



E-ISSN: 2789-1623  
P-ISSN: 2789-1631  
IJRP 2021; 1(2): 14-16  
Received: 17-04-2021  
Accepted: 08-06-2021

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## Assessment of prevalence of problematic internet use among college students

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### Abstract

**Background:** There has been an exponential rise in the number of internet users in India. The present study was conducted to assess prevalence of problematic internet use among college students.

**Materials and Methods:** 140 college students of both genders were provided with a questionnaire consisted of number of hours spent online, the devices used for accessing internet, usual purpose of using internet, and the predominant time of day for internet use and generalized problematic internet use scale-2 (GPISU2).

**Results:** time spent online/day was 3.42 hours, cost of use/ month was 280.4 rupees. Purpose of use was academic in 14%, shopping in 27%, social networking in 34% and gaming in 25%. Main device of use was laptop in 32%, mobile in 46%, computer in 5% and tablet in 17%. Time of use was morning in 14%, afternoon in 10%, evening in 32% and night in 44%. The difference was significant ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** There is high use of problematic internet use among students. Hence there is need of education regarding harmful effects of internet.

**Keywords:** Problematic internet use, students, mobile

### Introduction

There has been an exponential rise in the number of internet users in India. The report "Internet in India 2017" had estimated that of about 500 million internet users in India in the year 2018, 60% shall be students and youth<sup>[1]</sup>. The total number of internet users in the country is projected to grow to 666.4 million by the year 2023. While internet provides a world of opportunities, there has been a substantial amount of evidence highlighting the several negative consequences associated with misuse and/or excessive use of internet<sup>[2]</sup>.

The internet has been defined as the communication superhighway that links, hooks, and transforms the entire world into a global village where a different individual can easily get in touch, see, or speak to one another, as well as exchange information instantaneously from one point of the globe to another<sup>[3]</sup>.

The goal for internet utilization for academic and research purposes stems from the benefits derived, such as free access to online journals, magazines and other information resources. It has been theorized (i.e. Technology acceptance model) that the perceived usefulness or perceived utility is the major rationale for the acceptance of technological devices such as the internet.<sup>4</sup> The perceived usefulness (PU) is described as the extent to which a person perceived that utilizing a particular technological device will improve a given job performance. Whilst perceived ease of use (PEOU) is the extent a person feels that utilizing a particular technological device would require less effort, or how well a technological device can fasten a work without necessarily putting much effort<sup>[5]</sup>. The present study was conducted to assess prevalence of internet use among college students.

### Materials and Methods

The present study comprised of 140 college students of both genders. All were enrolled after they gave their written consent to participate in the study.

Data such as name, age, gender etc. was recorded. A questionnaire consisted of number of hours spent online, the devices used for accessing internet, usual purpose of using internet, and the predominant time of day for internet use and generalized problematic internet use scale-2 (GPISU2). The Generalized Problematic Internet Use Scale 2 (GPIUS2) is a 15-item questionnaire was used to assess the PIU. Moreover, the 15 items of this scale could be combined to form five different subscales comprising of three items each: preference for

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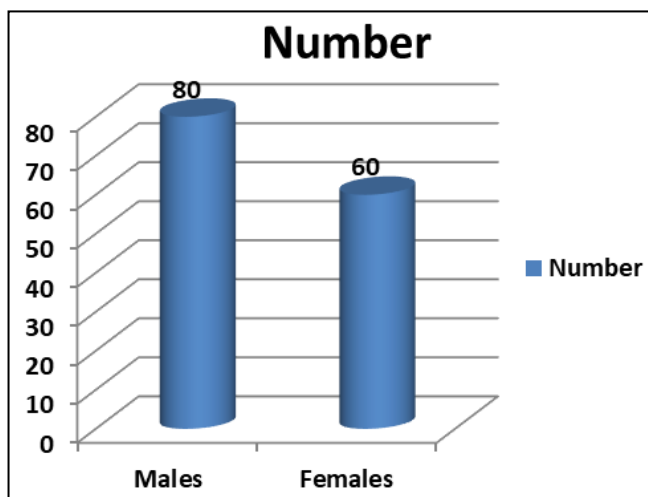
online social interaction (POSI) mood regulation (MR) cognitive preoccupation (CP), compulsive internet use (CIU) and negative outcomes (NO). The subjects rated all the 15 items on a likert scale ranging from a score of one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree). The possible total and subscale score ranges between 15–105 and 3–21, respectively, with higher scores associated with greater severity of PIU. Results were assessed statistically, with level of significance set below 0.05.

**Results**

**Table 1:** Distribution of subjects

Total- 140		
Gender	Males	Females
Number	80	60

Table I, graph I shows that group I had 80 and group II had 60 subjects.



**Graph 1:** Distribution of subjects

**Table 2:** Assessment of parameters

Parameters	Mean	P value
Time spent online/day (Hours)	3.42	-
Cost of use/ month (rupees)	280.4	-
<b>Purpose of use</b>		
Academic	14%	0.04
Shopping	27%	
Social network	34%	
Gaming	25%	
<b>Main device of use</b>		
Laptop	32%	0.05
Mobile	46%	
Computer	5%	
Tablet	17%	
<b>Time of use</b>		
Morning	14%	0.01
Afternoon	10%	
Evening	32%	
Night	44%	

Table II shows that time spent online/day was 3.42 hours, cost of use/ month was 280.4 rupees. Purpose of use was academic in 14%, shopping in 27%, social networking in 34% and gaming in 25%. Main device of use was laptop in 32%, mobile in 46%, computer in 5% and tablet in 17%. Time of use was morning in 14%, afternoon in 10%,

evening in 32% and night in 44%. The difference was significant ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Table 3:** Subscale scores obtained on global problematic internet use scale-2 total score

Variables	Mean
GPIUS2t	51.6
POSI	10.3
MR	12.9
CP	9.52
CIU	10.2
NO	9.17

Table III shows that mean value for GPIUS2t was 51.6, preference for online social interaction was 10.3, mood regulation was 12.9, cognitive preoccupation was 9.52, compulsive internet use was 10.2 and negative outcomes was 9.17.

**Discussion**

Internet use has become widespread in India particularly among the youth, and it is pertinent to study the extent and pattern of internet usage in adolescent students pursuing professional courses with an easy access to internet [6]. There is also a need to focus on emerging adults who are students to promote safe and healthy internet use behaviors across the life span [7]. Further, college students form a particularly vulnerable group to develop PIU due to several psychological and environmental factors associated with college life [8]. The present study was conducted to assess prevalence of internet use among college students.

In present study, group I had 80 and group II had 60 subjects. Ivwighrehweta *et al.* [9] investigated the impact of the internet on academic performance in selected tertiary institutions in Nigeria and found that most of the students were computer literate and merely access relevant academic materials through the Cyber Café. Most of the students disclosed that the internet usage improves their examination preparation. E-journals and e-books were among the resources often used. However, power outage, slow internet speed, lack of computer terminals, too many hits or information overload and insufficient computer were some of the problems impeding effective internet access or usage. We found that time spent online/day was 3.42 hours, cost of use/ month was 280.4 rupees. Purpose of use was academic in 14%, shopping in 27%, social networking in 34% and gaming in 25%. Main device of use was laptop in 32%, mobile in 46%, computer in 5% and tablet in 17%. Time of use was morning in 14%, afternoon in 10%, evening in 32% and night in 44%. Kumar *et al.* [10] determined the relationship between GPIUS-2 total score and demographic and internet use-related variables. Of 3973 respondents from 23 engineering colleges located in the different parts of the country, about one-fourth (25.4%) had GPIUS-2 scores suggestive of PIU. Among the variables studied, older age, greater time spent online per day, and use of internet mainly for social networking were associated with greater GPIUS-2 scores, indicating higher risk for PIU. Students who used internet mainly for academic activities and during evening hours of the day were less likely to have PIU.

We found that mean value for GPIUS2t was 51.6, preference for online social interaction was 10.3, mood regulation was 12.9, cognitive preoccupation was 9.52, compulsive internet use was 10.2 and negative outcomes

was 9.17. Oduwole *et al.* <sup>[11]</sup> argued that the internet has a great impact on the research outcomes of students in Nigerian Universities of Agriculture, as this enables them to have fast communication with their schoolmates, as well as offer a platform for accessing and publishing papers online. Other evident studies conducted among Delta State University, Abraka, students in Nigeria reported that the internet contributed significantly to the easiness of research through downloading materials. Emeka *et al.* <sup>[12]</sup> reported that the employment of the internet by the student's university of Abuja, Nigeria enhanced the skill and capacity of students. Though, lack of computer skills, slow internet server and the problem of paying for online were found to be some of the problems encountered in the use of the internet.

### Conclusion

Authors found that there is high use of problematic internet use among students. Hence there is need of education regarding harmful effects of internet.

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