

Internet Addiction and its Impact on Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

The internet has become an integral part of modern-day life and the global population using the internet has grown to almost 3.8 billion. Internet addicts develop an emotional attachment to on-line friends and get addicted to activities they create on the computer screens. Similar to other addictions, those suffering from Internet addiction use the virtual fantasy world to connect with real people through the Internet, as a substitution for real-life human connection, which they are unable to achieve normally. Whenever Internet addicts feel overwhelmed, stressed, depressed, lonely or anxious, they use the Internet to seek solace and escape. The development of technology and the internet have made us and our children much more vulnerable to their addictive nature.

1. Introduction

The Internet is considered to be one of the most powerful tools of information exchange in modern era. The network which encompasses almost everything like private, public, academic, business and government has revolutionized the products, processes and services in almost all sphere of life. Over the years it has percolated into the entire society due to rapid growth of access network and ease of use, particularly with advancement of wireless technologies and communication devices.

Digital literacy is a key to ensure everyone stays informed about the current affairs, and do their work online in a protected and safer way. But the abundant use of internet has definitely changed the way we work, we communicate and we live. Every technology brings about procedural changes which impact routines and behavior of human being and internet is no exception to it. But increase in usage time, variations in usage patterns and preferences of internet and its impact on human behavior has also attracted the attention of social scientists. Thus, internet addiction has become a buzz word in both technological and social world.

2. Internet Usage and Internet Addiction

Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) is a definition introduced for the first time by Ivan Goldberg in 1995. It describes the net addiction as "a pathology, a disorder, an overuse of this technology, including a wide range of behaviours and impulse-control, (Goldberg, 1996). Some studies relate Internet Addiction Disorder to physical changes in the brain structure – specifically affecting the amount of gray and white matter in regions of the prefrontal brain. This area of the brain is associated with remembering details, attention, planning, and prioritizing tasks. It is suggested one of the causes of Internet Addiction Disorder is structural changes to the prefrontal region of the brain are detrimental to your capability to prioritize tasks in your life, rendering you unable to prioritize your life, i.e. the Internet takes precedence to necessary life tasks. Internet Addiction Disorder, in addition to other dependency disorders, seems to affect the pleasure centre of the brain. The addictive behaviour triggers a release of dopamine to promote the pleasurable experience activating the release of this chemical. Over time, more and more of the activity is needed to induce

the same pleasurable response, creating a dependency. With the easy accessibility of internet globally and with the rise of new-generation gadgets, the risk of "internet addiction" is a compelling behavioral pandemic to be tackled worldwide.

Internet in the recent times has emerged as a double-edged sword, beneficial in acquiring knowledge on one hand and addiction and habituation on the other hand that has serious effects on physical, mental and social wellbeing and also adversely affects the academic performance of the learning population. The internet allows people to establish social connections with strangers without any fear, to express their thoughts and feelings freely without any inhibition and are able to access useful information, just with a single press.

The Internet allows for the rapid search of information, facilitates sharing of information, and offers a whole new way of communication between people from all over the world. Although increased access to the Internet has brought much convenience to society, it has also resulted in maladaptive patterns of use and led to decreased life quality, negative mood, and impaired daily function in real life (Anderson, 2001; Young, 1998). There are various powerful uses of the internet for school and college students such as research, online degrees, part-time jobs, communication, social networking, educational stationery, tools and applications, admission form submission, online test and data storage etc. The more students learn the uses of the internet in their college life, the greater its benefits. Research is the most important in life and advancement of career skill. Students and teachers do research on various things. It can be related to science, medicine, culture, geographic, humans, animals, communication, time, environment, products, and services.

As per internet usage report published by Nielsen Online and International Telecommunications Union (ITU), there are 4.3 billion internet users worldwide with highest number of users from China followed by India. Approximately 56.8% of world population is on internet. By now, a world without the internet is unimaginable. Connecting billions of people worldwide, the internet is a core pillar of the modern information society. The global internet penetration rate is 59 percent. The growth in internet usage is expected to continue as it is becoming fast indispensable part of everyday life.

Urban India with an estimated population of 455 million already has 295 million using the internet. Rural India, with an

estimated population of 918 million as per 2011 census, has only 186 million internet users leaving out potential 732 million users in rural India. India's internet users expected to register double digit growth to reach 627 million in 2019, driven by rapid internet growth in rural areas, market research agency Kantar IMRB. ICUBE 2018 report that tracks digital adoption and usage trends in India, noted that the number of internet users in India has registered an annual growth of 18 percent and is estimated at 566 million as of December 2018, a 40 percent overall internet penetration. It projected a double digit growth for 2019 and estimates that the number of internet users will reach 627 million by the end of this year. (Business Today, 2019). It is fascinating to note that the digital revolution is now sweeping small towns and villages perhaps driven by increased accessibility at affordable data costs. The increase in the usage of digital in rural India, where more than two-thirds of active internet users are now accessing the internet daily to meet their entertainment and communication needs.

According to a report "Internet in India 2017" published jointly by the Internet and Mobile Association of India & Kantar IMRB, internet is the preserve for youngsters, with Students and youngsters accounting for around 60% of all internet users in India. Psychological and environmental factors in the lives of college students may leave them disproportionately vulnerable to Internet addiction.

The increases in smartphone usage have fueled a massive uptake in internet traffic in the country. It estimates that by 2022, internet networks in India will carry 646 petabytes (1,000 terabytes or 1 million gigabytes) of data per day, which is over 490% higher than the 108 petabytes in 2017. By 2022, there will be 829 million smartphone users in India, accounting for 60% of the population, according to Cisco's 13th annual Visual Networking Index (VNI). Until last year, a mere 27% of Indians were using smart phones.

Identifying problematic Internet use among college students is challenging because the Internet can serve as a tool in nearly every aspect of their daily living such as for communication, shopping, business, travel, research, entertainment, and more and it is hard to imagine a world without internet. As the college students are more vulnerable to addiction that may cause psychological problems and that in turn may lead to academic failures. Most of college students are engaged on internet for the purpose of entertainment, social life, shopping, online courses, online jobs and many more. They are spending their more time on the readymade solution that is easily assessable on internet, this leads to internet addiction thus spoiling their academic and social life.

Every innovation brings its inherent risks. Internet addiction is one such risk associated with usage of internet. In order to examine Internet addiction in terms of gender, Internet access, family background and its impact on psychological, social, educational and occupational behavior, thus, choosing this topic for research. This study will help in recognizing signs and symptoms of Internet addiction, treating affiliated conditions and initiate psychosocial, industry & government interventions for optimal management.

Internet is likely to remain integral part of modern lifestyle; therefore, it will be difficult to disconnect the access in future. Realizing that adoption rates of internet are set to rise exponentially in future, choosing this study will help to know about the consequences of internet over usage or internet

addiction so as to take preventive measures, as per the circumstances and need.

Growth in internet availability and usage time is impacting psychological, social, educational and occupational behavior of human beings. The usage pattern may vary across age, gender, parental age & education, family size, internet access and so will be the variance of impact on various parameters. This study aims to investigate the types of internet addiction, symptoms of internet addiction disorders and the impacts of internet disorder on psychological, social, educational and occupational behaviour. The effects & impacts are significant to study because the growth of internet is rapidly penetrating into the routines of human life. With the advent of Internet of Things (IoT), the internet usage is not confined to information seeking only but has become a mandatory part of our daily life to complete the chores. It is hard to imagine in modern world, where human beings can avoid compulsion of using internet application in some form or the other.

3. Impact of excessive usages of internet on wellbeing

Internet has provided life easy, accessible and communicable in all sphere of life. It has increased the sphere in all the field such as education, communication, entrainment, social interaction etc. but due to dependency on this, people are becoming more dependent and addicted. this is affecting their social, mental and psychological wellbeing. It appears impossible that this phenomenon has not affected our lives. The result of excess time spent on qualitatively low activities in virtual environments has caused changes in the psychosocial behavior of individuals, leading to the definition of healthy and pathological internet use. Accordingly, healthy internet use is the use of the internet within a determined time interval with a specific aim (Davis, 2001).

According to **Emeka and Nyeche (2016)** the internet today is a worldwide entity whose nature cannot be easily or simply defined. To many, the internet is a large computer network linking together millions of smaller computers at numerous sites in various countries belonging to thousands of businesses, government, research, educational and other organizations. To the internet users, the internet is a global community-one with a very active life. In today world, the Internet plays a vital role in the teaching, research and learning process in academic institutions. Thus, the advent of the Internet has heralded the emergence of a new form of knowledge production and distribution – the soft form.

Suresh, C.V. (2018) studied the Internet addictive behaviors and subjective well-being among 1st-year medical students of Bengaluru. This study revealed that those who had higher levels of internet addiction showed reduced subjective happiness. Thus, those who experience decreased subjective happiness without overt psychological disturbances are still prone to have addictive patterns. This should be considered during screening for addictive behaviors.

Subhashini K. J., Praveen G. (2018) studied the association between internet addiction and depression and to know the effect of gender on internet addiction. Out of the 300 professional college students, 173 (57.7%) were found to be internet addicted and 67 (38.7%) among them were found to be depressed and a statistically significant association. Males were found to be more addicted than females and it was statistically significant.

Sharma, A. et al (2018) conducted a research with the objective to find out the relationship between internet addiction and Psychological Well Being of college student. The mean age of students was 19.11 (± 1.540) years, and 62.3% were male. Internet addiction was significantly negatively correlated to PWB ($r = -0.572$, $P < 0.01$) and sub-dimensions of PWB. Students with higher levels of internet addiction are more likely to be low in PWB. Simple linear regression showed that internet addiction was a significant negative predictor of PWB.

Kraut et al. (2002) found that excessive internet usage presents a negative effect on face to face interactions by reducing time spent with friends and family members, which leads to increased loneliness and depression, thus decreasing psychological well-being.

The study conducted by **Yoo et al. in 2014** also described that social networking site usage had a significant negative effect on PWB. Previous research evidence demonstrated associations between prolonged internet use, compulsive behaviors, and psychological problems among college students suggest that compulsive internet use impacts on PWB.

Randler (2016) examined the relationship among smartphone addiction with the age, gender and chronotype of German adolescent. The most remarkable result of this study was that morningness–eveningness (as measured by CSM scores) is an important predictor for smartphone addiction; even stronger than sleep duration. Evening oriented adolescents scored higher on both smartphone addiction

scales. In addition, gender is an important predictor for smartphone addiction and girls are more prone to become addicted. According to the *t*-test results, girls had higher scores than boys in smartphone addiction. Sleep duration during the week were negatively correlated with smartphone addiction. Short sleepers showed higher problematic usage. However, weekend sleep duration was unrelated to problematic smartphone usage.

4. conclusion

In view of the possible negative influence of Internet addiction on human development, there is a need to have a thorough understanding of the nature of Internet addiction. The Internet is used by many people as a normal part of their career or education, knowing how to separate excessive from normal use becomes difficult and cannot be accomplished using simple measures such as amount of time spent online in a given period. Most fundamental in differentiating normal from problem Internet use is the experience of compulsion to use the net. Normal users, no matter how heavy their usage, do not *need* to get online and do not neglect their occupational duties or their relationships with family and friends to get online. It is crucial to control our usage and understand what other precautions we can take to protect ourselves and our children from internet addiction and technology addiction.

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