

A STUDY ON INFLUENCE OF INTERNET AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN DINDIGUL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The Internet has considerably affected human behavior, and it has positive and bad effects; however, its excessive utilization exposes operators to influence of internet. Developmental stressors, along with free entry to Internet services, may additionally contribute to college student's vulnerability to web dependence. Research suggests that Internet dependency is often related with depression, impulse control disorder, and low self-esteem. College students are a in particular susceptible group on account of the time they spend on the internet. The goal of the research was to examine influence of internet among college students of Dindigul. This survey-based research used facts from 200 college students of various colleges of Dindigul District. The findings show that most of the college students have internet dependency of average level. Male and female college students considerably vary from each other on influence of internet on overall sample. Male college students are more addicted towards influence of internet with high mean value. There is a need to focus on mental fitness with regard to influence of internet, as challenging internet use is increasingly being stated and young Internet users are more at threat of turning into Internet addicts.

Keywords: Internet Influence, Technology Advancement, Internet Dependency

INTRODUCTION

In recent years technological developments have taken place in the contemporary world. In the complexity of today's world, internet use is taking part in an essential position in educational establishments to achieve special learning skills, which have come to be a necessity for college students. Exponential increase in internet use has been discovered throughout the world including India in the recent decade. About 205 million internet customers were reported in India in 2012 which includes both rural and urban people and it was expected that India will become the second main country after China in internet utilization (Internet and Mobile Association of India, 2013). However, elevated Internet usage has been related with some negative implications for some individuals. "Influence of internet" (IA) is one such negative outcome of excessive internet use among users (Dhir et al, 2015). It was Dr. Ivan Goldberg in 1995, who first proposed the caption "Influence of internet" for pathological compulsive Internet use. Internet can have an effect on interpersonal, social, occupational, psychological, and physical domains of the individual's lifestyles (Sushma, 2018). There have been growing issues worldwide for what has been labeled as Influence of internet and the possible adverse results of excessive Internet use, especially in younger people (Murali, 2007). In India, there were about 755 million internet customers in the year 2021 as in contrast to 100 million in 2010, so the internet penetration in India is 54.2% of the populace (World Internet Users Statistics, 2021).

The Internet is a convenient and speedy medium of interaction to obtain the required data for communication with others around the world. However, a lack of management over excessive internet use can disturb individuals' lifestyle requirements and relationships between household members, and it can carry instability of emotions (Zhang et al, 2018). Researchers have shown concerns about the excessive use of this platform and the hidden risk elements of internet users, such as physical and mental fitness (Abbas et al, 2019). The users of the Internet have accelerated incredibly worldwide, with the peak of a digital industrial revolution in progress, and new technological revolution will certainly create new issues and predicaments (Bener et al, 2018). The record of internet customers goes back some decades at present. The Internet has become one of the most fast-growing and transformative technologies. Globally, the users of the Internet have elevated from 414 million in 2000, 665 million in 2002, and over 4.574 billion by December 31, 2019. The US National Science Foundation specified that the internet customers enabled through smartphones access would enlarge to 5 billion in 2020 (Fumero et al,

2018). In recent years, internet customers in Iran have grown dramatically. According to the mentioned statistics, the Iranian customers of the internet have risen from 11.0 million in 2006, 33.0 million in 2002, and over 62 million by July 1, 2019. Hence, the users of the Internet in Iran have elevated considerably over 25 times, and recent studies carried out in Iran indicated that the young person makes up the majority of internet customers (Hilty et al, 2016). Previous studies specified that the Iranian customers devote 35% of their time to chat rooms, 28% to online games, 30% to checking E-mails, and 25% to browsing the internet on averages, while linked to the Internet. Besides, another research suggested that Iranian customers spend 52 min/week as an average time, while linked to the Internet (Gorgich, 2018).

Overuse of the internet has been linked with many psychological conditions including anxiety, depression, and insomnia. Several studies have shown that among users addicted to the internet, depression has much prevalence than normal users (Yen et al, 2008, Ko et al, 2008). Widianto & Griffiths (2006) claimed that rather than looking at Influence of internet, researchers should focus on particular activities on the Internet that might be potentially addictive because people do not become addicted to the medium, but to the actual behavior they engage in online. Akini and Iskender (2011) have reported that depression and anxiety are significant predictors of influence of internet in a study among Turkish students. There is an influence of problematic internet use or influence of internet on sleep patterns. Increased time spent on the internet may disrupt the sleep-wake schedule significantly, and a higher rate of sleep disturbance takes place among heavy internet users (Thomee et al, 2007). Wong (2011) studied the impact of online addiction on insomnia and depression on Hong Kong adolescents. The findings showed that "influence of internet was associated significantly with insomnia and depression".

Internet use has been overwhelmingly increasing in India, involving especially the youth population. Since adolescents contribute a significant proportion of the productive life age of our country, their involvement with internet overuse or addiction may lead to significant adverse consequences such as sleep disturbance, psychological and physical problems leading to academic decline. Although many studies have been conducted regarding influence of internet in India, nevertheless, not much has been studied in the state of Tamil Nadu in this regard. Hence, the present study was planned to investigate the pattern and prevalence of internet addiction, significance difference between influence of internet on the basis of gender, locality among college students of Dindigul District and its impact on their mental health.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive-analytical study selected 200 students (females and males) of various colleges of Dindigul District by applying Cochran's sample size formula and stratified random sampling methods. This method draws the statistical population according to the hierarchy of the types of population units. The study applied Young's Internet Addiction Test (IAT) and Goldberg General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28) for data collection. The study screened the data received and analyzed valid dataset through the t-test and Pearson's correlation coefficient by incorporating SPSS Statistics software. The investigators have excluded incomplete questionnaires from the study. Besides, we assured participants about the confidentiality of the collected information and lack of disclosure of their personal information. The investigators distributed the questionnaires among the target respondents. The authors explained the objectives of the present study to the target individuals and obtained informed consent from all participants before to execute the research.

TOOLS

Influence of Internet Test

Young developed this 20-item scale for measuring the influence of internet, which affects a variety of aspects in users' lives (Young, 1998). The study applied the Persian translation of Young's IAT developed by Alavi et al (2010). The questions showed the scores on a selected 5-point Likert scale (5 = always, 4 = usually, 3 = most of the time, 2 = sometimes, and 1 = seldom). The ranges of minimum and maximum scores showed 20–100. The scores divided internet users into the following three groups: typical users indicating a score of 20–49; at-risk users, specifying a score of 50–79; and the internet users having an addiction with a score of 80–100. The highest scores represent the highest levels of students' dependency on the Internet, which leads to addictive behavior.

The General Health Questionnaire

This prospective study used Goldberg's General Health Questionnaire -28 for gathering data. The study screened the data received and analyzed valid data set through the t-test and Pearson's correlation coefficient by using the SPSS Statistics software. The self-reported Goldberg's 28-item questionnaire examines the individual's mental health in the recent month and includes symptoms such as abnormal thoughts and feelings and aspects of visible behavior. This questionnaire consists of the following four subscales: somatic symptoms (questions 1–7),

anxiety (questions 8-14), social dysfunction (questions 15-21), and depression (questions 22–28). Each subscale contains seven questions that measure the various aspects of mental health, ranging from somatic to psychological dysfunction. The questions presented scores with a 4-point Likert scale (0=not at all, 1=average, 2=more than average, and 3=far more than average). The minimum and maximum ranges illustrated 0–84, which showed categories into four levels of mental health, for instance, normal (0–22), weak (21–40), balanced (41–60), and severe (61–84). The highest ratings/scores represented the lowest level of students' mental health status. The study examined and confirmed the questionnaire's reliability for each section by using content validity (0.78).

Table 1: Influence of Internet and Mental Health Scores

Gender	Non addicted users	At risk users	Addicted users	Influence of internet	Mental health
Male (%)	9 (4.5)	48 (24)	53 (26.5)		
Female (%)	7 (3.5)	39 (19.5)	44 (22)		
Total (%)	16 (8)	87 (43.5)	97 (48.5)	3.62 ± 0.83	2.47 ± 0.31
P	0.044			0.016	0.546

The total population comprised of 200 participants in the present study, including 110 male (55%) and 90 female (45%) students. The average age of the respondents under investigation was 22.35 ± 4.58 years, and the majority of respondents' age ranged between 18 and 23 years (68.4%). Concerning the marital status, there were 196 single participants (98%) in this population. The study findings specified that 134 students possessed their computers (67%). The results indicated that the majority of the students used the Internet either in the morning or in the evening.

Table 2:
Correlation Coefficient between Influences of Internet and Mental Health among Students

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Somatic symptoms	1					
Anxiety	0.031	1				
Social dysfunction	0.047	0.069	1			
Depression	0.124**	0.006	0.144	1		
Mental health	0.426**	0.365**	0.869**	0.332**	1	
Influence of internet	0.003	0.045	0.044	0.171**	-0.049	1

**Correlation was significant at the 0.01 level (two tailed)

The main reason for using the internet application was chatting with friends and family members. The mean and standard deviation of students with influence of internet was 3.62 ± 0.83 . Besides, the mean and standard deviation of students' mental health was 2.47 ± 0.31 , which stated that the general mental health of students was not in good condition. Regarding the mental health of the students' sample, the study results indicated that the highest and lowest rates showed linkage to depression with a mean and standard deviation of 2.82 ± 0.23 and somatic dysfunction with a mean and standard deviation of 2.21 ± 0.78 , respectively, as indicated in Table I. This specific study applied the Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the relationship between the students' influence of internet and mental health. The results of the correlation matrix demonstrated that they did not statistically significantly correlate with each other ($P < 0.001$, $r = 0.049$). The study results specified that students' depression and somatic symptoms had the highest ($P = 0.001$, $r = 0.171$) and lowest ($P > 0.001$, $r = 0.003$) relationships with influence of internet, as indicated in Table II.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to investigate influence of internet and its effects on the mental health of college students of Dindigul District. The results of the present study identified that 48.5% of college students were addicted to the Internet. This finding was concurrent with the results of studies conducted by Farhadinia et al (2015), Sepehrian and Jokar (2011), Fonia et al., (2016), Dargahi and Razavi (2007) and Javad et al (2020). Those who use the Internet more than others can replace stronger relationships in real life with low-quality social relationships, thereby resulting in more loneliness and depression. To further explicate the matter, the Internet may serve as a substitute for lives without vitality. Loneliness and isolation may cause people to spend more time on the Internet, thereby decreasing the quality of their social relationships. As for the demographic characteristics, the results demonstrated that there was a significant difference between male and female students in terms of influence of internet. In addition, 26.5% of male students were internet addicts, which exceeded that of female students (22%). In this study, male students should be given priority in prevention programs for influence of internet. These results were consistent with the results of studies conducted by Alavi et al., (2010), Orsal et al., (2013) and Fonia et al., (2016). Male and female students equally use internet for chatting, sharing, making online friendships and academic purposes also but male students are more addicted.

CONCLUSION

The overall prevalence of influence of internet in our study was found to be 48.5% among the participants; non addiction and risk to addiction were 8% and 43.5% respectively. Duration of internet access per day and the severity of Influence of internet were also found to be significant. Many researches in India and other parts of the world have shown a higher prevalence of Influence of internet among adolescents and young adults. Studies done in different parts of the country have also shown the same situation among college students. In justifying the relationship between depression and influence of internet, it can be expressed that the excessive use of the Internet can lead to social isolation and depression through reducing familial, social, and local connection. Therefore, depression may occur as a result of influence of internet, and in this case, the internet addict experience the resultant negative consequences, such as depression. Yet, there is a need to focus on this aspect of mental health as problematic internet use is increasingly being reported and younger internet users are more at risk of becoming Internet addicts. Multi centric studies are required to assess the real problem and thereby take appropriate steps to tackle the same.

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