

INTERNET IS AN INTEGRAL PART OR ADDICTION...?

ABSTRACT

The network of networks is the backbone of an inexhaustible source of global information. It has revolutionized the communication system, knowledge transmission and education system which brings progress in all fields of endeavour from creation of new goods, services and ideas for the advancement of knowledge and well-being of society as well. Internet is not just a technology, but a cultural artefact of its own right that brings culture closer to more people in more accessible forms, nurturing the rise of new forms of expression for art, innovation and enormous knowledge transmission. The internet has strongly influenced our education system by connecting and empowering students and educators through unbounded possibilities of knowledge sharing and creating new ways of teaching and learning without restriction of time and physical constraints that captivate and stimulate student's imagination at anytime, anywhere using any device. The internet can speed up growth, development and offer immense opportunities for strengthening the economy through e-commerce coupled with improved productivity and competitiveness as it has become a major distribution channel for goods and services. Our lives are surrounded by internet in each and every aspect and altered the way of interaction with our family, friends and life partners, and the meaning of cultural identity as well. Internet is formidable resource of building knowledge in which internet users are highly sensitized with the security and privacy issues, particularly minors and children despite of raising awareness. Internet is an easy medium to access pornography in children causing a sexually-deviant or sexually-addictive and increase in the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases (STD). Social media and the internet has become an inseparable part of younger generation's lifestyle; however, the excessive use of internet leads to internet addiction disorder (IAD) results as negative impact on physical and mental health, social and occupational impairment. IAD has diminishing the individual quality of life and disabling their time control. This paper emphasized on impacts of internet in our day to day lives, the psychological profile of addicted people, potential risk on emotional, mental and physical health, and possible treatment strategies of IAD.

Key words: Internet, positive, negative, STD, IAD.

INTRODUCTION:

Internet is sophisticated multidisciplinary tools that bring us together in one unit and free from geographic fetters which enable to share information and data from one end of world to other in fraction of time. In the present scenario, internet is being used as information hubs and has become an integral part of everyone's lives. The use of internet technology has been growing explosively across the world, immensely influencing the behaviour of people and society. Within the last quarter century, our lifestyle has drastically changed with the rising influence of internet (Kitazawa *et al.*, 2019). The internet has become so vital for business, education, communication and entertainment as well, and it is no longer viewed as a luxury of few and the rich and considered as an essential resource for all (Bricolo *et al.*, 2007). Internet has dramatically turned the existence of life as it completely revolutionized the current communication system and socialization scenario to an extent where it has

become our most preferred medium of everyday communication and raising human life day by day to a new level. Internet has entered into various domains of life such as research, communication networks, business and banking sector. The key advantage of internet in the education field is to access libraries, encyclopedias, art galleries, news archives, and other information sources from anywhere in the world. Now a day, almost everything we do in internet from ordering a pizza to sharing a moment with friends.

The internet itself is a “network of network” linked through wireless connection and other techniques that have been transformed since its inception. In its early days, it was a static network designed to shuttle a small freight of bytes or a short message between two terminals and for repository of information where content was published and maintained only by expert coders. However, in present times uploading and downloading immense quantities of information over various electronic leviathan, and now we are all commentators, publishers and creators with our own contents. As being a part and parcel of one’s life, people are extremely dependent on internet and its applications which affect their time and attention to be given for their own work such as educational, research and domestic works, responsibilities at home, even interaction and relationships with family and others (D’Souza and Hemamalini, 2018). With the advent of internet, most of the offline services are now available online for example: digital education, digital payment and money transfers, online shopping and online businesses. The internet has been abolished the barriers and boundaries of time and space, and introduced lots of opportunities in everyone’s lives. In the last decade, a huge increment in the number of internet users has been observed throughout the world. India had around 700 million internet users by 2020 and continuously growing day by day that will reach over 974 million users by 2025 i.e. the new internet users will be quintupled around 300 million by 2025 (Keelery, 2021). Roughly 4.66 billion people across the world are using the internet in their daily lives. In the beginning of 2021 i.e. close to 60 percent of the world's population. Statistics predicts that there will be six billion internet users by 2022, 75 percent of the world's population and more than 7.5 billion internet users by 2030, 90 percent of the world population (Johnson, 2021).

Although, internet has become one of the key drivers of social evolution and the best thing to have happened in human society, instead, excessive use of internet has detrimental impacts on human being as well as on the society too. People started to use social media with no real idea of the dangers, posting inappropriate comments to the profiles, leaked the private pictures and tapes seems to hit the headlines every day, and even criminal activities involving private-data trafficking. With the availability and mobility of new media, internet addiction (IA) has emerged as a potential problem in young people which refers to excessive computer use that interferes with their daily life (Kumar and Mondal, 2018). The unique qualities that seem to contribute to the potential for Internet addiction may be related to the speed, accessibility and intensity of the information accessed online (Greenfield, 1999). Obsessive use of the internet leads to IAD (Internet

Addiction Disorder) and evidences are mounting that IAD has a negative impact on mental health of adolescents. It has negative implications such as sadness, feeling down, having a loss of interest in daily activities, distraction from normal exercises and other physical play as well as social interaction with friends. Adolescents, who have high IAD, are more likely to suffer from emotional and mental stress, depression or social anxiety. However, the researchers have already uncovered some ways to treat the IAD, such as doing sport or spending more time with friends and developing healthy social networks (Masih and Rajkumar, 2019).

DIVERSE APPLICATIONS OF INTERNET:

The various remarkable and diversified applications of internet make it an integral part of everyone's lives. The internet is a multi-dimensional technology which provides abundant opportunities to its users through various applications and its multiple services.

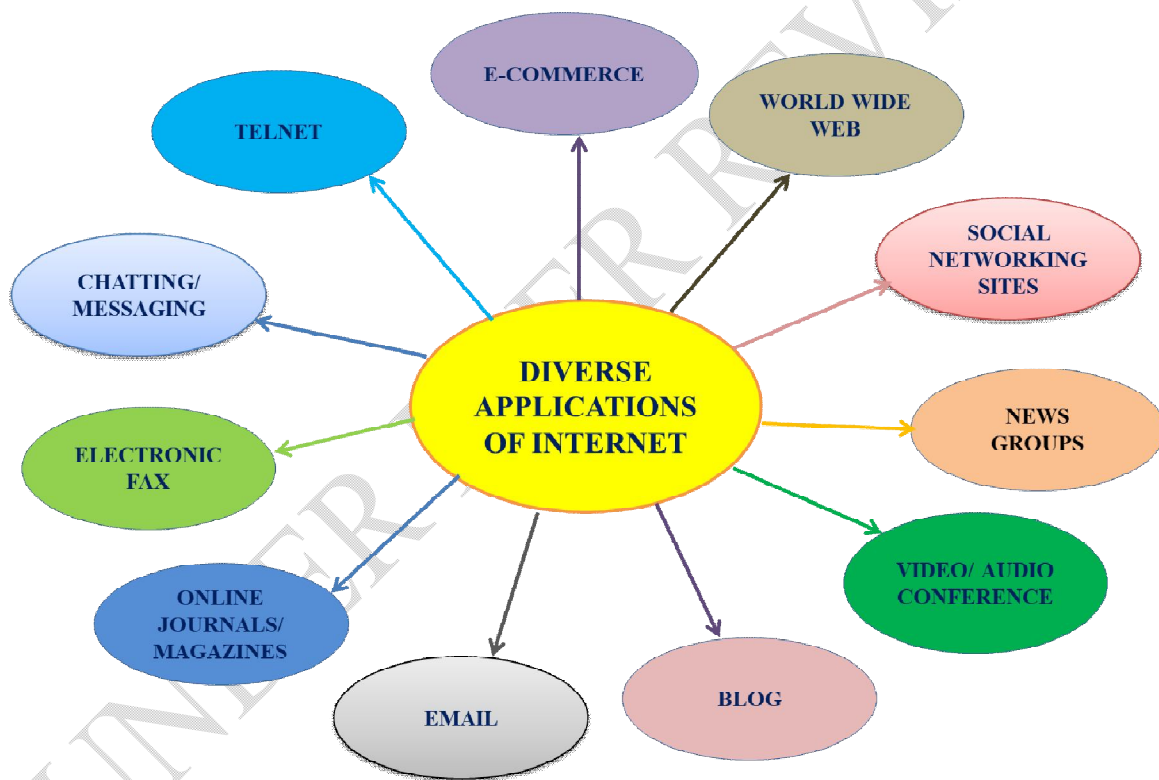


Fig. 1: A wide range of applications and services of internet in everyday life

Empirical evidence suggested that the use of internet could have both positive and negative impacts in everyone's life depending upon the person and the circumstances.

POSITIVE IMPACTS OF INTERNET:

Quick access

The internet provides a quick access to its users to connect worldwide through various devices and applications. It makes smarter your device at any sphere of the world and giving them a quick access to connect globally.

Cloud storage

Cloud storage or cloud computing is one of the major advantages of internet which offers connectivity to personnel computer and cloud services to store their private data as it offers cost-effective storage and services across a variety of devices.

Saves time, money and energy

Along with the speed, reliability and an extensive influence, internet provides fairly profitable mode to its users with a greater range of products and services in a cost effective manner that save time, money and energy.

Online services

Undoubtedly, online services are booming on the net that help people to communicate and work with other people all over the world. For example, the use of email to communicates with friends and family, consumers and businesses for digital goods and services, and also for digital education through google classroom and audio/ video conferences.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF INTERNET:

Cyber crime

With a rapid growth and development, internet became means for computer based cyber crimes for data stealing, spamming, money-laundering, stalking, credit card and identity theft, virus distribution, fraud calls and news, computer vandalism, child pornography and bullying etc. Many people have already become victims of cybercrime as it is increasing at alarming rate and cyber space security management is a serious issue of national security and military related security throughout the world (Gandhi and Thanjavur, 2012).

Physical health

Internet users have serious impacts on physical health in several ways viz., cervical pain, anxiety, stress, addiction, insomnia, neck complaints, strained vision, eating disorder and obesity. It is a global cause of concern to control internet usage in order to prevent the health problems that decreased the physical activity levels.

Internet addiction

The excessive undisciplined use of internet causes addiction which includes addiction on computer game, online relationship, cybersex, net compulsions and seeking for compulsive information.

Illegal/ inappropriate material

Inappropriate content includes inaccurate information such as text, images or videos that encourages unlawful or dangerous behaviour among individuals. Inappropriate material is available on internet in the form of pornographic material, violence, extremist, criminal and anti-social behaviour, and offensive content on social sites and blogs that encourage terrorism or hate.

Spreading of hate/terrorism

The rapid distribution of hate speeches and terrorism propaganda through the use of internet has become a cause of concern in recent years worldwide. The internet has become a platform of public incitement to ethnic, racial and religious hatred, and terrorism.

INTERNET ADDICTION DISORDER (IAD):

Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) is a behavioural disorder regarding excessive use of internet that leads to impairment or distress that significant damages both individuals and society. In America alone, it has been estimated that around 10-15 million people are suffering from internet addiction disorder, and this is increasing at the rate of 25% every year (UK Essays, 2018). The most significant contribution to the knowledge of IAD is to be attributed to Young, who developed a structured Internet Addiction Test (IAT) using the DSM-IV criteria for pathological gambling. The psychological profiles of internet addicted users are briefly described below:

- ❖ Behavioural dominance, mood alteration, tolerance, abstinence, conflicts, pathological gambling, eating disorders, sexual addictions and generic technological addictions, involving video games
- ❖ Mental refuge needs a virtual space where discharge the individual anxieties and frustrations
- ❖ Deep effects on social and psychological phenomenon, unable to tolerate the existential feeling of emptiness and the frustration of personal needs
- ❖ Neglect family members, people at workplace, studies, social relationships and themselves. Moreover, when they are offline, they tend to develop addicting behaviours such as insomnia, anxiety, depression etc.
- ❖ IAD seems to be a cross cultural syndrome, loss of boundaries and the distinction between people's public and private lives and loss of quality of life, lack of privacy, decreased safety and security.
- ❖ Damages the children's cognitive development which includes memory skills development, attention span, critical reasoning abilities, language acquisition, reading and learning abilities.
- ❖ Many off-line communities suffer from internet through the partial migration of human activities such as e-shopping, e-commerce, socialising, leisure activities and professional interactions.

Treatment strategies:

The internet addiction must be alternatively replaced with healthy activities such as yoga practising, exercising, meditation and involving sports activities (Busari, 2016). Therapies like cognitive behaviour therapy may play a major role in reducing the addiction to internet/social networks by changing their thought process for a better living. As the addiction towards internet is increasing day by day, therefore, several strategies should be planned to avoid internet addiction.

1. Promoting technology that better protects social institutions, which requires tech companies to introduce better products and services for wellbeing of society.
2. To impart awareness about positive and negative impacts of internet.
3. Strengthening social services support for internet users to prevent or mitigate harmful effects such as antisocial online behaviour or information overload.
4. Establishing governmental units and multi-stakeholder platforms at EU level to address the problems of internet's harmful social and cultural effects.
5. Encourage the parents and teachers to ask to children about the content they are searching for.
6. Learn how to report inappropriate or offensive content available on social media.
7. Counselling services in area for stopping the things that upsets or makes uncomfortable feel.

CONCLUSION:

Over the past few decades, internet has become as an integral part of everyone's lives and most important tools of our present-day society, profoundly revolutionized our communication, information sources, day to day work, education, learning and playing. It brought extensive transformation in everyone's life to perform any type of task and provide vast platform for quick and easy accessibility of high intensity information or data in more convenient and efficient way by saving time, energy and money, and virtually performing various services such as e-commerce, video/ audio conferencing, email, digital education and financial transactions, work from home, collaboration and access to a global workforce. Extensive internet use of social media in particular damages the social and intimate relationships and made them loneliness or socially isolated by viewing online pornography, malicious online behaviour, cyber-bullying and cyber-stalking. All social media like facebook, whatsapps, instagram, twitter, youtube etc. won't give healthy environment for children and adolescent. The parent should be warned about the characteristics of social media such as cyberbullying, facebook depression, sexting and exposed to inappropriate contents. Although, an alarming growth rate and unique qualities of internet experiences increasing dependence on internet use in daily lives and works imposing severe health challenges. Internet addiction is accelerated intimacy, anonymity, disinhibition, loss of boundaries and stimulation contents. Apart from internet addiction disorder (IAD), it also has widen the scope of criminal activities such as online money-laundering, harassment, defamation, cyber stalking, pornography, cyber bullying and cyber mob attack. Children are not much aware about the consequences of internet but we must take the responsibilities to guide our children as

parents, teachers and guardians to ensure to get right information through wise use of internet and inculcate right behaviour in our children. We use technology for the betterment of our lives but we have to decide to place it in right direction or unabated abuse.

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