

# Problematic Internet Use among Adolescents: A Review

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**Abstract:** *Appropriate internet leads to facilitation of information and knowledge, helps an individual to connect online, also leads to positive mental health and well-being. But over the years the usage of internet is not only confined to just positive use, overuse of internet for different purposes have lead to problematic internet use. The present review aims to provide an overview of recent literature in this field and to suggest some preventive measure.*

**Keywords:** *Problematic internet use, adolescent, internet addiction.*

**Abbreviations:** *PIU-problematic internet use IAT - Internet Addiction Test.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Problematic internet use can be defined as “excessive use of the internet resulting in negative outcomes” and many times clinical testing is required to assess the level of problematic internet use.

Although every age group is negatively affected by excessive internet use, but the most vulnerable among them are the adolescents. According to various studies, problematic internet use has severe implications on academic performance, resulting in missed classes, lower grades, and academic dismissal.

## 2. REVIEW OF VARIOUS STUDIES:

In today’s scenario, an individual finds it very hard to survive one day without internet access. Various studies conducted in different parts of the world provide us with insight. The study conducted in China among adolescents showed that 2.4% of adolescents were scored positive for criteria of internet addiction; and these adolescents also showed higher psychological problems related to use of internet.

The study conducted in three countries Croatia, India, and Nigeria among medical students has shown 38.7 and 10.5 % of respondents scored in the mild and moderate level of addiction. Only a small fraction (0.5%) of students scored in the severe level of addiction. A meta-analysis of 31 nations across seven world regions using data set derived from 80 reports including 89,281 participants showed a global prevalence estimate of 6.0%. The highest prevalence was in the Middle East with 10.9%, and the lowest was in Northern and Western Europe with 2.6% of users having internet addiction. Similarly, a study conducted on an Italian student population of 2533 students from different schools has shown that normal users of the internet were 94.19%, moderately addicted were 5.01%, and 0.79% were seriously addicted to use of the internet. Another study quoted around 25% of prevalence of internet addiction among students. The studies have found that the addictive level of internet use is around 11.3% in adolescent psychiatric patients. Review of published literature between 2000-2009 in Medline and Pub Med using the term "internet addiction“, United States and Europe have indicated prevalence rate between 1.5% and 8.2% in study population. A three year longitudinal study conducted in Hong Kong among adolescents reported that 22.5% of the participants met the criterion of internet addiction. The study conducted in six Asian countries on epidemiology of internet behavior and addiction among adolescents has shown that internet addictive behavior is common among adolescents in Asian countries. Problematic internet use is prevalent and characterized by risky cyber behaviors.

The result found from the study conducted across the city of Mangalore Karnataka (2016) shows that, about 54.56% of total participants were using internet for more than 4 years. As per the Young's original criteria, about 10.4% were moderate problematic users and 0.8% was found to be severe problematic users. However, 35.5% of participants felt that they are addicted to the internet. 54.8% used it multiple times in a day. 63.8% were using mobile phone internet. Significant correlation between IAT scores and Self scores indicates that the higher the internet use the higher are the physical and psychological problems.

Davey, S., Davey, A., (2016) conducted a comparative meta analyze to study the prevalence of problematic internet use in India, with other developed and developing countries. The result showed that, "Out of total 33 articles included, only 9 studies on PIU in India were taken in meta-analysis; which revealed that although the overall pooled prevalence of "problematic internet use" was lower i.e. 21.6%, despite heterogeneity among studies, but it was statistically significant ( $p < 0.0001$ ) indicating it to be an emerging problem among Adolescents of India.

Chao, CM., Kai KY., & Yu,TK.,(2020) found that cyber bullying, Internet pornography use, and Internet fraud significantly and positively affect PIU, with cyber bullying exhibiting the strongest effect. Cyber bullying among adolescent Internet users is a recognized problem worldwide (AlBuhairan et al., 2017; Lazarus et al., 2017; Savage and Tokunaga, 2017). This study revealed that PIU and inappropriate physical and mental health have become serious problems among adolescents and that the planning and implementation of preventive and control measures are urgently required in Taiwan . It also concluded that parental use of the Internet, parental restrictions on Internet use, and parental involvement in adolescent Internet use have significant effects on PIU.

Dhamnetiya, D., Singh, S., Jha, R., (2021), revealed that a total 41.3% of the subjects had PIU. Univariate analysis shows that internet use for emotional support, watching adult content, and gambling were significantly associated with PIU; however, in binary logistic regression, chatting, emotional support and watching online adult content were significant risk factors for PIU. The discriminate model correctly classified 66.2% of respondents into average and problematic internet user groups.

A recent study conducted by doctors of NIMHANS (2021) published in 'The Hindu' has found that 'problematic internet use' creates psychological, social, school, and work life difficulties in an individual's life.

The primary use of the internet by adolescents is mainly done to access social networking sites, gaming, and shopping. Problematic internet use is also linked to various psychological problems among adolescents like loneliness, (although they are connected online but still feel alone), anxiety, frustration, FOMO i.e. fears of missing out. This impact the academic performance may distract them from their career goals, hindering mental development.

### **3. CONCLUSION:**

By reviewing various studies from different parts of the world it reveals that the prevalence of problematic internet use is increasing, especially among adolescent. Various other negative outcomes such as depression, anxiety, cyber bullying are on rise among adolescents. There is a greater scope of research which can be done in this field.

PIU has led to various problems among adolescent, they feel socially cut-off, loneliness, depression, on extreme basis it can lead to suicidal tendencies.

It is not only just harming their physical and mental health, but also affecting them emotionally & socially. Many people are so indulgent online; they have face serious job loss over the years.

Research has also revealed that when adolescents are being restrained to limit their screen time, they face serious consequences, which can be termed as withdrawal symptoms such as feeling irritated not able to focus on their work or studies.

### **4. WAY FORWARD:**

Talking about the possible solution, Reward therapy can be practiced.

It is very important for parents to encourage their kids to play outdoor games with their friends in group. As playing in a group will not only strengthen their physical health and well being but will also promote leadership qualities and teamwork.

Parents supervision is also very essential, they should spend time with their kids, talk with them, try to know what they are feeling, how their study/work going. Teachers and caregiver should also pay equal attention.

It is seen that, lack of communication among parents and children have led their kids to connect online, they share their daily life problems with some random stranger, & start trusting them, start building bonds which many times can lead to some threat.

Young girls & boys compare themselves with their idols role models; especially have a tendency to develop negative body image which leads to low self-esteem.

The use of the Internet should be done in a positive and limited way. Adolescents can use the internet for gaining knowledge, listening to positive motivated quotes, and should spend more time with fuels & family apart from their cell phones. One should spend some time in nature as according to studies it has shown that spending time in nature provides a very soothing & calming effect.

Young people should practice Yoga' asanas, and should devote at least 10-15 minutes in meditation. The adolescents are future of the nation. It's very important for them to use their time and internet in judicious manner.

There is an urgent need in society to measure the prevalence of problematic internet use among adolescents of India. Early Identification of Problematic Internet Use may prevent the adolescent from harmful physical, mental and psychological effects of PIU. Timely psychotherapy and counseling should be provided. Mental awareness camps should be organized in every district to spread awareness related to ill effects of Problematic Internet Use.

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