

## Internet Addiction: The Underlying Causes and Effects A Perspective Study

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### Abstract

Internet addiction is a current days burning issue and an emergency, which needs societal attention as a whole. This paper develops an overview about the underlying causes and effects of internet addiction. The indexed studies were reviewed for the findings. Finally the paper suggests that sensitising and increasing awareness among people about life style modification as the strategic management to prevent and manage internet addiction.

**Keywords:** Internet; Addiction; Cause; Effect; Perspective.

### Introduction

With the growing digitalisation of the whole world, importance of internet is increasing in everyday life day by day. People are using various on-line resources each day which made it difficult to imagine life without internet access. Internet is the greatest gift from technology which makes everything available only with few clicks anywhere, anytime and thus made life easy. Internet is a window opening to the whole world. In addition to communication as prime purpose, it also facilitate recreation by games, internet banking, finding locations, preparing presentations, text mailing, music and many more. One can get enormous amount of informations available online that can satisfy one's curiosity for wisdom and knowledge in all the areas.

However, apart from the uncountable benefits of internet use, it affects individual's life in a negative

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way too. Due to techno communication, less importance is given to personal contact thus personal and one-to-one interaction is slowly losing its eminence. Because of the easy and 24 x 7 accessibility, people spend maximum time online, which leads to difficulty in doing their daily activities in due time, poor fragmented sleep, late bed time and early wake up, all these seriously affects their mental health and quality of life. Internet has brought a great epidemiological transition in the whole world. All are so much absorbed in the gadgets that, enable to notice what's going in the surrounding. Alone in group, poor group interaction; even though when sitting together for dinner, we are enjoying neither food nor togetherness instead busy with online activities. People are lacking emotional pleasure, even though in groups but not connected.

According to various reports and researches, it is found that internet develops obsession among people to be continuously online, which is significantly altering brain's perception for the device. According to Chinese Ministry of Health, staying online more than six hours a day and having adverse reactions from not being able to go online, are symptoms of Internet addiction disorder (Williams, 2008) [1]. The terms normal Internet usage and addictive usage are still debatable because research in the area of Internet addiction is still very less. Holmes, defines normal Internet usage to mean any amount of usage that does not exceed 19 hours per week (Holmes 1997). This definition is derived from a survey conducted. Young, offers a more generous definition for "normal Internet usage." According to her, an addicted person is one who spends at least 38 hours per week or 8 hours per day on the Internet (Young 1998). Specialists in the field of pathology offer the most restrictive definition for classifying Internet usage. Pathological theory states that any person who reported 2 to 3 hours of Internet use per week is a normal user. Anyone who logged 8.5 hours or more per week is classified as a pathological user (Morahan; Schumaker 1997) [2].

The concept of internet addiction refers to the use of internet which in turn causes various problems in individual, social and professional aspects (Greenfield, 2000). Goldberg defined "internet addiction" and tried to identify the diagnosis criteria for the first time. He jokingly adapted the substance addiction criteria to uncontrolled internet use e.g. fantasies and dreams about internet use as well as voluntary and involuntary finger movements (Goldberg 1995) [3].

In US, studies on internet addiction were originated by Dr. Kimberly Young, who presented the first research on internet addiction in 1996. She has given a very precise definition on internet addiction as "the presence of the three basic factors e.g. preoccupation, tolerance and withdrawal symptoms in any individual for internet use". The term preoccupation refers to individual's mind constantly thinking of what he / she will be going to do online later while he / she is still in other offline work, tolerance refers to spending considerably longer time online to feel the same level of satisfaction as before and withdrawal symptoms refers to exhibition of violent behaviors when the individual is not allowed to use internet and such behaviour is not normally seen in other circumstances [4].

The highest incidents of internet addiction were found in the Middle East (10.9%) and the lowest in North and West Europe (2.6%). North America had a prevalence rate of 8%, Asia had 7.1%, followed by South and East Europe on 6.1%, Oceania on 4.3% and no reports were found in South America [5].

### Sub Types of Internet Addiction [6]

Internet addiction further can be classified according to its particular purpose of use because of obsession to that particular purpose.

- Social networking sites e.g. face book, twitter etc.
- Instant messaging e.g. whatsapp, Skype, viber, imo etc.
- Compulsive search for informations through Google
- Internet Gaming
- Compulsive online shopping
- Pornography

### Impact on Life [7-12]

#### ⊙ *Physical Problems*

- *Overweight* due to reduced physical activity, eating unhealthy food.

- *Pains and aches* e.g. stiffness, burning feeling and pain in hands due to continuous holding the mouse and moving the finger on the key board, headache, neck pain, back pain due to sitting in the same position for hours.
- *Eye problems* e.g. dryness and redness of eye and irritation etc. due to continuous staring at the computer screen.
- *Sleep deficits* e.g. disturbed fragmented sleep patterns due to late night logins, day time drowsiness, lethargy etc.
- *Impairment of daily activities* e.g. Poor personal hygiene as showers, face washing, brushing hair and teeth, all get less priority.

#### ⊙ *Psychosocial/Behavioural Problems*

- *Poor IPR/communications* - Poor Inter Personal Relationship, reduced communication, lack of cooperation and inability to build relationship, withdrawal from social activities, hiding feelings from family and friends, likes isolation, poor participation in group activities, and lack of interest in social gathering etc.
- *Poor eating habits* - Eating irregularities, skipping meal, eating unhealthy food because don't want to take time to eat properly, rather than eating healthy, balanced meals, eat food that is quick and usually unhealthy.
- *Low frustration tolerance level* - Temper tantrum, irritable, aggressive, abusive, getting irritated easily if anyone interfere in internet use.
- *Poor time management* - Facing time management problem as maximum time spending in online activities.
- *Poor work performance* - lose of job due to poor performance at job, incomplete assignment, difficulty in focussing in work, utilising office hour for other non-purposeful online search.

### Possible Reasons [13-14]

The 'P's can lead to such addiction

#### ⊙ *Psychological Factors*

- Having low mood, low confidence, nervousness, sad mood, feelings of loneliness, boredom
- Need for excitement and experimentation as staying online is very funny and engaging because internet facilitates gaming, chatting on social

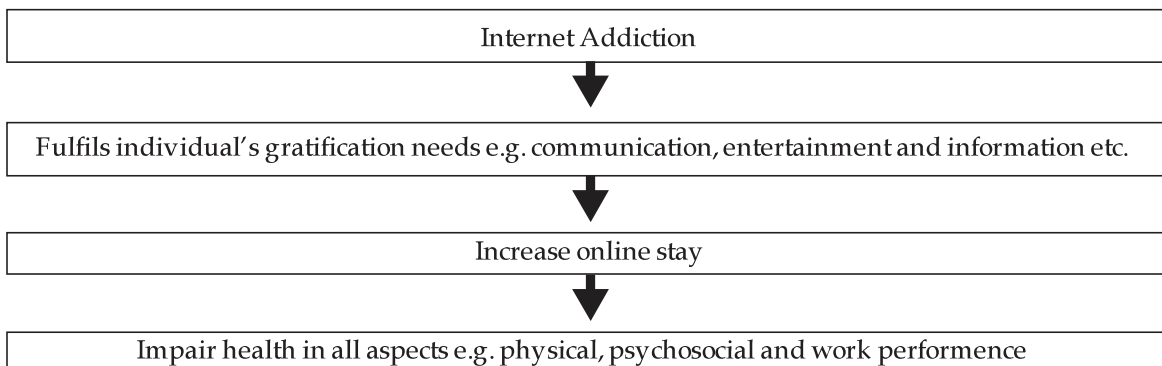
networking site, online shopping, internet gambling, pornography etc.

- Provides secure feelings because of anonymity.

⊙ *Personality Factors*

- Being shy and introvert/extrovert need for recognition and approval

### Psychopathology



### Gratiifications Theory by LaRose, Mastro, & Eastin, 2001

#### Diagnostic Evaluation [15]

Young (1996) developed a eight-item questionnaire to screen internet addiction which is a modified criteria for pathological gambling:

1. Do you feel preoccupied with the Internet (think about previous on-line activity or anticipate next on-line session)?
2. Do you feel the need to use the Internet with increasing amounts of time in order to achieve satisfaction?
3. Have you repeatedly made unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop Internet use?
4. Do you feel restless, moody, depressed, or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop Internet use?
5. Do you stay on-line longer than originally intended?
6. Have you experienced the loss of significant relationship, job, educational or career opportunity because of the Internet?
7. Have you lied to family members, therapist, or others to hide the extent of involvement with the Internet?
8. Do you use Internet as a way of escaping from problems or of relieving dysphoric mood, feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, depression etc?

*Individuals were Considered "Addicted" when Answering "yes" to Five (or more) of the Questions.*

#### Strategic Management [15-19]

⊙ *Aims of Strategic Management*

- Management and cure of impairments due to internet addiction
- Reinforcement of preventive measures by increasing awareness about various aspects of internet addiction

#### Management and cure of impairments due to internet addiction

⊙ *Physical Problems*

- *Overweight.* Take nutritional supplements e.g. Green leafy vegetables, fresh fruits etc. Take food regularly and timely. Avoid sitting in front of the TV or, computer, drinking coke/Pepsi and munching potato chips, eating junk foods, e.g. pizza, burger, French fry, pastries, carbonated soft drinks etc., skipping meals.
- *Pains and aches.* Follow work station ergonomics. Take regular breaks. Adjust computer chair with arm rest and full back support. Keep back straight and upright. Table height must be 29 inch above the floor. Use keyboard, mouse by wearing wrist-guard. Place keyboard at elbow height. Keep wrist straight, while using mouse or key board. Pain and spasm in the wrist referred as carpal tunnel syndrome.
- *Eye problems also referred as computer vision syndrome.* Keep a distance of about 45cm from the monitor. Blink consciously while working on the computer. Follow 20/20/20 rule: take 20seconds

break in every 20 minutes interval, and see objects 20 feet away, e.g. sky, windows. Adjust font size and brightness and contrast to meet the visual needs of the user. In severe case consult a doctor.

- *Sleep deficits.* No late night logins, as the light inhibit sleep onset. Set some rules like, lights out, technology off, gathering phones in a central place at night. Avoid taking large meal, caffeine, excessive fluid intake, in evening and before bed, eating, reading or watching television in bed. Fix your sleep and wake time. It helps refreshing feelings throughout the day. Follow routine of activities in everyday life. To induce sleep, create comfortable cool dark sleep environment, establish relaxing habits at bedtime such as meditation, take warm bath before bed.
- *Impairment of Daily Activities.* Fix time slot for all the daily activities e.g. wake-up time, exercise, bath, meal and net surfing etc.

#### ◉ *Psychosocial/Behavioural Problems*

- *Poor IPR/communications.* Have family time, make all family members sit together - Attempt to take any two meals with your family or, do yoga, meditation together. Use this time to connect with each other. It will help in maintaining a loving relationship with the family members, brings all family members close to each other. Watch TV together. Play some indoor games together. Co-view and co-play digital media. Keep computer in common areas.
- *Learn stress management techniques* as follows, Awareness.
- The initial step in managing stress is awareness. If one becomes aware of stressors, he or she can avoid or accept them.

#### *Relaxation*

- Practice relaxation techniques e.g. sports, jogging, physical exercise, breathing exercise etc.

#### *Meditation*

- Practice meditation 20 minutes, once or, twice daily.
- Select a quiet place and assume a comfortable position e.g. Sitting in a chair with feet flat on the floor approximately 6 inches apart, arms resting comfortably in the lap/ cross – legged on the floor or on a cushion
- Focus and count breaths in and out.

- Select a word or mantra and repeat many times, prevent distracting thoughts.
- Practice the selected focus for 10 to 15 minutes a day.

#### *Interpersonal Communication*

- Talking the problem out to a empathetic individual e.g. family or, friend
- Writing about the feelings on a diary.

#### *Problem Solving*

- Assessing the facts of the situation
- Formulate goals for the resolution of the stressful situation
- Think for the alternatives for dealing with the situation
- Determine the risks and benefits of each alternative
- Select the best alternative, implement and evaluate the outcome
- If the first alternative is ineffective then select and implement the second option Pets.
- Many psychological studies uncovered the evidence that those, who care for pets, especially dogs and cats, are better able to cope with the stressors of life. The physical act of stroking or, petting a dog or, cat can be therapeutic. It gives the animal an intuitive sense of being cared for and at the same time gives the individual the calming feeling of warmth, affection and interdependency with a reliable, trusting being.

#### *Music*

- Listening music reduces depression, elevate mood and stimulate motivation.

#### *Deep Breathing Exercises*

- Sit, stand, or lie in a comfortable position, ensuring that the spine is straight.
- Place one hand on your abdomen and the other one on the chest.
- Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose. The abdomen should be expanding and pushing up on your hand. The chest should be moving only slightly.
- When you have breathed in as much as possible, hold your breath for a few seconds before exhaling.

- Begin exhaling slowly through the mouth, pursing your lips as if you were going to whistle. Pursing the lips helps to control how fast you exhale and keeps airways open as long as possible.
- Feel the abdomen deflate as the lungs are emptied of air.
- Begin the inhale - exhale cycle again. Focus on the sound and feeling of your breathing as you become more and more relaxed.
- Continue the deep breathing exercises for 5 to 10 minutes at a time.

#### *Mental Imagery*

- Sit and lie down in a comfortable position.
- Close eyes
- Imagine that you and someone you love are walking along the seashore. No other people are in sight in any direction. The sun is shining, the sky is blue, and a gentle breeze is blowing. You select a spot to stop and rest. You lie on the sand and close your eyes. You hear the sound of the waves as they splash against the shore. The sun feels warm on your face and body. The sand feels soft and warm against your back. An occasional wave splashes you with a cool mist that dries rapidly in the warm sun. The fragrance of your suntan lotion wafts gently and pleasantly in the air.
- You lie in this quiet place for what seems like a very long time, taking in the sounds of the waves, the warmth of the sun, and the cooling sensation of the mist and ocean breeze. It is very quiet. It is very warm. You feel very relaxed, very connected. This is your special place. You may come to this special place whenever you want to relax.

#### **Conclusion**

Technology is a tool, which on its own has no use. It becomes boon or bane depending upon the purpose of use, for example a doctor could use the CT scan to diagnose a person's illness and take the necessary action. The same doctor could also use the CT scan to determine whether the unborn child is a female, and if yes, get it aborted. In both cases the CT scan does the same function it is expected to. The difference is in the usage; here the culprit is not technology, but the person using it. One can use a knife to cut vegetables or cut a rope, and the same knife can be used to murder someone. So who is at fault here, the knife or the owner?

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