Understanding the need for Internet De-addiction centers in India

Bhavana Desai

Communication & Information Department,

Symbiosis International (Deemed University) Pune, India,

Pramod Damle

Symbiosis Institute of Telecom Management,

Symbiosis International (Deemed University)., Pune, India,

ABSTRACT

Introduction: *Till recently the word addiction was mainly used with relation to consumption of liquor, drug, or substance. However, addictive behavior may not be confined to physical intake. Today, Compulsive Internet Usage (CIU) has been described as a psychological problem in several countries and today India is also are slowly getting into this menace. The persons suffering from Internet addiction indulge in virtual world to connect with real or imaginary people through the Internet, as a substitution for real-life human connection, which they are unable to achieve normally. Children, some as young as ten-year-old, have been identified as Internet addicts. Internet addiction disorder may be associated with abnormal white matter structure in the brain and may be as fatal as craving for drugs. Persons who are affected by this strange disorder spend large amount of time on the Internet, without any definitive aim.*

Current Scenario*: Around 40% of the world population has an internet connection today. 53 per cent of Indians are connected to the internet every waking hour which is higher than the global average of 51 per cent. Too much connectivity in youngsters is leading to severe depression, isolation and aggressive behavior. Also too much of exposure to other peoples' lives via Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms is making people dissatisfied with their own lives.*

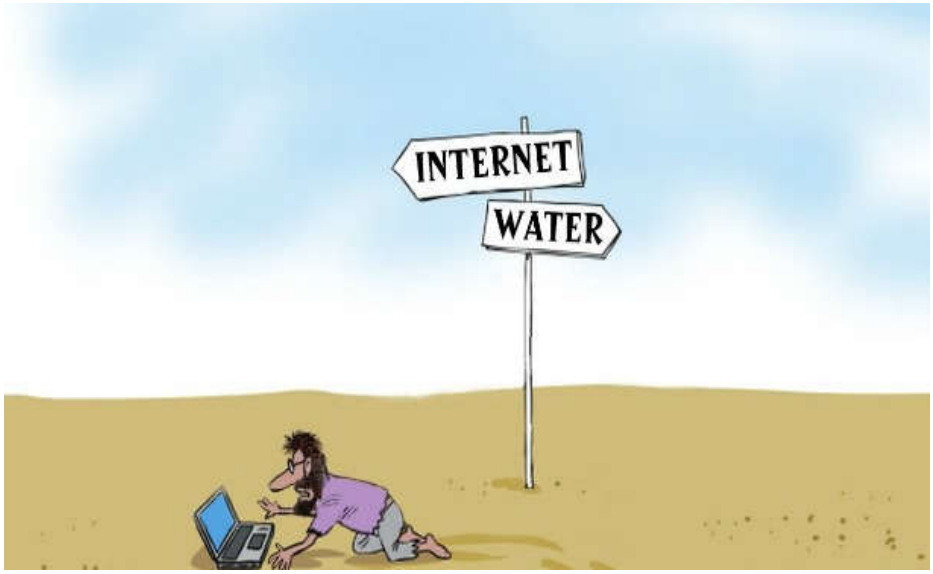
Need: *Internet addiction is now formally recognized as a disease hence centres that deal with these issues are the need of the hour. There are several de-addiction centers in UK, US and other developed countries. In the Indian scenario it is fairly a new concept of having Internet De-addiction centers.*

Objective: *The study aims at understanding the need of Internet De-addiction centers in India, like the Internet de addiction center Services for Healthy Use of Technology (SHUT) clinic in Bengaluru, the first Internet Addiction center in India, started by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) to curb Internet addiction in India.*

KEYWORDS: Internet De-addiction, Compulsive Internet Usage, Mental Health, Neuro Sciences

INTRODUCTION

A problem arising out of excessive computer use is a growing social issue which is being debated worldwide. Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) ruins lives by causing neurological complications, psychological disturbances, and social problems. (Cash et al., 2012).Internet addiction is a subset of a broader "technology addiction". In the last decade, internet has become an integral part of our life. The Neuropsychological model (Young 2010) suggests that there is an increase in dopamine in the brain due to Internet addiction, similar to any substance addiction. As per this model, an individual would be classified as an Internet addict, ifhe or she meets any one of the following three conditions: (1) One would feel that it is easier to achieve self-actualization online than in real life; (2) One would experience dysphoria or depression whenever access to the Internet is broken or ceases to function;(3) One would try to hide his or her true usage time from family members.



Fifty-three per cent of Indians are connected to the internet every waking hour which is higher than the global average of 51 per cent. The 53 percent average is higher than the 36 per cent in China and 39 per cent in Japan. (Goelet al.,2013).The online population can be grouped into three groups using the criteria given by (Young 2008). 74.5% as moderate users, 24.8% as possible addicts, and 0.7% as addicts. Those towards the addict part of spectrum reportedly show signs of high anxiety and depression with a high anxiety depression score.A study by AT Kearney Global Researchin 2014 found that there are three key motivations for Indian people to be continuously connected to internet: a) Interpersonal connection in which 94 per cent of respondents said that connecting with other people is a key motivation for going online b) Self-expression which is sharing opinions with others through the internet c) Access to services or products and making purchases online.(AT Kearney Global Research, 2014)

Absence of siblings leads to lack of emotional support leading to loneliness (Özdemir 2008). Loneliness has also been found to be most important factor in predicting problematic internet use (Pontes 2014). Studies indicate a trend towards excessive use of technology among families having single child. 96-98% of users have significant problems due to internet/video game use (Thamilselvan et al., 2016). As Internet de-addiction is a farely new concept in India, there is paucity of studies on Internet de-addiction. There are very few Internet de-addiction centers in India.

METHODOLOGY

Secondary data was collected by a review of available literature on internet addiction and the effects of Internet addiction on people of different ages throughout India and different countries.Data has also been collected from SHUT (Service for Healthy Use of Technology) clinic, which is the first Internet De- addiction centre in India.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) has defined Addiction as a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological, psychological, social and spiritual manifestations. This is reflected in an individual, pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors. Internet addiction is defined as any online-related, compulsive behavior which interferes with normal living and causes severe stress on family, friends, loved ones, and one's work environment. Internet addiction has been called Internet dependency and Internet compulsivity.

There is considerable controversy with respect to so-called *internet addiction* and whether it ought to be reified as a diagnosis in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition*. The relationship between "addiction" and various compulsive or impulsive behaviors also seems to be a source of confusion. It is not clear whether internet addiction usually represents a manifestation of an underlying disorder, or is truly a discrete disease entity (Pies 2009).

Social networking sites have become a very important aspect in the life of students and many other youngsters, too. Internet use has grown considerably in the last decade; the majority of young adults use the internet daily. There is a relationship between academic performance, addiction, security issues and summation score towards Social Networking Sites (Pierce et al., 2009)

A study of a meta-analysis of what we know about Social anxiety and internet use, (Prizant et al., 2016)has concluded that the more the internet is used there is more social anxiety and as the age increases there is a relation between the use of internet and social anxiety. As the age increases, so does the internet usage leading to social anxiety. There have been studies which conclude that checking Social Networking websites before going to sleep and then staying glued to the same for hours causing mental and physical stress (Okunbor,et al., 2014).

One of the biggest problems is the identity crisis that constant social networking produces. The types of actions users take and the kinds of information they are adding to their profiles are a reflection of their identities. Getting too involved in social media can lead to an addiction that inculcates bad habits. The system generates a competition to make as many new friends as possible and the so-called "social quotient" of a person is decided by how many friends they have and not on how good-natured and congenial the person really is. Often, students are not old enough to accurately analyze the word "like" or comment on social or political issues, and this leads sometimes to serious controversies.

Psychologists all over the world are worried about the identity crisis that our present generation may face today.The lives of people, especially students, are largely influenced by what is posted by other people on their profiles. The habits that students learn are decided more by what their friends do and less by the teachings of parents or professors. Our students are becoming more prone to frequent fluctuations in mood and self-control**.** If one of a student's friends posts about his or her present relationship with someone, then other friends are pressed to do the same thing. Actions that attract more public attention hold more value in their eyes, despite some of them being immoral or illegal. We even see that many students are worried about their looks, and so they always try to upload nicer pictures than

their friends(Young 2010). A recent study in 2014, (Abdulahi et al., 2014)has stated that whenever someone uploads a profile picture, it immediately affects the moods of friends. It often produces stress, anxiety or fear about their identities as people. Consistently thinking in this way can sometimes lead to depression.

Early onset of psychiatric problems is concerning because it predicts a more severe, chronic, and recurrent form of the issue (Zarate 2010). In addition, (Stavropoulos 2013) noted that mental illness at the critical period of emerging adulthood can lead to lifelong disability by eroding the individual's ability to develop socially, occupationally, and educationally. The mental health risks faced by young adults point to the importance of examining factorsthat could contribute to these mental health concerns.

More recently, the issue of suicide among internet addicts attracted much attention in the research fields. In a study conducted by Durkee et al., it was found that subjects with Internet Addiction (IA) were more likely to have suicide ideation and attempts. IA has been found to be highly associated with neurotic traits, psychiatric morbidity, and life impairments, all of these factors could increase suicide risks. High rates of psychiatric morbidity and suicide risks among the subjects with IA indicated that earlier identification of high risk individuals and provision of timely and pertinent management are necessary for suicide prevention and mental health promotion for the internet users (Durkee et al., 2011).

Psychologists in India have reported 4 to 5 cases of Internet addiction on a daily basis, with children as young as 12 years of age. This is an alarming trend as children waste long hours on internet using social networking sites, pornographic sites and other sites (TOI Nov 2014). This has raised an alarm to curb and prevent IA among Indian population.

A study by (Menon & Sharma 2014) found that in Indian context, 5% of youth (n=275 males) in the age group 18-25 years had addictive use of social networking sites and 24% (n=350:200 females and 150 males) had problematic usage of internet. Survey methodology with randomization was used.

India got its first centre for dealing with "technology addiction,"the Service for Healthy Use of Technology (SHUT) clinic. Open at weekends, the clinic has so far catered mainly to adolescents aged 14 to 18, who are usually brought in by their parents worried about excessive use of mobile phones or video games. In astudy funded by the Indian Council of Medical Research conducted in 2016, that surveyed over 2700 Bangalore residents aged 18 to 65, 3.5% of those interviewed admitted to being "addicted" to social networking sites, 1.3% to the internet, and 4.1% their mobile phones. The study noted physical or psychological distress in 3% of those "addicted" to social networking sites, 4.2% of those "addicted" to the internet, and 6.8% of those "addicted" to their mobile phones.In a behavioral addiction survey carried out by SHUT clinic on 2750 sample revealed presence of 5 to 7% of addiction to technology in the age group of 18-50 years.

People attending the clinic are first screened to assess how severe their problem is. The clinic assesses participants by using "the four C's": craving (having a desire to use technology); control (ability to control this behaviour); compulsion (using technology despite not needing to); and consequences (experiencing the effects of their behaviour). They are then educated using various approaches such as motivation enhancement therapy, which includes interviewing the participant and comparing the benefits of technology with the consequences of its excessive use. The interviewers do not argue but instead listen and express empathy with participants to help them make a decision to completely avoid or to regulate their use of technology. Psychological interventionsthat the clinic usesinclude cognitive and behavioral therapy, exercises to aid relaxation, role play, and other leisure activities, in addition to counselling for caregivers.

CONCLUSION

Excessive internet usage or pathological internet use (PIU) has been included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-V) in the appendix for condition requiring further research. Earlier it was included in Impulse control disorders or behavioral addiction but now after the alarming growth in the internet usage especially among adolescents and young adults and its harmful consequences this area of research has gained momentum worldwide. Considering all of the above negative effects of excessive Internet use and the alarming rate of Internet Addicts in India among people of different age groups, it is absolutely essential to have more Internet De-addiction centers across the country, which can screen individuals for internet addiction, spread awareness about internet addiction, provide treatment / therapy to internet addicts. They can also help in developing certain regulations over the use of such social networking sites, especially for our younger generation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

We thank Dr Manoj Kumar Sharma, Additional Professor, SHUT clinic(Service for Healthy use of Technology) NIMHANS,Bangalore for assistance with providing valuable inputs on the Internet De-Addiction, and for comments that greatly improved the manuscript.

REFERENCES:

- Abdulahi, A., Samadi, B., & Gharleghi, B. (2014). A study on the negative effects of social networking sites such as facebook among asia pacific university scholars in Malaysia. International Journal of Business and Social Science, 5(10).
- Cash, H., D Rae, C., H Steel, A., & Winkler, A. (2012). Internet addiction: A brief summary of research and practice. Current psychiatry reviews, 8(4), 292-298.
- Durkee, T., Hadlaczky, G., Westerlund, M., & Carli, V. (2011). Internet pathways in suicidality: a review of the evidence. International journal of environmental research and public health, 8(10), 3938-3952.
- Goel, D., Subramanyam, A., & Kamath, R. (2013). A study on the prevalence of internet addiction and its association with psychopathology in Indian adolescents. Indian Journal of Psychiatry, 55(2), 140.
- Internet Addiction; A handbook and guide to Evaluation and Treatment, by Kimberly S Young and Cristiano Nabuco de Abreu, 2010.
- Okunbor, D., & Arora, S. Facebook: Hate it or Love it, But Can You Ignore it? A Comparative Study of US and India.
- Özdemir, U., & Tuncay, T. (2008). Correlates of loneliness among university students. Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health, 2(1), 29.
- Pierce, T. (2009). Social anxiety and technology: Face-to-face communication versus technological communication among teens. Computers in Human Behavior, 25(6), 1367-1372.
- Pies, R. (2009). Should DSM-V designate" Internet addiction" a mental disorder?. Psychiatry (1550-5952), 6(2).
- Pontes, H. M., Patrao, I. M., & Griffiths, M. D. (2014). Portuguese validation of the Internet Addiction Test: An empirical study. Journal of Behavioral Addictions, 3(2), 107-114.
- Prizant-Passal, S., Shechner, T., & Aderka, I. M. (2016). Social anxiety and internet use–A meta-analysis: What do we know? What are we missing?. Computers in Human Behavior, 62, 221-229.
- Stavropoulos, V., Alexandraki, K., & Motti-Stefanidi, F. (2013). Recognizing internet addiction: Prevalence and relationship to academic achievement in adolescents enrolled in urban and rural Greek high schools. Journal of adolescence, 36(3), 565-576.
- Thamilselvan P and Manoj (2016) Parent Perception Of Teenagers Technology Use Dysfunctions: Implication For Parenting. International Journal of Current Medical and Pharmaceutical Research
- Young, K. S. (2008). Internet sex addiction: Risk factors, stages of development, and treatment. American Behavioral Scientist, 52(1), 21-37.
- Zarate, C., Machado-Vieira, R., Henter, I., Ibrahim, L., Diazgranados, N., & Salvadore, G. (2010). Glutamatergic modulators: the future of treating mood disorders?. Harvard review of psychiatry, 18(5), 293-303.