



Mini Review

JMR 2018; 4(4): 202-203
July- August
ISSN: 2395-7565
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www.medicinarticle.com
Received: 30-07-2018
Accepted: 30-08-2018

Internet Addiction: A Global Psychological Addiction Disorder

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Abstract

With the advent of social networking sites such as facebook, myspace etc it provided an online platform for users from all over the world to communicate and share information, create profiles, navigate other users with whom they share a common interest etc to stay more connected. Besides using these social mediums for social engagements and establishing relationships. However excessive use of these networking sites by an individual results in compulsive behaviour that attains the status of psychological addiction with the passage of time. Therefore it is crucial to acknowledge this compulsive behaviour as a global psychological addiction disorder affecting the lives of millions around the globe.

Keywords: Psychological Addiction, Social Networking, Self-reliance, Extroversion.

INTRODUCTION

Today, the number of active social networking site users is around billions which is expected to increase more in the coming years ^[1]. A large proportion of these users comprised of teenagers and young adults that uses these social sites on regular basis for different purposes ^[2]. This exponential escalation in the regular media usage is supported by the fact that where there is easy access, there will always be an intensification in the number of people who use it ^[3]. Functionality of social sites usage incorporates individual motives of entertainment, exploring new people, emotional support, establishing and maintaining relationships, bridging and bonding social capital ^[4].

Social capital bridging connect a person to diverse networks while social capital bonding offers emotive support through strong relationship ^[5]. However this mounting bridging results in neurotic internet use and later becomes addictive in the form of psychological disturbance which is now widespread all over the world especially among teenagers and young adults who spend countless hours in online surfing ^[6]. It may be plausible to speak from psychological perspective that internet addiction is usually developed in an individual life if he or she suffers from personal life negligence, mental anxiety, emotive concealing etc ^[7].

The prospective clinical significance of Internet addiction has been abstracted under internet spectrum addiction disorder ^[8]. Some define internet addiction as problematic internet use (PIU) ^[9]. Evidences from previous studies has revealed that excessive internet usage had obstructed addicts' academic/professional performances affecting their careers as well as social lives ^[10]. With the advent of mobile communication systems, internet accessibility is not an issue. Internet availability on mobile phones increase tendencies towards problematic use of internet ^[11].

Social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Whatsapp, LinkedIn etc have become popular worldwide, used for diverse purposes by different users ^[12]. Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors motivates users for social media engaging depending on their geographical location ^[13]. These factors, include unselfishness, inquisitiveness, sense of efficacy, inclination, mutual benefit, affiliation, power, partnership, incentive and acknowledgment ^[14]. Its persistent influence on individuals life is almost irresistible. Social media malady is a condition with specific signs and symptoms affecting human efficiency ^[15]. It may be caused by factors such as technology influence or technology abuse ^[16], knowledge deficiency and lack of wisdom ^[17].

With numerous social networking sites individuals are tempted to abandon their personal/professional

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or academic responsibilities [18] for just a virtual world of internet ignoring their actual life chores that are yet to be accomplished [19]. Irrespective of age, most individuals begin their day by checking their Facebook or twitter accounts to stay up-to-date with the present trends and events [20]. This obsessive behaviour, if left unchecked can engender serious psychological problems [21]. The most affected group of individuals is of students that cannot function without accessing their online accounts within every passing hour, giving rise to an alarming condition [22]. It has been observed that even during ongoing class lectures, students still find time to connect with friends online or respond to notifications at the cost of their academic pursuit [23]. The above scenario is described as internet addiction disorder that identifies the area of problematical use of media [24].

Internet addiction shares certain degree of resemblance with substance addiction where addicts suffer mentally and physically [25]. However it is viewed as severe psychological issue based on behavioural dependency on internet [26]. Addiction, is now recognized as a bodily and psychological dependence on a physical or behavioural trigger [27]. Further studies also reported other internet addiction related symptoms such as sleep deprivation, ignorance, irresponsible behaviour etc [28]. These are indications of psychological syndromes characterized by an uncontrollable desire [29].

Self-reliance, high extroversion, belongingness, low conscientiousness, gratification, cognitive issues were quite prominent traits of internet addicts [30]. Both intellectual and behavioural processes work together to develop damaging consequences associated with problematic internet usage [31]. Keeping in mind how powerful the influence of internet can be on users sub-consciousness to the point that they don't even realize their addictive behaviour and amount of time they are spending on it [32]. Internet addiction disorder appears to have the most embedded of all situations, strengthening through immediacy, ovation and affection [33]. Thus it is important to characterize this internet addiction as a serious disorder and counseling or other ways should be devised to minimize its compulsive use.

CONCLUSION

Internet has gained incomparable use with the advent of different social networking sites and modern technology. The zeal to use internet is conspicuous, presently billions of individuals are active internet users. It is not shocking to find that social sites have impacted the social networking of people. However compulsive use of these networking sites may be addictive with damaging consequences. Therefore it is critical to recognize this addictive behaviour as a psychological disorder around the globe

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