

Chapter 23

Problematic Internet Use: Its Underlying Components

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ABSTRACT

Internet use has become an integral part of our lives, offering a variety of features and services. While it can be beneficial to use the internet in moderation, excessive use of the internet can have negative consequences for our physical and mental health. Terms like internet addiction, internet dependency, and digital overexposure are all different ways of describing the same thing: an excessive and unhealthy use of the internet. This can manifest in a variety of ways, such as spending too much time online without taking a break or finding it difficult to focus on tasks outside of the digital domain. Overuse of the internet can also lead to feelings of depression, anxiety, and frustration. It is important to be aware of how much time is being spent online and to take regular breaks in order to stay healthy.

INTRODUCTION

Whether we discuss the pros or drawbacks of the internet, there is an increase in problematic internet use worldwide, and the impacts can range in different dimensions, because it is simple to use, readily available, and has appealing features. Almost every sector of the economy is dependent on technology, whether it be in the legal, medical, or political spheres; they all use the internet and its applications to accomplish their objectives. The benefits include the ease with which information is accessible online, the speed with which one is connected to the rest of the world, and the efficient use of time in various pursuits. Its uses are numerous and spread throughout a variety of fields, including politics, law, and the medical field. Highton-Williamson et al. (2015) highlighted that an important goal of such online connections was to develop new friendships, seeking affectionate relationships, retain established connections or re-connect with individuals, and seek via the internet guidance from others with lived experience in a review of of online social networking in individuals with psychosis (Highton-Williamson et al. 2015). Naslund et al. (2020) examined social media's potential function as an effective intervention tool for

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providing support to people with mental illnesses, encouraging engagement and retention in treatment, and boosting already-existing mental health services. The study analysed prospects utilising data science and machine learning, such as using social media to identify mental problems and creating prediction models to describe the aetiology and course of mental disorders.

The author focuses on the changing patterns of the internet usage over the years. Due to its attractive features, a decade back, the internet was formerly just utilised for recreational activities, but now it has become an essential part of our daily life.

The emanation of digital devices has affected social life, reducing parent-child interaction and preferring video calls over face-to-face interactions. It has also replaced outdoor activities, especially those that affect mental as well as physical health.

This common occurrence is known as the “online disinhibition effect.” Though the impact has two opposing effects, the most worrying and concerning is when individuals reveal their personal information online. They let go of their inhibitions and reveal their secrets and unfulfilled wishes. They go out of their way to display compassion, humanity, and generosity in order to aid others, which is known as “benign disinhibition.”

Internet offers a platform, in which they can express their opinions, ideas and feelings, which in hand helps people to share which they can't when met in person. Though, it has its own benefits it poses threats for the people on the receiving end as well for the ones who are engaging in the behaviour.

In conclusion, the internet has undeniably become a valuable tool for learning and exploration, but we must also be cautious about its potential pitfalls. Overdependence on the internet may indeed impair the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. As we've seen, a growing number of students are favoring online resources over traditional ones like books and journals, raising concerns about their capacity for critical thought and a comprehensive understanding of their subjects. The consequences of this trend may have far-reaching effects on education and intellectual growth. To address this challenge, it is imperative that we strike a balance, encouraging students to utilize the internet's advantages while not forsaking the benefits of traditional learning materials. It's a question of how we can navigate this digital era without losing the core skills that have been the foundation of education for generations.

ITS UNDERLYING COMPONENTS

To our wonder, how much use is problematic is the main question. Several studies have stated the amount of time spent using the internet, but the problem lies not only in the duration but also in the pathological factors. The nosology of problematic internet has kept on changing over the years with different types of internet usage. Diagnostic criteria have included various kinds of problematic internet use, though the terms used are varied. According to the American Psychological Association (2000), problematic computer usage fits the criteria for addiction and should thus be added in the forthcoming edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), 4th ed. Kimberly Young, PhD advocated text revision in her landmark 1996 article (Young, 1996). The initial experiment was started in response to studies indicating that certain internet users were developing Internet addictions in a manner similar to how others developed addictions to drugs, alcohol, or gambling. Addiction to the internet can potentially be clinically defined by comparing its characteristics to those of other recognised addictions (Young, 1996). Later, Internet Gaming Disorder was included in the DSM V as a result of the rise in major health issues, particularly in teenagers and young adults (Dong G, Potenza MN, 2000).

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