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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MENTAL HEALTH ON INTERNET ADDICTS AND NON ADDICTS

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Abstract

With the growing trend of digital life, Internet has penetrated very deeply into our daily lives. But with the pros, there come the cons as well. As a result of inappropriate and excessive use of Internet, some people have developed Internet addiction, which is likely affecting their mental health in many ways. This current study was conducted with the objective to measure the effect on Internet addiction on mental health among undergraduate college students. The Internet Addiction Test by Young and General Health Questionnaires 28 by Goldberg and Hillier were used to measure Internet addiction and Mental health respectively. A total sample of 60 participants was collected with equal representation of addicts and non-addicts. Analysis was done using mean, SD and t-test. The results revealed significant difference in overall mental health and its dimensions among Internet addicts and non-addicts.
Keywords- college students, Internet addicts, mental health.

Introduction

While being a helpful tool for work, entertainment, education, research, knowledge and social interaction, internet has penetrated so deep in our lives that it is now taking a toll on physical and mental health as well as interpersonal and intimate relationships. Internet is a double edge sword, which has led to drastic social changes. In India, the number of internet users has steadily increased each year since its start in 1995(VSNL), there were approximately 7 million internet users in 2001, 40 million during 2006, which crossed 205 million in October 2013, 481 million in December 2017 and the number of internet users in India is expected to reach 500 million by June 2018. Accessing Internet has become easier in the era of smartphones. Internet is highly addictive and it can be abused by anyone (Cao et al. 2011) and there is a lack of knowledge and awareness of the array of side effects of inappropriate and prolonged Internet usage.

There is an emerging public health concern over the increase in Internet usage, particularly among college going students. India's first Internet de-addiction center was started at New Delhi in 2014. The term "Internet addiction disorder" (IAD) was coined by Ivan Goldberg 1994 and is now more commonly called Problematic Internet Use (PIU) or Compulsive Internet Use (CIU). These terms avoid the word addiction and are not limited to any single cause, but only reflect a

general statement about excessive computer use that interferes with daily life. Habits such as reading, playing computer games, or watching very large numbers of internet videos or movies are all troubling only to the extent that these activities interfere with normal life. IAD is often divided into subtypes by activity, such as excessive, overwhelming, or inappropriate internet pornography use, gaming, online social networking, blogging, email, or internet shopping.

Numerous studies done by the researchers show that inappropriate internet usage can lead to anxiety, low self-esteem, loneliness, depression, insomnia, isolation, sociolphobia, suicidal tendency, inability to prioritize or keep schedules, defensiveness, agitation, mood swings, fear, impulsiveness, inattention and executive functioning, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) etc. It can make people an easy target of cyberbullying, cybercrime and cyberstalking. Many new disorders like Selfitis, Whatsappities and Facebookities have also been added. In fact, younger internet users were more at risk of becoming internet addicts than older users (Soule et al. 2002). Psychological and environmental factors in the lives of college students may leave them disproportionately vulnerable to Internet addiction (Griffiths 1998; Young & Rogers 1998).

Due to the countless uses of internet in various sectors life, young college students become easily susceptible to internet addiction. A number of studies across the world have studied internet addiction especially among adolescents and young adults, but such research is scarce in the Bundelkhand region. The current study was conducted with the objective to measure the effect on internet addiction on mental health among undergraduate college students of Jhansi district.

Methodology

Objective

a. To compare the overall mental health of Internet addicted and non-addicted students.
b. To compare Internet addicted and non addicted students on the basis of:
- Somatic symptoms
- Anxiety/Insomnia
- Social dysfunction
- Severe depression

Hypothesis

H1: There will be no significant difference between overall mental health of Internet addicted and non-addicted students.

H2: There will be no significant difference between somatic symptoms of Internet addicted and non-addicted students.

H3: There will be no significant difference between anxiety/insomnia of Internet addicted and non-addicted students.

H4: There will be no significant difference between social dysfunction of Internet addicted and non-addicted students.

H5: There will be no significant difference between severe depression of Internet addicted and non-addicted students.

Sample

For the current study a total of 60 undergraduate students were selected randomly from colleges in Jhansi district Uttar Pradesh. Data has been collected through purposive random sampling. 30 internet addicts and 30 non-addicts were selected as final sample.

Tools

- The Internet Addiction Test -Dr. Kimberly Young (1998) was used to measure the level of Internet addiction of the participants. Each item is scored using a five- point Likert scale, (1 = "rarely" to 5 = "always"). It covers the degree to which Internet use affect daily routine, social life, productivity, sleeping pattern, and feeling. The minimum score is 20 while the maximum is 100 and the higher the score the greater the level of Internet addiction. The range of the total IAT score 20-49 indicates average online use. The range of the total IAT score 50-79 is regarded as having occasional or frequent problems due to Internet use. A total score of 80-100 is regarded as having significant problems in one's life. In the present study the subjects with score less than 50 are classified as Internet non-addiction group and those subjects with score over 50 are classified as Internet addiction group.

- General Health Questionnaires 28 - Goldberg and Hillier (1979) for evaluation of mental health, the Scaled General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28) was used. The questionnaire has a total of 28 items and consists of four sub-scales with 7 questions in each:

  - Somatic symptoms (1 to 7) were related to physical symptoms and behavioral pattern and vulnerability to stress.

  - Anxiety and Insomnia (8 to 14) were related to symptoms pertaining to general feeling of apprehension about possible dangers and interference with sleep.

  - Social Dysfunction (15 to 21) were related to Symptoms pertaining to ineffective functioning in social situations in which individual might be exposed to scrutiny of others and fear of acting in a humiliating or embarrassing way.

  - Severe depression (22 to 28): Symptoms pertaining to emotional state characterized by extraordinary sadness, hopelessness and dejection.

Statistics

The data was analyzed using Mean, SD and t test.

Result and Discussion

The present study was undertaken with the aim to study effect of internet addiction on mental health of college going students in Jhansi district. The table 1 indicates the Mean and SD of internet addiction and non-addiction on overall mental health as well as on the four dimension viz. somatic symptoms, anxiety /insomnia, social dysfunction and severe depression.

Table 1: Mean, SD and t-values of Internet addicts and non-addicts on GHQ scale

Variable		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	Significance level
Overall mental health	Internet addicted	55.433	7.811	1.426	11.784	.01
	Non addicted	31.166	8.137	1.485		
Somatic symptoms	Internet addicted	15.67	3.497	.638	11.404	.01
	Non addicted	6.07	3.005	.549		
Anxiety/Insomnia	Internet addicted	12.37	4.937	.901	3.487	.01
	Non addicted	8.47	3.627	.662		
Social dysfunction	Internet addicted	15.00	2.560	.467	5.659	.01
	Non addicted	9.67	4.482	.818		
Severe depression	Internet addicted	12.27	3.542	.647	6.009	.01
	Non addicted	6.97	3.285	.600		

The overall mental health Mean and SD score for internet addict and non-addict was found to be 55.433 & 7.811 and 31.166 & 8.137 respectively which was found significant at $p<.01$ level, t= 11.784. This shows that there is significance difference in overall mental health between internet addicted and non-addicted adolescent students. Thus, H1 that there will be no significant difference between overall mental health of Internet addicted and non-addicted students, is rejected.

Somatic symptoms scores were found to be more in internet addicts (M= 15.67, SD= 3.497) than in non-addicts (M=6.07, SD=3.005). The t-value, 11.404, was found to be significant at $p<.01$ level, thus H2 that there will be no significant difference between somatic symptoms of Internet addicted and non-addicted students, is rejected.

Anxiety/Insomnia scores were found to be more in internet addicts (M= 12.37, SD= 4.937) than in non-addicts (M=8.47,SD=3.627). The t-value, 3.487, was found to be significant at $p<.01$ level, thus H3 that there will be no significant difference between anxiety/insomnia of Internet addicted and non-addicted students, is rejected.

Social dysfunction scores were found to be more in internet addicts (M=15.00, SD=2.560) than in non-addicts (M=9.67, SD=4.482). The t-value, 5.659, was found to be significant at $p<.01$ level, thus H4 that there will be no significant difference between social dysfunction of Internet addicted and non-addicted students, is rejected.

Severe depression scores were found to be more in internet addicts (M= 12.27, SD= 3.542) than in non-addicts (M=6.97, SD=3.285). The t-value, 6.009, was found to be significant at $p<.01$

level, thus H5 that there will be no significant difference between severe depression of Internet addicted and non-addicted students, is rejected.

The above results are in line with the previous study done by Jahanian & Seifury (2013); Dutta (2016); Awasthi & Verma (2017); and Bagdey et al. (2018), who found that there are significant difference in the different dimensions and overall mental health of internet addicted and internet non-addicted students. The findings of this study makes a concordance with the study by Yang and Tung (2004) where it was found out that the internet addict students manifested higher tolerance and withdrawal symptoms and were engaged in compulsive usage of internet. Also with study done by Cao and Su (2007) that revealed those adolescents with Internet addiction possess different psychological features as compared to those who use internet for lesser time.

Conclusion

The study clearly reveals the adverse effects of internet addiction on mental health. Excess of anything is bad. Much like any other potentially addictive activity, it's important to do things in moderation. Therefore, it is very important to regulate the internet usage time especially for young adults and adolescents who are more susceptible to addiction. Society should be made more aware of the ill effects of internet, joined effort should be made by everybody. Those who are facing severe addiction should seek professional and expert help. While avoiding the Internet completely is very difficult in today's world, it's important to understand that going online should never replace the kind of social interaction that we all need to be fully human. In the end there has to be a line drawn when it comes to accessing internet and using social media. The need of the hour is to switch off the "virtual life" and focus more on the "real life".

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