



A Review on Internet Usage and Addiction among Adolescents

Abstract

The widespread adoption of the internet has transformed the way adolescents interact, learn, and entertain themselves. While the internet offers numerous advantages, its excessive and uncontrolled usage has raised concerns about addiction among this demographic group. The research uses the secondary data approach. This review synthesizes current research on internet usage patterns and addiction tendencies among adolescents. It highlights the multifaceted factors contributing to internet addiction, such as social media, online gaming, and compulsive smartphone usage. The impact of internet addiction on adolescents' mental and physical health, academic performance, and social relationships is discussed. Additionally, prevention and intervention strategies are examined, including parental involvement, digital literacy programs, and therapeutic interventions. Understanding the nuances of internet usage and addiction among adolescents

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



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is crucial for educators, parents, and policymakers in addressing this growing public health issue and fostering healthier digital behaviors in the younger generation.

Key Words

Internet Usage, Internet Addiction, Adolescents.

Introduction

Technology is advancing rapidly, and youth are increasingly participating in Internet- based communications. Additionally, almost half of all adolescents own personal cellphones, giving them immediate access to text messaging (Lenhart et al, 2005). Given these estimates, it is increasingly clear that cyberspace provides a social networking forum where tech-savvy teenagers can communicate with one another. In fact, the popularity of cyber communication is illustrated by statistics revealing that approximately half of all adolescents communicate with friends and meet new online users via social networking sites (Lenhart and Madden, 2007). As with social gathering places in the physical world, adolescents meet social challenges in the cyber world. Similar to the school environment (Nansel et al, 2001), teenagers may be subjected to peer victimization online.

Internet Usage among Adolescents

Internet usage among adolescents has seen an unprecedented surge in recent years, shaping the way this demographic engages with the world. Adolescents are avid consumers of online content, using the internet

for education, communication, entertainment, and social networking. This digital era has led to both opportunities and challenges.

Adolescents have harnessed the internet for learning and skill development. Access to information is easier than ever, and online resources supplement their formal education. Moreover, social platforms enable communication and connectivity with peers across geographical boundaries, facilitating social interaction.

However, the excessive use of the internet poses concerns. Adolescents are susceptible to threats found online, such as exposure to offensive material, cyber bullying, and privacy intrusions. Over-reliance on the internet can lead to issues like decreased physical activity, disrupted sleep patterns, and potential addiction, negatively affecting their overall well-being.

Impact of Internet Usage among Adolescents

The internet has changed the world. Open access to the internet has revolutionized the way individuals communicate and collaborate, entrepreneurs and corporations conduct business, and Governments and citizens interact. Internet development and governance simultaneously adopted a ground-breaking open paradigm that included all stakeholders. The internet allows the traditional forms of communications, but more interactive than old style of broadcast and more inclusive than a conventional telephone call. As a result, the roughly three billion internet users produce as well as consume information. The largest mass medium imaginable can broadcast and access websites, blogs, videos, tweets, and other content. Audio video calls and conferences can be set up and received without regard to distance or cost. Internet has consolidated itself as a very powerful tool for information, communication and entertainment that has modified the human behavior by entering in its life. Adolescents today have huge chances for education and pleasure thanks to easy and ongoing access to the internet, which also allows them to communicate with both their classmates and complete strangers from around the world.. Adolescents use a variety of internet applications such as instant messaging, bulletin boards, chat rooms, and blogs to connect with their peers and to investigate common adolescent issues like sexuality, identity, and partner choice. The internet is important resource for students. It is full of information and can be used by students to get for ideas for projects and assignments. There are over fifty million websites available on World Wide Web that is loaded with useful information. It is very easy to find any information over the Internet with the help of search engines. It also serves as a useful tool to stay in touch with old friends through social networking sites. Pew Internet & American Life Project says that 87% of US teens aged 12-17 now use the internet. Thus Internet as become popular among youth. In India as well most educational institutes provide internet access to their students.

Adolescence is a time of significant biological change. Increases in height, weight, body composition, and the emergence of secondary sexual traits are frequent examples of physical changes. Along with these physical changes wide spectrum of endocrine changes (gonadarche and adrenarche), including hormones that affect gonadal maturation and the production of gonadal sex steroids also takes place. Early and mid-adolescent growth spurts are controlled by the complicated, interconnected production of a number of hormones. Traditionally, adolescence has been thought of as a period of “storm and stress”-a time of heightened emotional tension resulting from the physical and glandular changes that are taking place. They learn how to manage them as they get older. Social adjustment is one of the most challenging developmental processes of adolescence. These adjustments must be made with the members of the opposite sex in a relationship that never existed before and to adults outside the family and school environment. The adolescent must make many new adjustments in order to achieve the goal of developing adult social patterns, the most crucial of which are those involving the peer group’s increased influence, changes in social behavior, new social groups, new values in choosing friends, new values in social acceptance and rejection, and new values in choosing leaders.

Adolescents are affected by external factors that vary across cultures and societies, such as social values and norms as well as the shifting roles, responsibilities, relationships, and expectations of this stage of

life. These factors also reflect a variety of broader societal changes, such as rising urbanization, globalization, and accessibility to digital media and social networks. At this period, they also want to be more independent and responsible. They increasingly want to assert more autonomy over their decisions, emotions and actions, and to disengage from parental control. Adolescents' expression of this autonomy-driven urge is strongly influenced by their social and cultural context. Teenagers require close supervision, assistance from instructors, parents, and other significant individuals as a result of these developments. If the above issues are not addressed, then this would lead to various problems among adolescents and they might affect the healthy transition of the adolescents to adulthood.

There are both positive and bad effects of the Internet's communication boom and its potential to alter how people communicate and gather information. Since people from all over the world can communicate without regard to nationality, race, gender, or class, the positive effects of internet use include any information reaching any location in the world quickly. The variety of information available on the internet also aids in other fields' effective research. On the down side, one can find out about self-distraction, improper socialization, risk-taking behaviors, loneliness, etc. Risks in the Internet have been defined as "one goes beyond the normal use of the Internet and takes risk which may threaten one's personal growth, safety and interpersonal relationships". There is no denying that the increased acceptance of online communication tools among teenagers has contributed to the social milieu that is crucial for their development. Despite the abundance of knowledge available online, teenagers are increasingly using it inappropriately. According to studies, teenagers visit websites that are associated to terrorism, hate, and pornography, and they are more prone to cyber bullying, harassment, and sexual exploitation. Recent studies have shown that both adults and teenagers are addicted to the Internet.

Internet Addiction

According to Potenza (2006), the word "addiction" originated from "adducers" in Latin, meaning "bound to" or "enslaved by". Initially, the concept of addiction was used as a non-specific reference to different social behaviors, but is most often related to alcohol abuse behaviors. Goodman (1990) defined "addiction is a process whereby a behavior that can function both to produce pleasure in addition to provide escape from internal discomfort, is employed in a pattern characterized by (1) recurrent failure to control the behavior (powerlessness) and (2) continuation of the behavior despite significant negative consequences (unmanageability)". The word addiction has been defined and re-defined over the years. Conventionally the word addiction is defined to mean a status of physical and psychological dependence on psychoactive substances such as heroin, alcohol, tobacco along with other drugs. These substances cross the blood-brain barrier and, once ingested, temporarily modify the chemical milieu of the brain. In 1957, the Expert Committee on Addiction-Producing Drugs defined addiction and habituation as components of drug abuse. A number of psychology professionals currently define "addiction as including abnormal psychological dependency on various things, such as gambling, computers, Internet, food, sex, pornography, exercise, work, watching TV or certain types of non-pornographic videos, spiritual obsession, cutting along with shopping".

Internet addiction is classified as an impulse control disease that is very similar to pathological gambling but does not include the use of any intoxicating substances. Some Internet users may develop an emotional attachment to on-line friends and activities they create on their computer screens. Internet users could appreciate features that let them connect with others, communicate, and exchange ideas via chat rooms, social networking sites, or "virtual communities." Others who use the Internet are constantly "blogging" or doing online research on interesting subjects. The word "web log" is shortened to "blogging," in which one posts commentary and regularly records happenings. It can be thought of as journaling, and the entries are mostly written down. Internet addicts, like those with other addictions, use the online version of a fantasy world to communicate with actual people in place of the inability they would otherwise have to make in-person connections. The impact of the internet on students has been the subject of numerous studies. By having simple access to the informational globe and to their academic community, it aids students in expanding their academic knowledge.

It is a valuable source to retrieve information for their research and assignments (Tella, 2007). The internet serves as a medium for entertainment and social connection as well. One can communicate with others via social networking sites, email, chat rooms, blogs, etc. Entertainment options available on the internet include films, music, games, and videos. Reports showed that 91% of adult internet users use e-mail, 38% use instant messaging and 35% use social network site for communication with each other (Jones, 2009). (Bellamy and Hanewicz, 2001) suggest that a parallel of Internet Addiction Diagnostic (IAD) would be pathological gambling. (Young, 1996) expressed internet addiction as an impulse-control disorder which does not involve intoxicant. She stated that problematic Internet users show similar symptoms to those who suffer from pathological gambling as well as dependency on alcohol and drugs.

“Internet addiction”, as the term has been coined by Goldberg, and used originally to define the impact of higher internet usage on everyone’s personal life. Such is same as the substance abuse, namely chemical addiction. The persons that are addicted might suffer emotionally or physically owing to the above dependency. We also regard internet addiction online addiction, cyberspace addiction, internet addiction disorder, net addiction, pathological internet use, along with high internet dependency. In a general sense, addiction can be defined to be “a compulsive, and an uncontrollable reliance on a chemical substance, practice or habit to an extent which either the obtaining means or ceasing use might lead to intense mental, emotional, and physiological reactions”. A person’s inability to control their internet usage may also be explained by an internet addiction, which manifests as an uncontrollable and harmful technological use.

The internet history dates back to the time of mid-1960s at the time of initiatives taken by the US Defense Department to devise a computer of distributed network. Such a network of the computers started in the form of data sharing with the prime objective of internet or Arpanet, being the provision of links amidst computers and not people. Driving immense interest, development of an e-mail started in an early stage by the Arpanet users which can use the same to promote communication of person-to-person and not a communication of computer-to-computer. Development of World Wide Web developed took place in 1990s with the release of web browsers done in 1993-1994. In the event of the change’s states above, there occurred rise in usage of internet and further grabbed attention of commercial organizations along with private users. From that time, there has been huge growth in Internet being everybody’s technology from professionals to laypersons. Such a huge influx of people online considered Internet to be the place where everyday tasks can be conducted and people can pursue their life everyday pleasures, for example friends and family communication. People who use Internet regularly would be educated with 49% of them being college graduates.

Psychological dependence on the internet shown as increased spending on internet-related activities, negative emotions when offline, increased tolerance for the negative effects of continuous use, and denial of adverse behaviours. Addiction of internet is defined as the absence of ability to manage the usage of the Internet, leading to the onset of social, psychological, family, or school and work impairment.

Internet Addictive usage has been regarded as the “disorder of impulse control which negates involvement of an intoxicant” further akin to the pathological gambling. Young (2011) defines, “Addiction of internet is the compulsive, online-related behavior that interferes with everyday living, causing immense stress on friends, family, loved ones, and the work environment. Addiction of Internet is named as Internet dependency along with Internet compulsivity. No matter what name you give, it is the compulsive behavior which is seen to dominate the life of addicts. Addiction of Internet is one psycho-physiological disorder comprising of symptom of withdrawal, tolerance, affective disturbances and interference of social relationships.

Even though the time spends using internet seems to be a vital aspect when diagnosing Internet addiction, literature suggests that this is not the prime predictor of the said problem. Further, Griffiths (2000) noted studies which use the above criterion to provide definition to the addiction of Internet avoids considering the internet usage context, overestimating dependents. For instance, individuals that need to implement Internet as a job component are part of the long-distance relationships and could appear to stay online more than any

the person who does not shows pathological implications. The study results which gave reports on the total time spent in individual's sample who then regard them to be the Internet addicts vary between 5 hours every week to more than 21.2 hours every week. Several researches suggest that such an activity of staying online is one of the factors that lead to Internet addiction. Even though several models have been outlined to segment different online activities, there exists similarity between these models and this is the interactive and information-collecting functions. Young (1996) proposed the earliest version of the model and defined five different internet addiction subtypes on the basis of kinds of online activity:

- **Cyber-relationship Addiction:** higher involvement with online relationships.
- **Cyber sexual Addiction:** using adult sites compulsively for porn and cybersex.
- **Computer Addiction:** over engagement with computer games.
- **Information Overload:** compulsively surfing web or searching database.
- **Net Compulsions:** greater online gambling, trading or, shopping.

Conclusion

The review on internet usage and addiction among adolescents has shed light on the multifaceted aspects of this growing concern. Adolescents' increasing reliance on the internet, while offering numerous benefits, also exposes them to the risks of addiction, which can have far-reaching consequences on their mental and physical health, academic performance, and social relationships.

The review has underlined the importance of recognizing the various factors contributing to internet addiction, such as social media, online gaming, and compulsive smartphone usage. It has also highlighted the need for a comprehensive understanding of the impact of internet addiction on adolescents' lives.

In conclusion, addressing internet usage and addiction among adolescents requires a collaborative effort involving parents, educators, healthcare professionals, policymakers, and the adolescents themselves. By implementing these recommendations, we can foster a healthier digital environment for the younger generation and equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate the online world responsibly.

Suggestions

- Conduct longitudinal studies to track the internet usage patterns and addiction tendencies of adolescents over an extended period.
- Expand the research scope by including cross-cultural analysis. Comparing internet usage and addiction among adolescents from different cultural backgrounds can reveal how cultural factors influence online behaviors and addiction rates.

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