



IMPACT OF INTERNET ADDICTION ON STUDENT'S MENTAL HEALTH

UMAR FAROOQUE

Research Scholar

Department of Education and Training

Maulana Azad National Urdu University (A Central University), Hyderabad-500032 India

Abstract : The new generation's Internet is so advanced and modern that it's becoming part of everyone's daily life, including children, young people, and old people (Nalwan & Anand ,2004). This is why the Internet is rapidly becoming an important part of our lives. The educational field also heavily utilizes the Internet. Students use the Internet to access various types of information, online courses, download content, and participate in various types of online activities. When students use the Internet excessively and cannot control themselves, they become addicted. Dr. Ivan Goldberg introduced the term "Internet addiction" in 1996 and developed it in response to excessive Internet use. He attempted to clarify various important points such as Internet addiction, Internet addiction disorder, online addiction, cyber disorder, net addiction, and Internet Addiction Disorder (Eichenberg & Ott, 1991). Due to excessive use of the Internet, students face various mental illnesses as well as psychological problems, leading to depression, anxiety, irritability, and negatively affecting their mental health. This hinders their expected educational achievement. Similarly, when the Internet is used excessively and improperly, the individual has to face physical and psychological problems (Greenfield, 1999). Currently, students use the Internet for academic work as well as wasting their valuable time on entertainment, shopping, chatting with friends, and video calls. This study is a thematic-based paper, and various reviews of related literature have been used to explain the important points used in the paper, which aims to find out how and what kinds of mental or emotional problems students have when they are addicted to the internet.

Keywords: Internet Addiction, Internet dependence, Social media addiction, Personality, Mental Health, Students.

INTRODUCTION

The Internet has presented the whole world as a small place. While the Internet offers greater opportunities for prosperity to those with limited resources, it has also led to a situation where those familiar with the web suffer rather than benefit from it (Rao, Bansal and Chandran ,2018).

When a person uses the Internet excessively, it leads to pathological behaviours, and then, due to which a person cannot control himself from using the Internet, he has to face problems in education as well as social problems, school problems, or professional difficulties. Similarly, excessive use of the Internet also causes many psychological problems, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and high levels of stress. Depression, loneliness, social phobia, hostility, and ADHD suffer from problems. People with these characteristics feel more comfortable talking online than talking to people directly (Das et al., 2019).

Millions of people use the Internet in their private and public lives to achieve various educational purposes. There is no doubt that the Internet has given us many benefits, such as saving time, providing useful information in less time, communicating with people online, taking online courses, availability of online content, taking online classes, and participating in various educational programs online, etc. But on the other hand, excessive use of the Internet leads to many problems, be they social problems, psychological problems, political problems, economic problems, value problems, emotional problems, etc., which include pornography, lack of authentic information on the Internet, wasting time, and various types of diseases, etc. Similarly, when students start using the Internet excessively under the pretext of studying and start being busy on the Internet all the time, it also has a negative impact on their mental health, due to which their expected educational achievement is not possible.

When students start using the Internet excessively and cannot control themselves, everyone can say that they are addicted to it. In contrast, when excessive use of the internet harms the people or students, then we can say it is an addiction that has developed among them.

Meaning of Internet

The Internet works as a global wide area network that connects computers all over the world. It consists of high-bandwidth data lines that run together to form the backbone of the Internet; these are the lines that connect to major Internet hubs that distribute data to other geographical locations, such as Internet Service Provider, web servers, etc (Christensson, 2015).

According to Encyclopedia Britannica (2019), “The Internet is an organized system that has revolutionized the way people communicate and trade and economies, connecting different computer networks around the world.”

Meaning of Addiction

The English word addiction is derived from the Latin word addict, which means the ability to consciously choose something and to devote oneself excessively to it, even if it causes harm (Poli, 2017).

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines addiction as a chronic disorder that is negatively affected by psychological, social, biological, and environmental factors, as well as its overall development and maintenance.

According to the American Society of Addiction Medicine (A.S.A.M.) 2019 “Addiction is a treatable and chronic disease that involves complex interactions between brain circuits, genetics, and a person’s life experiences and environment.”

Meaning of Internet Addiction

Internet addiction is a very difficult thing to define. Because it includes almost all the effects of Internet addiction. The definition and description of Internet use are not agreed upon by researchers. An example of these differences is the terminology that can describe the behaviour related to excessive Internet use.

Current Internet activities include connecting people to the Internet, which negatively impacts their lives. Different terms are needed to describe these behaviours because one term cannot cover all online activities and their consequences.

When a person uses the Internet excessively, six different terms have been given for it: Internet Addiction Disorder, Compulsive Use of the Internet, Excessive Use of the Internet, and Problematic Use of the Internet, Pathological Use of the Internet, and Computer and Internet Addiction.

Internet addiction is considered a continuous disorder in which a person experiences tension or arousal if he does not use the Internet and feels relief or happiness after doing so (Shapira et al., 2003).

Definition of Internet Addiction

All researchers agree that excessive use of the Internet has a negative impact on the overall development of students, which also has a negative impact on their mental health and does not produce the expected results in their academic achievement.

However, some of the definitions of Internet addiction that different researchers have given in different ways are as follows:

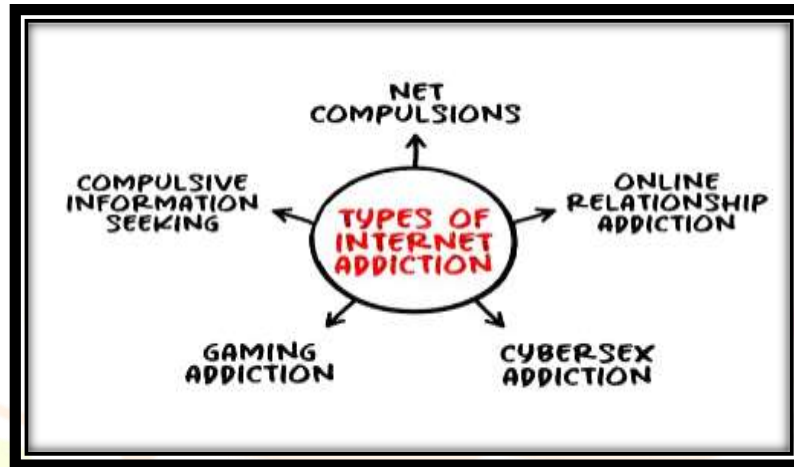
According to the Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) (2011), “Internet addiction is defined as a condition in which young people avoid participating in family activities and spend more time interacting with family and friends. And there is an attempt to reduce irritability and electronic relationships.”

According to Goldberg (1995), “Originally, people used the term “Internet addiction” to describe the detrimental effects of excessive Internet use on personal life. It is similar to substance abuse, such as chemical addiction. These are all addictions that affect individuals physically and emotionally.”

According to Rice (2005), “Internet addiction is a compulsive, involuntary use of the Internet that interferes with a person’s ability to lead a normal life.”

Types of internet addiction

Five types of Internet addiction were described by Young and his colleagues in 2000, a brief description of which is presented below.



1. Compulsive information seeking

The Internet offers endless information about any field, so people can search for all kinds of information from it, but sometimes this information search turns into an addiction, reducing people's creativity at work and making them dependent on the Internet to find information.

2. Net Compulsion

This type of addiction is related to online shopping, online auctions, or online games of various kinds. This addiction causes financial difficulties and job-related problems. People with this type of addiction will always be more involved in online activities that involve investing money, such as online gambling, shopping, and investing money in various online games.

3. Gaming Addiction

This type of addiction involves playing online or offline games. This leads to people wasting their time playing games, whether they are at the office or at home. Game addiction is not only found among employees but also among children and youth.

4. Cyber Relationship

This type of addiction is related to online friends. Due to which people neglect their personal relationships and are more involved with online friends, which has a negative impact on internet users. People with this type of addiction spend more time with online friends and friends through social networking websites than with real friends.

5. Cyber Sex Addiction

This type of addiction includes online pornography. It includes various types of activities related to sex. This type of addiction creates problems in real life, romantic and sexual relationships and it also has a negative impact on the brain.

Different types of Internet Use

We know that everyone uses the internet differently, just like people. There are many people who use the World Wide Web to access various information, like knowing about sports, weather reports, getting information about different political places, planning a vacation, filling online forms, searching for new information, etc.

There are also some people who use different applications for chatting and sending messages, like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, Messenger, MySpace, Snapchat, Skype, and Line, etc., to make new friends, communicate with people online, and stay in touch with different geographical areas. Similarly, MySpace has entirely changed the paradigm of socialization, and social networks like LinkedIn fully encourage professional connections.

The Internet can also be used for recreational purposes, such as frequent use of pornographic websites, online gambling, and playing various online games. Similarly, there is a strong correlation between Internet use and users' loneliness. Lonely people use the Internet to express their feelings and thoughts and to share their experiences and ideas with others (widyanto & Griffiths, 2006).

Symptoms of internet addiction

- Experiencing anxiety and irritability without using the internet.
- Lying to others if someone asks about their internet use.
- Spending more time on the internet.
- Spending more time using the internet instead of spending more time with people.
- Preferring to listen to movies and music.
- Preferring to do online classes and work.
- Enjoy video calling and playing games with friends.
- The excessive use of various social media apps such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, Snapchat, and YouTube, etc.
- Being curious about using any digital device.
- Prefer to play online video games.

Benefits of Internet for students

The Internet is a popular tool used worldwide to complete various tasks, so its benefits are many, some of which are listed below.

- Emerging Trends

One can effectively achieve education by using the Internet to learn about new trends in the field.

- Information

There is a lot of information available on the Internet related to different subjects. The biggest advantage of using the Internet is that any student, regardless of their field of study, such as science, arts, commerce, marketing, or even government institutions, can use it to obtain information about someone.

- E-mail

Email is a kind of non-timely communication medium. With the help of email, a student or research scholar can easily send various types of messages, tools, questionnaires, or any important information in a short time, regardless of their geographical location.

- Current news

Teachers and students should be aware of global issues and current events, whether in education or elsewhere. With such knowledge, we can learn about new trends at the national and international levels.

- Online learning

Students, regardless of their geographical location in the world, can study online through the Internet. This option is of great benefit to those students who are deprived of their studies due to their poor economic status, but there are many platforms like Swayam, YouTube, etc., where they can complete their studies in an interesting way.

- Online teaching

In the present era, everyone complains about not getting employment, but the Internet has provided us with many facilities that we can use to do many things by connecting online. Similarly, teachers in the field of education can also teach students online by connecting to the Internet so they can easily live their lives in a quality manner.

- Job opportunities

In the present era, students are unable to find employment after pursuing higher education, which makes it difficult for them to lead their private lives. However, the internet provides a platform for students where they can get employment by joining various online companies or by taking up the teaching profession.

- Online chat

Students can ask questions of other friends, teachers, or a forum through online chat, answer questions, or post their questions if they have any difficulty in learning or understanding any subject they are studying in their classroom.

- Encyclopedia

An encyclopedia with all kinds of information cannot be carried by students. Students can easily access any information of their choice using the encyclopedia at any time and with great ease on the internet.

- Global collaboration

The internet provides students with the facility to connect with people and research scholars and share their feelings and thoughts with others online.

Disadvantages of internet

Internet Addiction when students use the Internet excessively, they may become addicted to the Internet. Such behaviours will negatively affect their way of thinking, understanding, and working.

- Social Isolation

When students use the Internet only in their spare time and prefer to connect with people through online methods rather than offline methods, they gradually become isolated from society, and their trust in people also decreases.

- Cyber Crime

Due to excessive use of the Internet, students may become victims of various types of cybercrimes, such as cyberbullying, phishing schemes, or even identity theft, which can range from asking for money to threatening students' personal information.

- Privacy issue

Whatever information students receive or share from others on the Internet can pose a threat to the security of their personal information and can be used incorrectly.

- Health issue

If the internet is used excessively, it can also have a negative impact on various health conditions, such as headaches, poor posture, sleep disturbances, and eyestrain; it can also have a negative impact on various mental health conditions, such as low self-confidence and depression.

- Wasting time

Excessive use of the internet can lead to addiction, causing students to waste valuable time, negatively impact their studies, and hinder their future progress.

Meaning of Mental Health

The mental health of any student is related to their physical health and their behaviour because it is critical for the physical, mental, economic, emotional, and moral development of a person. On the other hand, a healthy student or individual is aware of their responsibilities, is well aware of their abilities, can easily handle the pressures and worries in their life, and is able to contribute to their society in which they stay. This evidence clearly shows that the health of a society and its happiness and well-being depend on the mental health of its people. Similarly, mental health, physical health, and social functioning are interdependent, which affects the mental health of a person. How any student thinks, feels, and acts, and at the same time solves whatever problems and worries he or she faces— all of this depends on their mental health, which enables a person to live a quality life.

Health is an essential part of the overall well-being of any person. One cannot consider health without also considering a person's mental health. This is why mental health is crucial for an individual's growth and development, plays a significant role in society's productivity, and enables individuals to lead healthy and happy lives.

The WHO has defined Mental health in such a way that mental health can be called a person in whom social, physical, spiritual, and mental health and mental illness or any kind of disability are found.

Definition of Mental Health

Various researchers on mental health have conducted many studies in India and abroad, which have revealed various types of problems and difficulties related to the mental health of individuals. Most of the researchers have presented drug abuse, alcohol abuse, suicidal behaviour, internet addiction, etc. as common types of problems and difficulties related to mental health. However, different researchers on mental health have given different views and opinions, some of which are listed below.

According to Crow and Crow (1951), "Mental health is a type of science that deals with human well-being and spans all areas and branches of human relationships."

According to Kuppuswami, "Mental health is the ability of a person to moderate their desires, feelings, thoughts, determination, and ideas in their daily lives, which means having the ability to cope with and accept the ups and downs of life and the realities of it."

According to Kleine D.B. (1965), "Mental health, as its name suggests, is related to the health of the brain, its functions and performance, feelings and emotions, and their maintenance."

Impact of Internet Addiction on Mental Health

When students or individuals use the internet excessively, it proves to be dangerous for their health, and students who become addicted to the internet are unable to do any kind of creative work and also have a negative impact on other work because they have an addictive behavior, due to which a person always keeps thinking about what they did on the internet the previous day and plans how to use the internet in the best way the next day, which depends entirely on the internet activities-

In the points below, when students use the internet excessively, various effects on their mental health have been derived with the help of various reviews of related literature.

- Students suffering from various types of mental disorder.
- Lack of tolerance and understanding.
- Students are experiencing frustration, stress, anxiety, and conflict.
- Feeling unable to adapt to a new environment.
- Feeling distrustful.
- Deeply disappointed with everything.
- Expressing one's feelings and emotions in an undesirable way.
- Feeling emotionally unstable.
- Constantly feel dissatisfied with their academic achievements.
- Getting used to living in a fantasy life.
- Suffering from various types of mental disorders.
- Having poor motivation to achieve.
- Suffering from various types of mental distractions and chaos.
- Adopting unrealistic behaviour during interactions with people can be challenging.
- The individual is experiencing a lack of self-confidence in themselves.
- Being found to be poor in self-concept.
- Lack of tolerance.
- Unable to make a decision on any issue.

- Constantly experiencing feelings of conflict.
- Constantly experiencing feelings of disappointment.
- Lack of self-confidence.
- Lack of critical thinking skills.
- Lack of creative thinking skills.
- Feeling suspicious, fearful, and insecure.
- Having a strong desire to use the internet.
- Consistently portray their emotions as unstable and simply annoying.

Psychological problems of internet-addicted students

- Experiencing feelings of fear and anxiety.
- Experiencing mood swings.
- Feeling lonely.
- Constantly experiencing feelings of anxiety.
- Lacking the ability to defend oneself.
- Avoiding work.
- Not paying attention to time.
- Not being honest.
- Likes to be isolated from people.
- Always living in depression.
- Suffering from anxiety and restlessness.
- Always being angry.
- Being irritable.
- Facing financial difficulties.
- Feeling ashamed.

Physical or mental problems of internet-addicted students

- Feeling tired.
- Experiencing back pain.
- Having headaches.
- Experiencing neck pain.
- Sleep deprivation or disturbance.
- Overweight or losing weight.
- Feeling weak.
- Suffering from various types of eye diseases.
- Having difficulty seeing.
- Feeling anxious.
- Having malnutrition.
- Having difficulty balancing.
- Experiencing various types of pain in their thumb.

Conclusion

In the current era of information and technology, new information emerges daily, providing benefits to people. It is said about the present era that the information learned yesterday will not be completely beneficial for today. The 21st century has become a century in which people are depending on various types of digital devices, whether it is for entertainment, obtaining information, conducting business, socializing with friends, or playing online games. As of 2024, the number of internet users in the world is 5.56 billion, which has increased from 5.3 billion in 2023, an increase of approximately 4.9%. According to Internet world stats, the number of internet users in India has reached 900 million in 2025. According to a report by IAMAI (Internet and Mobile Association of India) and KANTAR, 886 million people are using the internet in India in 2024. People use the Internet to fulfil their various needs, which allows individuals to access more information in less time. The Internet has created a whole world for all humans to access information, which allows us to learn and discuss new things.

On the other hand, in the field of education, students and teachers take advantage of the Internet to obtain various types of information, resulting in students being able to solve and learn even the most difficult concepts in a short time. Teachers also integrate different types of technology in teaching and learning along with acquiring new information, which makes the classroom environment captivating and effective and also helps in ensuring the active participation of students easily. But when students start using the Internet excessively and become dependent on the Internet to obtain small pieces of information and start wasting their spare time chatting with their friends on the Internet or playing games, then we can say that students have become addicted to using the Internet. When students become addicted to the Internet, it has a negative impact on their mental and physical health. Due to which they have to face psychological problems along with their mental and physical health. These

problems include anxiety, stress, depression, irritability, and obsessiveness, among others. Therefore, it is necessary that we do not use the Internet excessively, but rather use it as needed so that we can avoid various types of negative effects.

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