & Babaie, 2013; Parker, Taylor, Eastbrook, Schell, & Wood, 2008). Emotional intelligence is also related to one's personality, social relationships, and life satisfaction (Hamissi et al., 2013), whereas Internet addiction is associated with various diseases, including depression or phobic anxiety, as well as a number of

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psychosocial risk factors, such as hostility and social isolation (Beranuy et al., 2009).

Internet addiction is assumed to be a very broad concept, and there is no conclusive definition or consensus about this phenomenon. Despite the commitment to achieve a uniform definition and its inclusion in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition*, researchers and clinicians have encountered difficulties in designating Internet addiction as an impulse control disorder (Block, 2008; Negovan, 2010; Oktuğ, 2010).

In this context, Silva (2014) asserts that many Portuguese teenagers and young adults spend too much time using computers, mobile devices, and the Internet. This study reveals that nearly three quarters of the population under 25 years old show signs of dependence on the digital world. In the most extreme cases, online addiction can result in isolation and violent behaviors and may require psychiatric treatment (Silva, 2014). When addressing the topic of Internet addiction, the results of Pontes, Griffiths, and Patrão (2013) show that the presence of Internet addiction in Portuguese adolescents and young adults between the ages of 15 and 39 years attending secondary school and university is correlated with depressive symptoms and sociodemographic factors, including gender, marital status, age, and level of education.

A variety of studies have shown the impact of Internet addiction on a broad range of behavioral and psychological aspects (Chak & Leung, 2004; Cho et al., 2010; Douglas et al., 2008; Mesgarani, Shafiee, Ahmadi, & Zare, 2013; Ying & Wenbin, 2011). In addition, other researchers studied the impact of Internet addiction on characteristics such as personality, loneliness, social support, motivational factors, and so forth among individuals of different ages and different behavioral levels (Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Hardie & Yi Tee, 2007; Jahanian & Seifury, 2008; Romano, Osborne, Truzoli, & Reed, 2013; Samarein et al., 2013).

In this context, Parker (2005) found that emotional intelligence is a substantial predictor of dependencies associated with addictive behaviors, such as online gaming and Internet use, regardless of age. The author concluded that individuals with lower interpersonal skills spend more time on addictive activities and therefore do not develop interpersonal skills consistent with their age group.

In addition, this addiction can interfere adversely with personality traits, especially among adolescents, and can cause emotional instability and impulsivity. Khoshakhlagh and Faramarzi (2012) observed that emotional intelligence is the best predictor of IA. However, a significant negative relationship also exists between emotional intelligence, mental disorders, and Internet addiction (Nikmanesh, Kazemi, & Khosravy, 2014).

Therefore, there are various aspects that motivate the importance of this investigation such as (a) relative lack of Portuguese language research concerning the relationship between EI and IA, (b) to promote social awareness regarding the existence of Internet addiction because doubts still remain about whether the addiction is real despite the fact that substantial evidence continues to grow, and (c) that mental health nurses should be more informed, so that they can take the lead in education, prevention, and treatment of Internet addiction, always considering the role of emotional intelligence in supporting their clients (Veiga-Branco & Lopes, 2012; Wieland, 2014).

In addition, the focus on gender and age is because these variables play a role in almost all spheres of life, from the workplaces to the interpersonal relationships, and the differences in gender and age clearly determine the type of prevention and intervention in the invisible problem of Internet addiction, as confirmed by studies conducted by most authors (Alavi, Maracy, Jannatifard, & Eslami, 2011; Hasanzadeh, Beydokhti, & Zadeh, 2012; Shazad & Bagum, 2012; Silva, 2014). Thus, this study aims to compare EI and IA levels by gender and age groups and to evaluate the relationship and the predictive relation between the EI and IA.

METHODS

Sample and Setting

This study involves 1,413 young people and adults between the ages of 17 and 65 years ($M = 38.79$ years, $SD = 13.607$ years). Men make up 42.1% of participants, whereas women comprise 57.7% of the sample. Concerning professional status, 6.4% of participants are unemployed, 14% are students, 12.4% are both employed and students, 45% are employed by someone else, 14.2% are self-employed, 4% are retired, and 3.2% have more than one source of employment. In regard to marital status, participants show the following characteristics: single (34.2%), married (38.7%), cohabiting (9.1%), widowers (1.1%), affective meaningful commitment with someone (9.1%), and divorced (7.5%). With respect to formal educational levels, 0.1% of participants have 4 years of formal education, 0.3% have 6 years, 2.2% have 9 years, 12.8% have 12 years, 32.6% hold an undergraduate degree, 37.5% have a master's degree, and 13.7% possess a doctoral degree.

Procedure

Data were collected online. A specific link was created for this investigation, and it was disseminated through e-mail, organizational contacts, and social networks. On their home page,

the researchers presented the study's objectives and ethical research procedures, which included confidentiality, anonymity of the participants, and informed consent. Data collection took place between October 2014 and February 2015 and was collected from a sample of the Portuguese population. The study conforms to the ethical principles for scientific research, as defined by the Portuguese Psychological Society (*Ordem dos Psicólogos Portugueses*), as well as the guidelines of the American Psychological Association regarding the conduct of human studies. Subsequently, the data collected were statistically analyzed using the SPSS v.22. The age division of the sample is supported by the research of Papalia, Olds, and Feldman (2009) that emphasizes adult development as a set of specific changes that occur in biological and psychological domains of human life according to each age stage.

Measures

The data collection instruments used included a sociodemographic questionnaire, the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte, Malouff, & Bhullar, 2009), and the Internet Addiction Test (Young, 1998).

The sociodemographic questionnaire aimed to gather demographic information to enable us to characterize the study's participants. Thus, we considered variables such as age, gender, nationality, marital status, and educational level.

The Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (Schutte et al., 2009) is a measure of emotional intelligence traits and consists of 33 items with a 5-point Likert-type response format. Each item asks participants to indicate their level of agreement, using responses ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The most commonly used subscales are "perception of emotions" (Items 5, 9, 15, 18, 19, 22, 25, 29, 32, and 33), "dealing with our own emotions" (Items 2, 3, 10, 12, 14, 21, 23, 28, and 31), "dealing with others' emotions" (Items 1, 4, 11, 13, 16, 24, 26, and 30), and "use of emotions" (Items 6–8, 17, 20, and 27). Factor analysis revealed four factors whose load factor is equal to or above 0.40. The strength factor and rigorous design of the 33 items were the principal reasons this scale was utilized. The analysis of internal consistency is shown by a Cronbach's alpha of .90, indicating good internal consistency, and the test-retest showed a reliability of .78 (Schutte et al., 1998). The value obtained in this study was .879, which is consistent with the original study, representing a very high level of internal consistency (Marôco, 2014). The studies conducted by Schutte et al. (1998) showed that the scores in the measurement of 33 items are correlated with eight theoretically related constructs. The total score can vary between 33 and 165 points. The higher the score achieved on this scale, the more easily individuals can be considered emotionally stable. Of the 33 scale items, 5, 28, and 33 are inverted.

The Internet Addiction Test (Young, 1998) is a questionnaire of 20 items in which respondents are asked to score each item on a Likert-type scale of 5 points to assess the degree to which Internet usage affects their daily routines, social life, productivity, and feelings. The minimum score is 20, and the maximum is 100. The higher the score, the greater the

problems caused by Internet use. Young suggests that a score of 20–39 points is a midline where the respondent has full control and shows proper use of the Internet. A score of 40–69 signifies that the respondent shows frequent problems related to Internet usage. Finally, a score of 70–100 means that the respondent's Internet usage is causing significant problems. We extracted six factors from this questionnaire. The first factor (five items) measures the importance of using the Internet. The second factor (five items) measures overuse of the Internet. The third factor (three items) assesses neglect of one's work and professional obligations. The fourth factor (two items) measures anticipation. The fifth factor (three items) describes one's lack of self-control. Finally, the sixth factor (two items) highlights and evaluates the lack of a social life. These factors show low to good consistency, with alpha coefficients ranging from .54 to .82 (Widyanto & McMurrin, 2004). The Cronbach's alpha value obtained in this study (.916) is higher than the value in the original study, which signifies a very high level of internal consistency (Marôco, 2014).

We used parametric tests that required two conditions: the quantitative variables to be normally distributed and the population variances to be homogeneous. This was ensured after using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and the Levene test (Marôco, 2014). Student *t* test was required for comparing means of two different subject groups, and the Pearson correlation coefficient was used as a measure of linear association, with values oscillating between -1 and $+1$ (Pestana & Gageiro, 2014). In addition, we used the stepwise multiple regression to predict the behavior of a dependent variable (*y*) from the independent variables (*x*), alongside with the margin of error (95% confidence interval).

RESULTS

For EI levels, the average score was 134.48 ($SD = 12:48$), and the average for IA levels was 36.10 ($SD = 13:43$). In the sample, 67.8% of participants reported having complete control and proper use of the Internet, whereas 30.2% had a score that indicates frequent problems relating to their Internet usage, and 1.9% possessed scores indicating significant problems in relation to Internet use.

Regarding the demographic results, "age" was subdivided into two groups, the "youth" group (adolescents and young adults) between 17 and 30 years and the "older" group between 31 and 65 years. All demographic results are shown in Table 1.

Table 2 shows that male and female participants show statistically significant differences ($t(1385) = -3.734, p < .001$), with women scoring higher in EI ($M = 135.59, SD = 13.10$) when compared with men ($M = 132.88, SD = 13.73$). Results for all other dimensions are presented in the same table.

Table 3 shows the statistically significant differences among age groups ($t(1349) = -5.906, p < .001$), in addition to conveying that older participants generally report a higher EI score ($M = 136.31, SD = 13.38$) than younger participants

($M = 132.04, SD = 13.08$). Results for all other dimensions are presented in the same table.

Table 4 shows the results regarding the comparison of Internet addiction levels and the dimensions by gender. Statistically significant gender differences are found ($t(1385) = 4.558, p < .001$), with men possessing higher IA scores ($M = 37.89, SD = 13.83$) than women ($M = 34.81, SD = 11.25$). Results for all other dimensions are presented in the same table.

Table 5 presents the results comparing Internet addiction levels and their dimensions by age. Differences between age groups are statistically significant ($t(1349) = 6.348, p < .001$), and younger participants have higher IA scores ($M = 38.47, SD = 13.31$) when compared with older subjects ($M = 34.19, SD = 11.43$). Results for all other dimensions are presented in the same table.

The researchers performed a Pearson correlation analysis between the variables and their dimensions. The results presented in Table 6 indicate that the established correlations between the variables of emotional intelligence and Internet addiction are mostly negative and significant. The researchers verified the existence of weak negative correlations, which were also statistically significant for most of the dimensions of the two scales.

As previously noted, we established a weak, but statistically significant, negative correlation ($r = -.184, p < .001$) in regard to the relationship between emotional intelligence and Internet addiction. Thus, the researchers conducted a linear regression, designating Internet addiction as the dependent variable and emotional intelligence and its dimensions as the independent variables.

Using the stepwise method of linear regression, as shown in Table 7, the dimensions of emotional intelligence are determined to act as predictors of Internet addiction. The results shown are the nonstandardized regression coefficients (β), the values of standard error of β , the standardized regression coefficients (β), the R^2 , and the R^2 set. The adjusted R^2 explains the 0.41% of the variability.

The *B* standard error (EPB) is 0.080, and the value of *t* ($t = -7.444, p < .001$) is significant, signifying that the dimension entered into the regression model ("perception of emotions") has explanatory power in regard to Internet addiction. The second regression model utilizes the dimensions "perception of emotions" and "dealing with others' emotions" as variable predictors of Internet addiction. In this regression model, the value of the adjusted R^2 explains 0.48% of the variability. The standard error value of *B* (EPB) of 0.099 and the value of *t* ($t = -3.994, p < .001$) for the "perception of emotions," in addition to the value of *B* (EPB) of 0.100 and the value of *t* ($t = -3.303, p = .001$) for the dimension "dealing with others' emotions," are statistically significant. This suggests that these dimensions of emotional intelligence also have explanatory power in regard to Internet addiction. As can be seen when considering the value of *B*, both the dimension "perception of emotions" ($\beta = -.204, p < .001$) and the dimension "dealing with others' emotions" ($\beta = -.204, p < .001$) have a negative influence on Internet addiction. This signifies the

TABLE 1 Sociodemographic Data		Frequency	%	Cumulative %
Gender	Male	585	42.1	42.1
	Female	802	57.7	99.9
Education level	4 years	1	0.1	0.1
	6 years	4	0.3	0.4
	9 years	31	2.2	2.6
	12 years	178	12.8	15.5
	Undergraduate	454	32.6	48.4
	Master	522	37.5	86.2
	Doctoral	191	13.7	100.0
Marital status	Single	476	34.2	34.3
	Married	538	38.7	73.2
	Cohabiting	127	9.1	82.3
	Widower	15	1.1	83.4
	Affective commitment with someone	126	9.1	92.5
	Divorced	104	7.5	100.0
Profession status	Unemployed	89	6.4	6.4
	Student	195	14.0	20.6
	Employed student	172	12.4	33.0
	Employed by someone else	626	45.0	78.3
	Self-employed	198	14.2	92.7
	Retired	56	4.0	96.7
	Other	45	3.2	100.0
Total (N)		1391	100.0	

existence of an inverse relationship, showing a correlation between lower levels of “perception of emotions” and “dealing with others’ emotions” and higher levels of Internet addiction.

DISCUSSION

The sample shows very low levels of Internet addiction, as only 1.9% of subjects present significant problems in regard to their Internet usage.

The results for gender differences were statistically significant ($t(1385) = -3.734, p < .001$), because women obtained higher scores than men in the dimensions of emotional intelligence. This complements the study results of Mandell and Pherwani (2003), which also observed significant differences in the average scores of emotional intelligence between men and women. The results are in line with those reported by Extremera, Fernandez-Berrocal, and Salovey (2006), as well as those of Harrod and Scheer (2005), which found that women possessed higher levels of emotional intelligence than men. However, gender differences in EI are not supported by all conducted studies. In fact, Shazad and Bagum (2012) con-

cluded that men and women have the same level of emotional intelligence, although they verified the existence of different scores on emotional intelligence subdimensions.

However, most existing results show greater emotional skills in women, which we also could see in this study. In fact, according to recent studies, women have an increased capacity at the level of emotional intelligence not only in general but also in various dimensions of the same, as analysis of emotions, perception, and emotional expression; managing emotions; and also related emotions with cognition (Çelik & Deniz, 2008; Snowden et al., 2014). Furthermore, emotional intelligence is considered more as a markedly feminine attribute because of the demonstration of greater social skills by women as men, in turn, usually present as more proficient in other areas such as spatial ability (Bueno, Santana, Zerbini, & Ramalho, 2006; Rooy, Alonso, & Viswesvaran, 2005).

Regarding the sample’s differences in the results concerning age, there were statistically significant differences seen between age groups ($t(1349) = -5.906, p = .000$). Older participants presented higher scores in all dimensions of

TABLE 2 Results for the Comparison Between Men and Women in Total EI Score and Subscales						
	Gender	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t (df)</i>	<i>p</i>
Total EI	Male	585	132.88	13.73	-3.734 (1385)	.000**
	Female	802	135.59	13.10		
“Perception of emotions”	Male	570	36.59	4.27	-4.516 (1339)	.000**
	Female	771	37.65	4.25		
“Dealing with our own emotions”	Male	572	35.13	3.55	-2.324 (1351)	.020*
	Female	781	35.58	3.51		
“Dealing with others’ emotions”	Male	579	31.85	4.43	-5.324 (1366)	.000**
	Female	789	33.09	4.08		
“Use of emotions”	Male	574	24.56	3.25	-2.265 (1354)	.024*
	Female	782	24.96	3.16		

EI = emotional intelligence.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

emotional intelligence, in comparison with younger members of the study, supporting the empirical evidence found by Extremera et al. (2006). In their research, they found that older individuals possessed more emotional intelligence. These results suggest that life experiences can have a positive impact on the development of emotional intelligence. Gaitniece-Putane (2009) shows that gender and age can influence emotional intelligence, which was corroborated by the study sample, as older individuals and women showed higher average values of this variable.

Regarding the results of Internet addiction levels and its gender dimensions, the research concluded that gender differences are statistically significant ($t(1385) = 4.558, p < .001$). Men, on average, revealed a higher IA score than women. It should be noted that, in the dimension “lack of control,” there was no statistically significant difference ($t(1372) = 1.505, p = .133$);

however, men showed a higher score ($M = 05.05, SD = 2.31$) when compared with women ($M = 4.87, SD = 2.17$). These results corroborate those reported by Chakraborty et al. (2010); Frangos, Frangos, and Sotiropoulos (2011); Kuss, Griffiths, and Binder (2013); and Özcan and Gokcearslan (2013), which found that men showed a higher risk of developing Internet addiction. Alavi et al. (2011) also state that male subjects are inclined to use the Internet more frequently than women, so the risk of Internet addiction in the general male population is about three times higher than in the general female population. Although high levels of Internet addiction are almost nonexistent in our study’s sample, our findings still corroborate the results obtained in prior research. The research confirms that women show greater emotional intelligence when compared with men, which is a key indicator of Internet addiction, due to the negative relationship

TABLE 3 Results for Total EI Score and the Range of Dimensions in Younger and Older Participants						
	Age Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t (df)</i>	<i>p</i>
Total EI	Younger	631	132.04	13.08	-5.906 (1349)	.000**
	Older	720	136.31	13.38		
“Perception of emotions”	Younger	612	36.85	4.16	-2.447 (1305)	.015*
	Older	695	37.44	4.40		
“Dealing with our own emotions”	Younger	616	34.98	3.49	-3.646 (1316)	.000**
	Older	702	35.68	3.54		
“Dealing with others’ emotions”	Younger	622	31.92	4.19	-4.934 (1330)	.000**
	Older	710	33.07	4.27		
“Use of emotions”	Younger	622	24.20	3.14	-6.187 (1319)	.000**
	Older	699	25.28	3.16		

EI = emotional intelligence.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

TABLE 4 Results for the Comparison Between Men and Women in the Total Score of the IA and the Subscales						
	Gender	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t (df)</i>	<i>p</i>
Total IA	Male	585	37.89	13.83	4.558 (1385)	.000**
	Female	802	34.81	11.25		
“Importance of the Internet use”	Male	580	8.24	3.95	3.569 (1364)	.000**
	Female	786	7.57	2.99		
“Overuse”	Male	579	10.33	3.59	3.401 (1367)	.001*
	Female	790	9.69	3.37		
“Negligence at work”	Male	569	5.08	2.54	4.229 (1353)	.000**
	Female	786	4.54	2.10		
“Lack of control”	Male	580	5.05	2.31	1.505 (1372)	.0133
	Female	794	4.87	2.17		
“Lack of a social life”	Male	580	5.71	2.61	3.344 (1372)	.001*
	Female	794	5.26	2.36		

IA = Internet addiction.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

consistently found between these two variables. Thus, there is a need to implement programs to spur emotional development, not only to facilitate the expression of emotions in men but also to develop protective factors against addictive behaviors when using the Internet.

Concerning the results that compare levels of Internet addiction and its dimensions by age, the researchers found that the differences between age groups are statistically significant as well ($t(1349) = 6.348, p < .001$). On average, the study's younger participants revealed a higher Internet addiction

score when compared with older members of the study. These results are consistent with those seen in the literature, which finds that younger individuals, particularly teenagers, are at an increased risk of Internet addiction (Beutel et al., 2011; Chen & Fu, 2009; Hasanzadeh et al., 2012; Sato, 2006). The study by Silva (2014) also revealed that almost three quarters of the Portuguese population aged 25 years and younger show signs of digital world dependence, especially teens and young adults who, in many cases, spend excessive amounts of time on the Internet. In short, younger participants score lower on

TABLE 5 Results for the Comparison of the Total IA Score and the Range of Dimensions Among Younger and Older Individuals						
	Age Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t (df)</i>	<i>p</i>
Total IA	Younger	631	38.47	13.31	6.348 (1349)	.000**
	Older	720	34.19	11.43		
“Importance of Internet use”	Younger	624	8.41	3.77	5.457 (1329)	.000**
	Older	707	7.39	3.07		
“Overuse”	Younger	624	10.53	3.70	5.504 (1331)	.000**
	Older	709	9.48	3.21		
“Negligence at work”	Younger	624	5.17	2.46	5.888 (1318)	.000**
	Older	696	4.43	2.11		
“Lack of control”	Younger	627	5.30	2.12	5.403 (1337)	.000**
	Older	712	4.65	2.28		
“Lack of a social life”	Younger	626	5.82	2.60	5.042 (1336)	.000**
	Older	712	5.14	2.34		

IA = Internet addiction.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

TABLE 6 Pearson Correlations Between EI and IA Variables												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. "EI Total"												
2. "IA Total"	-.184**											
3. "Perception of emotions"	.737**	-.191**										
4. "Dealing with our own emotions"	.853**	-.137**	.570**									
5. "Dealing with others' emotions"	.865**	-.182**	.601**	.690**								
6. "Use of emotions"	.810**	-.104**	.493**	.639**	.584**							
7. "Importance of Internet use"	-.187**	.866**	-.180**	-.172**	-.187**	-.109**						
8. "Overuse"	-.161**	.903**	-.170**	-.117**	-.154**	-.098**	.711**					
9. "Negligence at work"	-.234**	.795**	-.219**	-.170**	-.225**	-.159**	.616**	.657**				
10. "Predicted Internet"	-.078	.737	-.112	-.036-	.074	-.034	.548	.609	.499			
11. "Lack of control"	-.118**	.840**	-.130**	-.078**	-.118**	-.048	.650x**	.749**	.627**	.540*		
12. "Lack of a social life"	-.060*	.593*-	-.067*	-.036	-.071*	-.023	.481**	.459**	.422**	.349*	.409**	

EI = emotional intelligence; IA = Internet addiction.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

TABLE 7 Stepwise Multiple Regression on the Predictor Effect of Emotional Intelligence in Internet Addiction

	Predictor	R ²	R ² Adjusted	B	EPB	β	t	p
Step1	“Perception of emotions”	.042	.041	-.593	0.080	-.204	-7.444	.000
Step2	“Perception of emotions”	.050	.048	-.396	0.099	-.204	-3.994	.000
	“Dealing with others’ emotions”	-.329	.100	-.204	-3.303	.001	-0.329	.100

emotional intelligence and are the most likely to be addicted to the Internet. In cases of extreme Internet addiction, the development of intervention activities and the promotion of social skills are warranted.

Furthermore, the dimensions “perception of emotions” ($\beta = -.204, p < .001$) and “dealing with others’ emotions” ($\beta = -.204, p < .001$) show an inverse relationship with levels of Internet addiction. The research indicates that lower levels of “perception of emotions” and “dealing with others’ emotions” are correlated with higher occurrences of Internet addiction. In this context, the study of Hamissi et al. (2013) shows that self-assessed emotional intelligence scores have a negative relationship with Internet addiction. In other words, people with high emotional intelligence seem to be able to control their dependence on the Internet, whereas individuals with low emotional intelligence are more likely to show signs of Internet addiction.

The correlations established between the variables of emotional intelligence and Internet addiction are weak and negative ($r = -.184, p < .001$) but statistically significant. The study by Reiso?lu, Gedik, and Goktas (2013) show that emotional intelligence is not a predictor of Internet addiction, which contradicts other findings from the literature as well as those found in this study. Jafari and Fatehizade (2011) corroborate the existence of correlations between Internet addiction and emotional intelligence, claiming that emotional intelligence can reliably predict 29% of cases of Internet addiction. Data from this study indicate that there is a relationship between these variables. However, it should be noted that this association might vary based on individual and cultural differences.

Contrary to those who display low levels of emotional intelligence, emotionally intelligent individuals will actually be able to create, through the use of emotional regulation, positive emotions controlling the negative and grow emotionally and intellectually and will be better able to establish interpersonal relationships and better control of their own lives (Wong & Law, 2002).

The negative impact of Internet use on individuals and their lives is often undervalued. Brown (2006) suggested that the choice that individuals make by the technological means is influenced by their character and the way they interact with the world. Thus, the way people interact with the Internet can be reflected in their daily lives, influencing their behavior. Adolescents are more likely to use the Internet as a form of socialization, without realizing the potential negative impact, and when this affects the mood and compromises the function and the academic, professional, and social performance, the use

of the Internet can become a problem that requires intervention by psychologists (Yen, Ko, Yen, Chang, & Cheng, 2009).

In the field of nursing, Wieland (2014) reveals that the nurses are professionals who often interact with clients and identify the problems associated with Internet addiction as the primary failure of well-being or as a secondary problem of other concerns such as anxiety, depression, and so on.

So, the implications for mental health education and interventions are challenging for nurses. On the one hand, nurse educators need to add technological addictions, such as Internet addiction, to the nursing curriculum, and the nursing assessment should include use of screening instruments for this specific addiction such as adapting the Young Internet Addiction Test by Young (1998).

On the other hand, nurses must have emotional intelligence training to know their emotions to effectively manage them and recognize them in others (empathy), to assist the clients to join and progress in the treatment of this addiction, because a key to intervention is the motivation for change, which is particularly problematic with the current reliance on the Internet for people’s everyday lives (Fitzpatrick, 2008).

In the perspective of emotional intelligence, nurses should be aware of their own emotions and how these affect them, thereby subsequently managing their own emotions and becoming more effective in their activities, whether personal or professional. So, the emotions underlying the sense of the effectiveness of the decisions from the emotional control are the key for performance in nursing career (Veiga-Branco & Lopes, 2012).

This study features some limitations. First, the sample was very heterogeneous and was gathered over the Internet. Second, it was a cross-sectional study that warrants caution when generalizing the results obtained. Therefore, further studies in the same field that utilize even broader samples are recommended to corroborate our findings.

Finally, we wish to promote the importance of early intervention in schools through a multidisciplinary approach encompassing parents/guardians, teachers, staff, and so forth. To prevent the development of IA behaviors and stimulate EI, we support increased health education sessions, with the goal of teaching students to use the Internet in a healthy and sustainable manner. The researchers also recommend that connections with social associations, businesses, and public services be enhanced to promote the prevention of Internet addiction. The results obtained support the idea that action should be taken in the form of primary prevention, by warning children, adolescents, and adults about the risks and

consequences arising from IA, so that they will be self-reliant and responsible with their own mental and physical health.

In conclusion, we consider this work to be an important study on Internet addiction and emotional intelligence, which made us more aware of these phenomena and the role we must play as psychologists to address them accordingly.

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