

A study to assess internet addiction among adolescent junior college students of Navi Mumbai, India

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Abstract

Introduction: An Internet Addiction is like any other addiction. It is defined as a compulsive loss of impulse control resulting in damage to the user and his or her relationships, schoolwork, or employment¹. Prevalence statistics of Internet Addiction among adolescents vary widely from 2% to 20% across cultures and societies⁴. The internet usage in India has grown by 32% from October 2013 to October 2014. About 72% of the internet users are youth⁵. Internet addiction among college students interferes with their studies, work and daily life causing severe stress on themselves and family. **Objectives:** To assess the prevalence of Internet Addiction among adolescent junior college students and classify the extent of internet addiction. **Methods:** A cross sectional study was conducted at a Junior College, in Nerul, Navi Mumbai during June and July 2015. The whole batch of 150 students between the age group 15 to 17 years were selected for the study (complete enumeration). The questionnaire was administered which consisted, *The Internet Addiction Test (IAT) of Kimberly Young* consisting of 20-item, based upon five-point Likert scale, with a view to assess internet addiction and measure the extent of their addictive behavior in terms of normal users (score <20), mild (score 20-49), moderate (score 50-79), and severe (score > 79) addiction. Statistical analysis was done using SPSS version 21.0 with the help of mean and percentages. **Results:** The prevalence of Internet Addiction among college students was found to be 61.33%. As per the IAT grading, 58 (38.67%) students were normal users, 62 (41.33%) had mild, 27 (18%) had moderate while 3(2%) had severe form of internet addiction. The mean time spent on internet was 1.34 hours per day. The purpose of using Internet by students was reported as social networking (52%), Gaming (16%), downloading music (14.66%), internet TV (5.33%), academic purpose (4.66%) and pornography (1.33%). **Conclusion:** The prevalence of Internet Addiction is increasing among adolescent junior college students and thus there is an urgent need to intensify preventive measures for secure and safe use of internet.

Keywords: Internet Addiction, Adolescent college students, Internet Addiction Test (IAT), Kimberly Young, Likert scale.

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INTRODUCTION

Internet Addiction is excessive or compulsive use of internet. Internet Addiction is defined as a compulsive loss of impulse control resulting in damage to the user and his or her relationships, schoolwork, or employment¹. Internet is utilized for various reasons like academics, news, science studies, sports, movies, music etc. Internet addiction was first described in 1995 by Ivan Goldberg, following which multiple studies were conducted. Young designed the first instrument to assess Internet Addiction and suggest that the disorder has significant effects socially, psychologically and occupationally^{2,3}. Adolescent college students are usually

using internet for more than required time and this is known to interfere with their studies, work and daily life causing neurological complications, psychological disturbances, social problems and severe stress on themselves and family which may ruin their lives. Prevalence statistics of Internet addiction among adolescents vary widely from 2% to 20% across cultures and societies⁴. The internet usage in India has grown by 32% from October 2013 to October 2014. About 72% of the internet users are youth⁵. In India, mobile Internet usage is growing at the rate of nearly 85% per annum, with nearly 75% of non voice usage being devoted to entertainment, where video and music streaming are major growth activities⁶. Multiple studies have identified Internet addiction as a significant Public health threat in Western world with very little research done in India. Internet Addiction among college students interferes with their studies, work and daily life causing severe stress on themselves and family. With this background, the present study was conducted to assess the prevalence of internet addiction among adolescent college students and classify extent of Internet Addiction, which will help to take appropriate necessary steps to tackle this problem.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross sectional study was conducted at a Junior College, in Nerul, Navi Mumbai during June and July 2015. The whole batch of 150 first year junior college students between the age group 15 to 17 years were selected for the study by complete enumeration. Permission was taken from the Principal of the junior college after explaining the objectives of study. Ethical approval was taken from the Institutional Ethical committee. A predesigned, structured questionnaire was prepared in English and validated. Pilot study was conducted among 25 students. Written informed consent was taken from students and the predesigned structured questionnaire was administered to students to assess the prevalence of Internet Addiction and classify its extent. The questionnaire also included the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) of Kimberly Young consisting of 20-item, based upon five-point Likert scale that measures the severity of self-reported compulsive use of the internet². Total internet addiction scores were calculated, with possible scores for the sum of 20 items ranging from 20 to 100. It is used to assess internet addiction and measure the extent of their addictive behavior in terms of normal users (score <20), mild (score 20-49), moderate (score 50-79), and severe (score > 79) addiction. The internal reliability of the scale is 0.93. This test assesses the generalized internet addiction. The data was collected, compiled, tabulated and statistically analyzed using SPSS version 21.0, with the help of mean and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the present study the participants were adolescent students in the age group of 15 years to 17 years. Majority i.e. 88 (58.6%) of the study subjects were of 17 years of age, where as 10 (6.66%) students were of 15 year old and 52 (34.66%) were 16 year old adolescents. Out of 150 college adolescents selected for this study, 94 (64%) were boys and 56 (36%) were girls. In the present study, the mean age of study subjects was found to be 16.52 years. This is almost similar to the study conducted by Deepak Goel *et al*⁷, where they reported that the mean age was 16.82 years. Using the Internet Addiction test of Kimberly Young², in the present study, the prevalence of internet addiction among the adolescent junior college students was found to be high i.e. 61.33%. 58 (38.67%) students were making normal use of internet. None of the student reported of not having used internet ever.

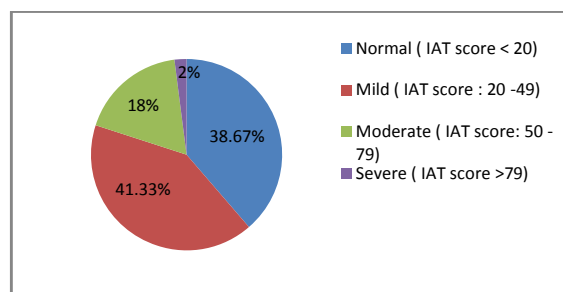


Figure 1: Grading of Internet Addiction among Adolescent Students as per Internet Addiction Test (IAT) of Kimberly Young (n=150)

As regards grading of internet addiction, Graph 1, showed the severity of Internet addiction as per the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) of Kimberly Young, among the adolescent study participants of this study. Among 150 adolescent study participants, 58 (38.67%) students were normal users, 62 (41.33%) had mild, 27 (18%) had moderate, while 3(2%) had severe form of internet addiction. This is almost similar to a study, conducted by Arvind Sharma *et al*⁸ where internet addiction test scoring revealed that 57.3% as normal users, 35.0% as case of mild, 7.4% as moderate and 0.3% as severely addicted to Internet. In the present study, the mean time spent on internet was 1.34 hours per day. This is almost similar to a study conducted by Arvind Sharma *et al*⁸ in college students in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh where the mean time spent on internet was 1.29 hours per day. In the present study, Graph 2 shows, various uses of internet among adolescent study participants. The purpose of using Internet by students was reported as social networking (52%), Gaming (16%), downloading music (14.66%), internet TV (5.33%), academic purpose (4.66%) and pornography (1.33%). Though in this study some observations especially pornography is seen only

1.33% among the participants (n=93) it is quite possible that there would have been bias in the selecting this option because of fear of exposure or shame.

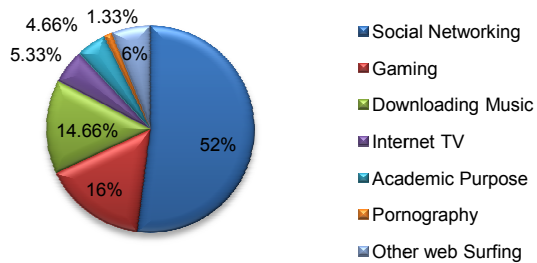


Figure 2: Purpose of Internet use among Adolescent Students (N=150)

In the present study, 126 (84%) adolescent study participants had received some lessons on safe use of Internet whereas, 24 (16%) participants were unaware of safe use of internet. Among the internet users, 76 (50.66%) adolescents used internet daily, 25 (16.66%) reported using internet more than twice a week, 28 (18.66%) used internet at least once a week and 21 (14%) used internet occasionally. 61 (40.66%) adolescent students had online contact through social media whom they had never met in the real world. This reflects the dangerous use of internet at a young age of adolescence.

CONCLUSION

In the present study, the prevalence of internet addiction among the urban adolescent college students was found to be high i.e. 61.33 %. The prevalence of internet addiction is increasing among adolescent students which needs immediate attention and counseling among adolescent age groups. The joint efforts of teachers and parents could be the best way to curb this problem of the internet addiction in the children. Thus there is an urgent need to intensify preventive measures for secure and safe use of internet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers and Parents should be vigilant on the internet use by the adolescents. Restrictions on certain sites should be mandatory especially pornography sites. Hours spent on internet needs to be reduced among the adolescents and more outdoor sports activity should be encouraged so as to divert the mind of the children from internet use and also helps their physical development. Counseling of the students is urgently required to prevent them from getting addicted. Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities should be regularly conducted to highlight the side effects of excessive use of Internet. In addition to this, a study on a large scale is needed with involvement of more colleges in different areas to assess the extent of Internet Addiction and its consequences.

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