International Journal of
Advanced Multidisciplinary Scientific Research (IJAMSR) ISSN:2581-4281

Internet Addiction: Use Of Social Networking Sites and Its Impact on Intermediate Students

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ABSTRACT

Widespread use of internet has led to a kind of addiction. The present study examined the use of Internet and getting addicted to the social networking sites and on the whole its impact on intermediate level students. The sample comprised of 285 students out of which the addicts were pulled out. The tools used were questionnaire developed by Dr. Kimberly Young, the IAT which is a 20-item questionnaire that measures mild, moderate, and severe levels of Internet Addiction with its sociological impact. An additional questionnaire drafted at International Development Research Centre (IDRC) was used to gauge the behavioral, psychological and physical impact of internet on Intermediate students. And finally, a questionnaire was coined in the assistance of Miss Sunanda Jati, lecturer, Dau Dayal Girls P.G. College to check the indulgence of intermediate students on social networking sites. The researcher used dichotomous questions. It was found that the students have positive tendency towards the useful and easy reflections of internet and a greater tendency towards getting addicted.

Introduction

The advent of computer brought about a major revolution in the history of human culture; a major debate broke through whole world whether this machine could replace human beings and become our master. Eminent scholars, learned people, high profile politicians and almost every literate being were voicing their comments with a majority of them claiming that no machine can ever replace human being. This all happened in the 80's when internet or any such thing was beyond the realm of human imagination; but the capability of human mind is limitless and finally this internet, a thing beyond imagination became a reality and the whole human race suddenly started shrinking within cubical. However much we claimed initially that no machine can become our master or replace

human beings but it's time we accept, admit and acknowledge that this machine with internet actually became our master and we are mere slaves. What makes matter worse is the illusion under which we live i.e., we are still in control of our lives and all our activities. We didn't even realize but slowly, steadily and surely internet started governing our whole being. I as a researcher strongly feel that it is the need of the hour to rise up with the morning sun before it is too late with the electronic media ruling over our mind and soul and that to, to an extent that it ultimately ruins our life. Research on such topics can serve as a significant contribution to answer the question. This quantitative casual comparative research was geared at finding the underlying causes and symptoms of the effect the addiction to the Internet has on human beings. Rationale for the study exists in the fact that the addiction to the Internet is now an illness and can be diagnosed. No doubt, that there has been a lot of positive impact of internet but we are concerned with its adverse effect. So, the researcher thought to take a study on INTERNET ADDICTION.

Objectives Of the Problem

1. To identify the internet addiction in the intermediate students.
2. To identify the impact of social networking sites on the intermediate students.
3. To identify the level of involvement and purposes of internet usage.
4. To examine the issues of privacy and disclosure
5. To identify the sociological Impact on the students.
6. To identify the beliefs of the internet usage by students.
7. To test the tendency to become addicted to the 'Net'.
8. To test the attitude towards internet.
9. To identify the economic Impact.
10. To identify the possible behavioral Impact.
11. To identify the psychological impact.

Tools Of the Study

The researcher developed and used Dichotomous questions and other questionnaire tools for the purpose of collection data.

Dr. Kimberly Young's, the Internet Addiction Test which is a 20-item questionnaire that measures mild, moderate, and severe levels of Internet Addiction with its sociological impact.

Questionnaire drafted at International Development Research Centre (IDRC) was used to gauge the behavioral, psychological and physical impact of internet on Intermediate students.

An additional questionnaire was coined by the assistance of Miss Sunanda Jati, lecturer, Dau Dayal Girls P.G. College to check the indulgence of intermediate students on social networking sites.

The tests were given to experts to examine the suitability, relevance and language adequacy of test items. The suggestions were incorporated and modified as per the observations.

Sample Of the Study

Purposive Sampling technique was used to get the sample. The population here comprises of intermediate students falling in the age bracket of sixteen, seventeen to eighteen years belonging to both the sexes. The school was randomly selected as the sample. The sample was selected from the Intermediate students of Army School, Agra Cantt, Agra, where the total strength of students was 387 out of which the survey investigator had selected 285 students on the basis of availability. A total of 100 students, 50 boys and 50 girls, were further short listed for survey as they fell in the category that the researcher was conducting the research in.

Collecting Data

The researcher collected the data in person by visiting the school. The instructions were given to the students; time given was nearly 35 Min to complete the test. The test answers sheets were collected, scored according to the key and subjected to statistical analysis. The investigator approached the students through the principal and made them fill the questionnaire designed for the purpose. Keeping in mind the possible error 100 students out of 285, who had answered the questionnaire, were short listed. Intending to conduct an unbiased study the sex ratio was also mentioned making it 50 boys and 50 girls.

Analysis Of Data

The data collected was classified, tabulated and subjected to statistical analysis and henceforth interpreted. Simple percentage method was used to conclude the found data.

Findings and Discussions

1. Use of The Internet:

The researcher concluded that the respondents' attributes - including gender and age. This study found that 28.5% of respondents reported 40 or more hours of online activity weekly - an amount labeled an important signal of addictive behavior.

2. Years Being Using the Internet:

Out of hundred students 34% have been using internet since last 3 years in which the percentage of boys is 44% and girls is 24% which means that the number of boys using internet is higher in comparison to girls, showing that boys started using internet earlier than girls.

Net use among Boys have been prevalent since last 3 years, however girls have picked up mostly in the last 2 years. This helps us in concluding that girls are equally prone to internet addiction.

3. Hours Spent in A Week, On the Internet:

The outcome of Internet usage between 5-9 hrs in a week's time is 4%, where boys are 6% and girls 2%. Between 10-19 hrs total usage is 9%, where there are 10% boys and 8% girls. Between 20-29hrs is 16%, in which 14% are boys and 18% are girls. Between 30-39 hrs total goes to 28%, where 26% boys and 30% girls are found. Finally, between 40-49 hrs total usage of internet is 43%, where 44% are boys and 43% girls.

Consistent increase in the hours is seen as per the internet usage by the students. Which clearly states the addiction is found more in boys as compared to girls and that girls are not too behind to stand on the land mark of 'tend to fall' in this category.

4. Things People Do Online:

The study discusses the things people do online which have revealed two aspects where students either agreed or disagreed according to their usage and understanding. We saw that 95% students agreed to the usage of net for E- mail, in which 94%were boys and 96% were girls. Those who disagreed were a small section of 6% boys and 4% girls. The percentage of girls is more as compared to boys who have e-mail accounts. It was seen that students use chat, messaging and e-mail to make, stay in touch with friends worldwide, sometimes in the same way as some previously had pen pals especially girls.

The scenario is same with instant messaging where 67% agreed and 33% disagreed. In this 76% boys and 58% girls were in yes category and 24% boys and 42% girls were in the no category.

The study revealed that students surf irrelevant web sites, engage in chat room gossip, converse with Internet pen pals, and play interactive games at the cost of productive activity.

5. Social Networking Sites Used:

The study opens up the most used social networking sites and the data here by clearly gives us the correct sequence.

Facebook.com stands as the most popular social networking site with 38% in all, where 36% were boys and 40% were girls, stating that girls are more active on facebook as compared to boys.

Orkut stands second were total usage is 27% students in which 30% boys and 24% girls have their account.

Hi5.com stands third in the above series with 21%, in which 20% are boys and 22% are girls.

It was also noticed that students had more than one account on different sites.

Minimal use and awareness was seen for the other sites like ibibo.com, MySpace Sites, Bigadda.com, etc.

6. The Following Are Some Beliefs Students Had About Internet Use:

Both positive and negative impacts were seen on the students. The merits of the Internet make it an ideal research tool. They found internet very informative and useful as they agreed that it improved their performance in class and provided them with opportunities to learn, with a total of 81% including 84%boys and 78% girls. The students strongly feel that internet has given opportunities to share with friends the information they would otherwise not have. The Internet has been hyped as a premiere educational tool driving schools to integrate Internet services among their classroom environments. But the real fact is that Internet usage by children does not improve performance in class because the information on the Internet is too disorganized and unrelated to school curriculum and textbooks to help students achieve better results on standardized tests.

Another category was of students who discussed about enhancement of their relationship with family and friends. It was note worthy that the total percentage of enhancing relation with friends was 94 in which 98% were boys and 94% girls, whereas the total percentage of enhancing relation with family was 34% consisting of 22% boys and 32% girls. This clearly shows a remarkable difference between the two situations. Students believe in enhancing relationship with friends no matter they know them personally or not.

A huge number of students, precisely 81% and 94% respectively did acknowledge internet as a source which has encouraged gambling and infidelity.

This part of the study reveals that the awareness level towards the ill effects of internet is more among boys. Girls, having taken to internet use recently, are either blissfully unaware, or are not willing to acknowledge the danger.

7. The Following Are Some Descriptions of Students on Using Internet:

56% boys and 40% girls agreed that they find it difficult to get down to work whereas 44%boys and 60% girls strongly disagreed to the statement making it to total of 52% Clearly showing that although boys seem more addicted yet girls are not far behind.

24% boys and 32% girls agreed to the statement that they are prepared to leave their online activities for work whereas 76% boys and 68% girls showed disagreement to the statement making it a total of 72% showing that boys are more prone to online addiction.

The boisterous human nature revealed itself when 84% boys and 78% girls claimed that they know their strength, in addition to this, 82% boys and 76% girls claimed that they like to take responsibilities for making decision. Truly speaking no single behaviour pattern defines Internet addiction. These behaviors, when they have taken control over life becomes unmanageable, include: compulsive use of the Internet, a preoccupation with being online, lying or hiding the extent or nature of your online behaviour, and an inability to control or curb your online behaviour.

8. Tendency to Become Addicted to the 'Net:

This part of the survey was aimed at finding out the tendency of students to become addicted to the net and the most surprising factor was that both boys and girls were found having equal tendency to internet addiction.92% students accepted that they have problem in limiting their time spent on net. 98% confessed that they find it hard to stay away from net for several days at a time .92% agreed that they have tried unsuccessful to curtail their use of net. 84% admit that they derive much pleasure and satisfaction in life from being on net and 92% agreed that they have repeatedly tried to control, cut back or stop internet use.

9. The Following Are Some Possible Sociological Impacts of Internet Use on People:

The sociological part of the study showed alarming results where a total of 86% students claimed that they prefer the excitement of internet time spent with friends or family. 90% always ended up forming new relationship with fellow online users. An alarming 92% confessed that they are in a habit of always

checking their e mail before getting to work. 83% acknowledged that their school work always suffers because of time spent on line. 77% admitted that they always cut down the time they spend on extracurricular activities so that they can stay online longer. 78% accepted that internet at school has declined their work productivity. What was even more alarming was the fact that a total of 74% and 54% respectively accepted that they have always risked significant relationship, career opportunities because of internet and have had been in trouble at school because of their personal use of internet services provided there.

10. The Following Are Some Possible Behavioral Impact:

The questionnaire dealing with the behavioral impact clearly started showing signs of internet addiction. Another disturbing fact that revealed itself was that the gender difference which was very evident in the initial part of the study is fast diminishing and boys and girls equally show sighs of addiction. In this part 92% students confessed that they make unsuccessful attempts to cut down their time spent online, skipped classes and even slept late or woke early to be on net. 93% agreed that over familiarity with internet lead to loss of interest in social or recreational activities. Addiction of students to social networking sites was behind the change in their behavioral pattern.

11. The Following Are Some Possible Economic Impact:

The questionnaire dealing with the economic impact shows that internet is, not only taking its toll on the psychological and physical life of our students but is also going heavy on their purses.80% students feel that the money spent on internet is affordable and 96% prefer to fund their own internet browsing with 94% students doing so by their own pocket money. The study also gives us the insight into the students mind set showing that 95% consider their online activities worth the money they pay, 81% actually enjoy spending money on internet café and 40% admitting that they feel restless when they are short of money to pay for their online activities.

12. The Following Are Some Possible Psychological & Physical Impact:

The psychological and physical analysis of the given group of students reveals that86% of them became defensive or secretive when any one ask them what they do online. It is not the technology which is to blame— it's the behavior. 82% accepted that they find themselves anticipating when they would go online again. The participants often demonstrated impulsivity control and experienced intense cravings to get on the Internet when they attempted to restrict themselves. Physical symptoms may be evident (e.g., students may look overly tired or sleepy in class because of all-night Internet sessions). Other possible physical ailments include carpal tunnel syndrome, back strain, and eye strain from the long periods of sedentary computer use. They may be depressed, withdrawn, irritable, or anxious as a result of both the physical and psychological toll of the Internet addiction. A mammoth 90% admitted to fear that they feel life without internet would be empty, boring and joyless. 66% blocked disturbing thoughts and replaced them with soothing thoughts about internet. 68% admitted to snapping, yelling or being annoyed when someone bothered them while they were on line. It was evidenced by angry and resentful outbursts at others who question or try to take away

their time from using the internet. 90% had difficulty in cutting down the time spent online. They find it increasingly difficult to meet their major obligations at school, or home. They are restless, irritable, and anxious when not using. They do not succeed in cutting down, controlling, or stopping use. They experience physical, psychological, and social problems due to their use, yet they persist in their Internet behavior.89% suffered from attention deficit disorder. Trends also showed that Internet addicts suffer from emotional problems such as depression and anxiety-related disorders and often use the fantasy world of the Internet to psychologically escape unpleasant feelings or stressful situations.93% preferred internet over going out with family members and the same percentage confessed to lying to family members and others about the extent of their involvement of internet. Internet addicts also suffer from relationship problems in almost 75% of the cases and use interactive online applications such as chat rooms, instant messaging, or online gaming as a safe way of establishing new relationships and more confidently relating to others through the Internet.57% suffered sleeplessness due to their excessive involvement with internet. 70% admitted that they feel depressed, moody or nervous when they are off line. Responses such as excited, happy, thrilled, uninhibited, attractive, supported, or desirable indicate that use of the Internet has altered the student's mood state. Most of the students in the study had severe academic impairments including poor grades with 65% acknowledging that they spent less time studying because of internet. Academic issues include decrease in study habits, missing classes, and a significant drop in grades. Students may also be less involved in extracurricular and social activities. However, no significant gender difference appeared in this part of the study meaning that both are more or less sailing in the same boat.

Conclusion

Research indicates that Internet addiction is often associated with other forms of mental distress such as depression, impulse control disorder and low self-esteem. Internet addicts can no longer be stereotyped as high profile, well-educated people with a thirst for knowledge. Current research indicates that Internet addicts can be of any gender. They generally fall between the ages of 16 - 18years. In addition, it appears that many individuals become addicted for social rather than intellectual reasons. As technologies become increasingly accessible and diverse, age and education no longer serve as useful guidelines for examining Internet addiction.

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