

Original Research

Internet use and addiction among adolescents

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ABSTRACT:

Background: The present study was conducted for assessing internet use and addiction among adolescents. **Materials & methods:** 100 participants within the age group of 16 to 18 years were enrolled. A Preformed Proforma was given to all the subjects. Semi-structured proforma that contained details of demographics, educational qualification and status, purpose of using the internet, money spent per month, place of access, the time of day when the internet is accessed the most, and the average duration of use per day. All the results were recorded in Microsoft excel sheet and were analysed by SPSS software. **Results:** Out of 100 subjects, 38 were moderate internet users, 42 were possible addicts of internet while the remaining 20 subjects were addicted to internet. While analysing statistically, it was seen that internet addicted subjects had compromised physical health, mental health and general health in comparison to the moderate users and possible addicts. **Conclusion:** There is significant proportion of adolescent population affected by internet addiction. Also, this addiction is affecting their health.

Key words: Internet, Adolescent, Addiction

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INTRODUCTION

There has been an explosive growth in the use of internet not only in India but also worldwide in the last decade. There were about 42 million active internet users in urban India in 2008 as compared to 5 million in 2000. The internet is used by some to facilitate research, to seek information, for interpersonal communication, and for business transactions. On the other hand, it can be used by some to indulge in pornography, excessive gaming, chatting for long hours, and even gambling. There have been growing concerns worldwide for what has been labeled as "internet addiction."¹⁻³

The concept of internet addiction (IA), which was first used by Goldberg in 1995, has recently turned out to be a phenomenon. This phenomenon is defined through various terms such as "net addiction", "online addiction", "IA disorder", "pathologic internet use" and "cyber disorder". Young linked excessive internet use most closely to pathological gambling, a disorder of impulse control in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) and adapted the DSM-IV criteria to relate to internet use in the IA Test (IAT). Healthy internet use

is the use of the internet for an expressed purpose in a reasonable amount of time without cognitive or behavioral discomfort whereas problematic internet use or IA is a psychiatric condition that involves maladaptive thoughts and pathological behaviour. Now it is difficult to estimate how widespread this IA in adolescents is. The major symptoms of IA include 1) preoccupation with the internet, 2) withdrawal symptoms – restless or irritability including a feeling of anger, tension, depression when the computer is inaccessible, 3) repeated unsuccessful effort to control, cut back or stop internet and so on.⁴⁻⁶ Hence; the present study was conducted for assessing internet use and addiction among adolescents.

MATERIALS & METHODS

The present study was conducted for assessing internet use and addiction among adolescents. A total of 100 participants within the age group of 16 to 18 years were enrolled. A Preformed Proforma was given to all the subjects. Semi-structured proforma that contained details of demographics, educational qualification and status, purpose of using the internet, money spent per month, place of access, the time of

day when the internet is accessed the most, and the average duration of use per day. All the results were recorded in Microsoft excel sheet and were analysed by SPSS software.

RESULTS

Out of 100 subjects, 59 were boys and 41 were girls. Out of 100 subjects, 38 were moderate internet users,

42 were possible addict of internet while the remaining 20 subjects were addicted to internet. While analysing statistically, it was seen that internet addicted subjects had compromised physical health, mental health and general health in comparison to the moderate users and possible addicts.

Table 1: Correlation of internet users with health

Variables	Internet users- Correlation coefficient			p- value
	Moderate users	Possible addict	Addict	
Physical health	-1.225	-0.258	1.691	0.000 (Significant)
Mental health	-1.875	-0.658	1.998	
General health	-2.358	-0.845	2.138	

DISCUSSION

Adolescence can be defined as the period between puberty and adulthood, usually between the ages of 11 and 18 years. Events during this period greatly influence a person's development and can determine their attitudes and behavior in later life. Adolescence can be divided into three substages: early, middle, and late. One of the most important functions of adolescence is to find one's own identity and view of life, without inner conflict and the need to always act within acceptable moral standards, abide by parental authority, or meet peer expectations. Because teenagers are often in conflict with authority and cultural and moral norms of society, certain developmental effects can trigger a series of defense mechanisms. During adolescence, there is an increased risk of emotional crises, often accompanied by mood changes and periods of anxiety and depressive behavior, which adolescents attempt to fight through withdrawal, avoidance of any extensive social contact, aggressive reactions, and addictive behavior. Adolescents are exceptionally vulnerable and receptive during this period and can become drawn to the Internet as a form of release. Over time, this can lead to an addiction.⁷⁻¹⁰ Hence; the present study was conducted for assessing internet use and addiction among adolescents.

Karacic S et al determined if there is a correlation between the purpose of Internet use and age and if this interaction influences the level of addiction to the Internet. The study included a simple random sample of 1078 adolescents—534 boys and 525 girls—aged 11-18 years attending elementary and grammar schools in Croatia, Finland, and Poland. Adolescents were asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire and provide data on age, gender, country of residence, and purpose of Internet use (ie, school/work or entertainment). Adolescents mostly used the Internet for entertainment (905/1078, 84.00%). More female than male adolescents used it for school/work (105/525, 20.0% vs 64/534, 12.0%, respectively). Internet for the purpose of school/work was mostly used by Polish adolescents (71/296, 24.0%), followed by Croatian (78/486, 16.0%) and

Finnish (24/296, 8.0%) adolescents. The level of Internet addiction was the highest among the 15-16-year-old age subgroup and was lowest in the 11-12-year-old age subgroup. There was a weak but positive correlation between Internet addiction and age subgroup ($P=.004$). Male adolescents mostly contributed to the correlation between the age subgroup and level of addiction to the Internet ($P=.001$). Adolescents aged 15-16 years, especially male adolescents, are the most prone to the development of Internet addiction, whereas adolescents aged 11-12 years show the lowest level of Internet addiction.¹¹

Iva Černja et al investigated internet addiction on a sample of Croatian adolescents. Overall, 352 students aged between 15 and 20 from randomly selected high schools participated in the study. They have collected the data on the Internet Addiction Test along with basic demographic information. The main analyses included the factorization of Internet Addiction Test (IAT) test and the measurement of prevalence of internet addiction with the analysis of the gender differences. The results showed that 3.4% of high school students reported high levels of internet addiction, while 35.4% of respondents reported some signs of addiction. Three-factor structure of IAT was obtained with dimensions: Emotional and cognitive internet preoccupation, then Neglecting work and lack of self-control and the last one is Social problems. Although the first factor has the most significant role in internet addiction risk, gender differences were found only in the last two factors, where boys have higher scores on Social Problems, while girls have higher scores on Neglecting work and lack of self-control. The prevention activities should be focused on the area of emotional and social competence and the responsible use of internet.¹²

CONCLUSION

From the above results, the authors concluded that there is significant proportion of adolescent population affected by internet addiction. Also, this addiction is affecting their health.

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