

Effect of Internet Addiction on Mental Health of Adolescents

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Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to examine the relationship between internet addiction and the mental health of adolescents. It also studies the effect of different levels of internet addiction on the mental health of adolescents. The sample for the study includes 50 students (27 boys and 23 girls) of class XI and XII of Dehradun. The data were analyzed with the help of Pearson Coefficients of Correlation. The findings of the study reveal a negative relationship between internet addiction and mental health. The study also reveals that students with various dimensions of mental health are affected negatively by Internet addiction.

Keywords: Internet addiction, Mental Health, Adolescents

Introduction

Today technology plays important role in our day-to-day life. People do not imagine their world without technology. During the last two decades, the way we live and the way we work have changed due to the developments in the communication and information industry (Unsal et al., 2008). Most of the work is done in our life with the help of technology. Internet is the most useful technology for obtaining information and communication for individuals and organizations (Bildt & Smith, 2016). The easy availability, accessibility, and affordability of the Internet have made it increasingly embedded in everyday life. In the past 20 years, the internet has become an integral part of our lives and an important tool for social interaction and communication. Adolescent Internet use is growing exponentially in the last decade (Watters et al., 2013). Among these adolescent Internet users, over 50% were high school students (Wang et al., 2011). Internet use has rapidly become a common activity, blended its use, either for academic or leisure purposes, into many aspects of their daily lives. This high rate of Internet use is fueling growing concern over Internet addiction.

Internet Addiction (IA), also known as Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD), is a behavioral addiction characterized by compulsive, uncontrollable internet use that interferes with daily life. Many pieces of research indicated internet addiction as one of the most common problems among adolescents (M. D. Griffiths & Hunt, 1998); (Huang & Leung, 2009); (Shapira et al., 2003); (Young & Rogers, 1998a). The concept of 'internet addiction' has been proposed as an explanation for uncontrollable and harmful use of internet technology (Byun et al., 2009); (M. Griffiths, 1998); (Leung, 2004); (Huang & Leung, 2009); (Young & Rogers, 1998); (Young, 1999). In 1998, Young proposed a set of criteria for the

diagnosis of Internet addiction based on the DSM-IV criteria of pathological gambling (Young, 1999). Currently, official diagnostic criteria about IA do not exist, but Young (1999) defined IA as excessive, compulsive, uncontrollable, tolerance-causing internet use, which causes distress and serious results in social problems. Excessive use of and addiction to the internet may result in many negative psychological and physical damages, and these observations may be more prevalent among adolescent students (Li et al., 2013); (Z. Xu et al., 2012). However, uncontrolled internet use could have a negative impact on adolescents' physical health and psychosocial development. Indeed, previous studies reveal that upwards of 30 to 59% of adolescents, 12 to 18 years old, score above the mid-point on internet addiction measures (Watters et al., 2013). In addition, previous studies demonstrate that support from social ties is negatively related to individuals' addiction-related behavior (J. Xu et al., 2012).

However, despite the widely acknowledged merits of the internet, especially its literacy skills, psychologists and educators have been aware of the negative impacts of its use, especially overuse and misuse which lead to physical and psychological problems (Bricolo et al., 2007); (Hur, 2006). The association between heavy use of the internet and depression may be due to 2 mechanisms: First is that Internet use contributes to negative effects on mental health, and the other one is that individuals with depressive tendencies are likely to use the internet as a kind of a self-medication method (Yen et al., 2007). Those with heavy use of the internet or individuals with internet addiction tend to have anxiety, depression, interpersonal conflicts, and to make suicide attempts (Yen et al., 2008); (Strong et al., 2018).

Objectives

The objectives of the study are

1. To study the relationship between internet addiction and the mental health of adolescents.
2. To study the effect of internet addiction on different dimensions of mental health of adolescents.

Methodology

The sample for the present study consisted of 50 students of classes XI and XII. Out of which 27 were boys and 23 were girls. The Snowball sampling technique was adopted to select samples. Internet Usage Scale of Shaloo Saini & Dr. Parminder Kaur and Mental Health Scale (MHS-TSBA) by Dr. Sushma Talesara & Dr. Akhtar Bano were used as tools for gathering data. Pearson Coefficient of Correlation was computed for the analysis of the data.

Result and Discussion

Table-1 Values of Coefficient of Correlation between Internet Addiction and Mental Health of the students

Group	Sample	Coefficient of Correlation
Total	50	-0.42
Boys	27	-0.52
Girls	23	-0.23

A perusal of Table 1 shows that the values of coefficient of correlation between Internet Addiction and Mental Health for the total sample, boys and girls are -0.42, -0.52, and -0.23 respectively. It means that there is a low negative correlation between internet addiction and mental health among total and boys and girls. This result shows that mental health is affected negatively by internet addiction. Addiction to the internet affects adversely the mental health of adolescents. The results revealed that internet addiction and mental health were negatively related, which was consistent with the results of studies conducted by (Shahbazirad & Mirderikvand, 2014); (Fallah Mehneh, 2007); (Lebni et al., 2020); (MOUSAVI et al., 2017) _

Table-2 Dimension wise value of Coefficient of Correlation between Mental Health and Internet Addiction

Group	Sample	School-related	Home-related	Peer related
Total	50	-0.49	-0.32	-0.34
Boy	27	-0.55	-0.42	-0.40
Girl	23	-0.38	-0.15	-0.22

Values of coefficient of correlation described in table 2 disclose that there is a negative correlation between internet addiction and school, home, and peer-related activity which are -0.49, -0.32 & -0.34 respectively for the total sample. In the case of boys, there is a negative correlation found between school-related activity, home-related activity, and peer-related activity i.e. -0.55,-0.42 & -0.40 respectively. In the case of girls, there is a low negative correlation found between school, home & peer-related activity i.e. -0.38, -0.15 & -0.22 respectively.

Conclusion

1. There is a negative correlation between internet addiction and mental health among boys and girls and a lower negative correlation is found in girls compared to boys. The inverse relationship between addiction to the internet and the mental health of adolescents means along with addictive behavior, the mental health of the students decreases. Girls show a lower negative correlation than boys which means that girls' mental health is less affected by addicted behavior.
2. There is a low negative correlation between school, home & peer-related mental health, and IA of the whole group, boys and girls. School-related mental health is more affected than home and peer-related mental health in the collective sample. In the case of boys, the correlation between school-related mental health and IA is negatively high. It means internet-addicted behavior degrades the school-related mental health of boys. Home-related and peer-related mental health, are also affected adversely with IA. In the case of girls, school-related, home-related, and peer-related mental health found a low negative correlation. These results also show the adverse effect of IA on mentioned dimensions of mental health. The comparatively high negative correlation found in various dimensions of mental health and IA of boys than girls.

Implications

1. In the twenty-first century, technology has become an integral part of our lives. Individuals carry out their day-to-day activities using the internet, starting from shopping, gaming to education. This study will help adolescents to make them aware of internet addiction. The results of this study will also be fruitful for educational authorities of society to teach families and individuals about the repercussion of the overuse of the internet.
2. The findings indicate that internet-addicted and non-addicted adolescents differ in their mental health dimensions. Therefore, it will be important for psychologists to pay additional attention to mental health dimension disorders caused due to internet addiction.
3. The results of the present study will improve the understanding of internet use and make citizens aware of the dangers of such an addiction. Further, the findings of this study will be helpful for parents, teachers, and other professionals who are looking after the adolescents.
4. Psychiatrists who are active in the field of mental hygiene must be aware of mental problems associated with internet addiction such as depression, anxiety, obsession, hypochondria, paranoia, interpersonal sensitivity, and job and educational dissatisfaction among internet addicts. These findings indicate that individuals can be trained to change their metacognitive beliefs and enjoy more general and mental health as a result.

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