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INTERNET USAGE AND ITS ADDICTION: A CASE STUDY OF INDIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: The usage of internet is growing rapidly each year especially among students. The prevalence of internet addiction still remains unclear for most of the Indian university students. The purpose of this study was to examine the internet usage and its addiction in Indian university students. The sample was comprised of 300 university students, comprised of both sexes (150 female and 150 male), with ages ranging from 20 to 30 years. Dr. Kimberly Young internet addiction test questionnaire rating scale was used to collect the data. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the student's demographic characteristics and the prevalence of internet addiction. Our study explores internet addiction among some of the Indian university students. The results of present findings indicated that internet addiction does exist among some of Indian university students. In particular, $\leq 25y$ age students were identified as internet addicts than ≥ 25 y age students. It was also found that internet addiction is more common in male students as compared to female students. Moreover, our results showed that prevalence of internet addiction in postgraduate students was greater when compared to Ph.D. students. These findings suggest that internet addiction is more common among younger male Indian university students.

Keywords: Internet addiction, Dr. Kimberly Young questionnaire, prevalence, and Indian university students

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1. INTRODUCTION

Internet has a revolutionary impact on the day to day life of every individual. Internet has changed the various aspects of individual life in the way individuals entertain themselves and interact with each other, with the infinite social networking sites. Students are facing several problems because they spend significant time surfing irrelevant web sites, using social media, and playing games on the internet which leads to internet addiction. Excessive use of social applications, like online chatting [1],[2],[3], social networking sites [4],[5] such as Facebook, Instagram [6],[7], and online instant messengers [8],[9],[10] have been found to be associated with internet addiction. Many studies have reported that the internet users are at risk of developing an "internet addiction" [11],[12]. Numerous literatures believed that there is an emergence of internet addiction among users which may lead to the significant ill-effects [30],[7],[14],[15],[16],[17],[18],[19]. The prevalence of internet addiction in university students was noticed in several literature. Studies using internet addiction questionnaire was conducted among the Malaysian medical students and observed 36.9 to 81% internet addiction [20],[21]. 1.6% internet addiction was revealed in Turkey students by using the Young's Internet Addiction Test (YIAT) [22]. 38.2 to 63.5% internet addiction was observed among the Japanese university students with the YIAT study instrument [23],[24],[25]. Furthermore, 16.8% internet addiction was found in Lebanon university students and 40% in Jordan university students [26],[27]. The more time spent in online activities, the more inclination of internet addiction is shown among university students. Internet addiction should not be taken lightly, as it is an alarming issue which has significant impact on the health problems of students. Students need to use internet judiciously and productively to prevent the underlying risks aforementioned. Some researchers also revealed that internet addiction increases the risk of many negative social and health outcomes, including poor academic performance, harmful personality effects, anxiety and depression. Therefore, the goal of this study was to examine the effect of internet usage on internet addiction, among the university students.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study focuses on Indian university students. Its main purpose is to explore the existing risk of internet addiction for postgraduate and Ph.D. students of Pandit Ravishankar Shukla University, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India. The present cross-sectional questionnaire-based survey was conducted from March 01, 2016 to July 06, 2016. Out of 314 students, a total of 300 students who responded were part of this study. Total three hundred (300) randomly selected apparently healthy students (aged between 20 and 30 years) were willingly participated in this study. Out of the included individuals 150 were males and 150 were females. Student suffering from sleep disturbances, headache, and psychiatric disorders (as per their self-reporting through the questionnaire) was not included in the present study. Complete confidentiality regarding their identity was maintained.

We used Internet Addiction Test (IAT) by Dr. Kimberly Young, i.e., the questionnaire. IAT is a

reliable and valid measure of addictive use of internet, developed by Dr. Kimberly Young. It consists of 20 items that measures mild, moderate and severe level of internet addiction. IAT questionnaire by Dr. Kimberly Young were used for assessment of internet addiction. IAT contains 20 self-rated questions. Twenty self-rated questions are combined to form scores, and sum of these twenty self-rated questions scores yields one "global" score. The score (= 22 to 49) indicates average on-line user having mild problems; the score (= 50 to 79) indicates moderate problems because of the internet; and whereas the score (= 80 to 100) indicates internet usage is causing severe problems in their life. Additionally, biographical information sheet were implemented to record the demographic and personal information, such as name, sex, age, date of birth, children, marital status, weight, height, designation, education, background (rural/ urban), family-income, income of source, work type, blood group, food habits (veg/ non-veg), smoking habit, consumption of alcohol, sleeping pills use, major health problem, if any, colour of skin, etc., from all the students. All the collected data was analysed by applying descriptive statistics.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Prevalence of internet addiction in male and female students

The responses from the university students were used to record the prevalence of internet addiction. According to their self-reports of internet use, Figure 1 illustrates the percent frequency of male and female, at group level of different *internet addiction test* namely *mild, moderate and severe*. The higher prevalence of "*severe internet addiction*" was found in male students (73.33 %) than in female students (53.33%), although the "*moderate" and "mild internet addiction*" were detected maximum in female students (33.33 & 13.33%) as compared to male students (23.33% & 3.33%) respectively.
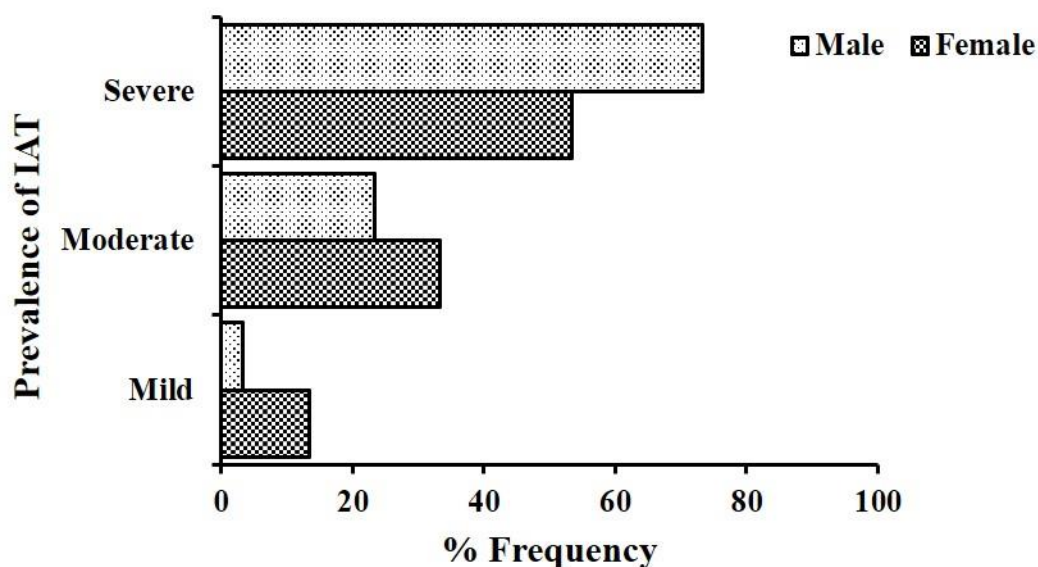

Figure 1. Prevalence of *internet addiction* in different gender groups (Male and Female).

Prevalence of *internet addiction* in ≥ 25 y age and ≤ 25 y age students

Percent frequency of ≥ 25y and ≤ 25 y age students at group level were constructed for *"mild", "moderate" and "severe internet addiction"* and shown in Figure 2. Results of descriptive statistics revealed that internet addiction in students of ≤ 25 y age(was significantly higher when compared to the ≥ 25 y age students.

The percent frequency of *"severe internet addiction"* in ≤ 25y age students (90%) was significantly higher from ≥ 25 y (36.6%). The *"moderate internet addiction"* in ≤ 25y age students (45.33%) was also found significantly higher in comparison to ≥ 25 y (11.33%). The ≤ 25y age students (15.33%) showed higher percent frequency of *"mild internet addiction"* than in ≥ 25 y (1.33%).
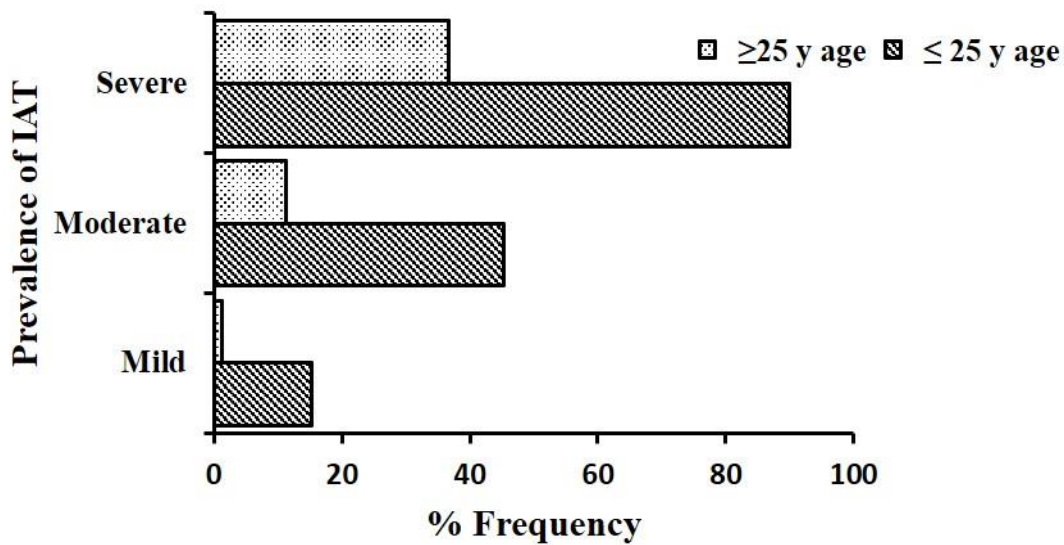

Figure 2. Prevalence of *internet addiction* in different age groups (≥ 25 y age and ≤ 25 y age students).

Prevalence of *internet addiction* in postgraduate and Ph.D. students

The prevalence of *internet addiction* was noticed in postgraduate and Ph.D. students and represented in Figure 3. The maximum *internet addiction* was found in postgraduate students as compared to Ph.D. students. Results of descriptive statistics indicated that *internet addiction* was significantly higher in postgraduate students (90% and 29.33%) as compared to the Ph.D. students (16.67% and 26.67%) among the groups namely *"severe", and "moderate"* respectively. Whereas *"mild internet addiction"* was found slightly higher in Ph.D. students (19.33%) as compared to postgraduate students (18%).
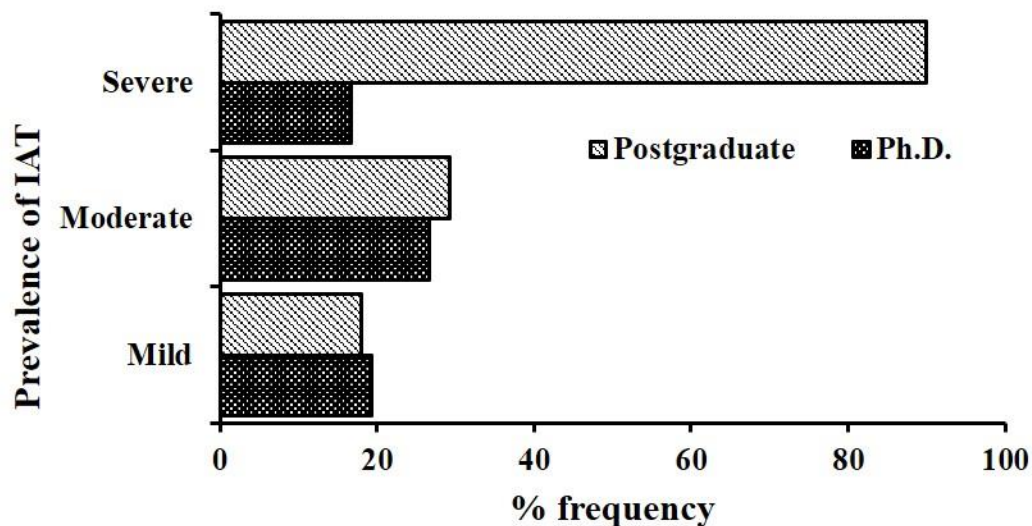
Figure 3. Prevalence of *internet addiction* among postgraduate and Ph.D. university students.

The internet is an integral part of everyone's life. Internet is being an unavoidable part of day-to-day life because the usage of internet has been growing explosively worldwide [3]. With the increase in dependence of internet, people are gradually getting addicted towards it. University going students are highly vulnerable to the internet addiction. Several peer reviewed studies documented a high prevalence of internet addiction among university students. Factors associated with internet addiction were spending more time, having mental distress, playing online games and so on [28],[29],[30],[31]. According to some authors [32],[33],[34],[35],[36] high internet dependency can have negative consequences for students, especially regarding academic careers, cognitive functioning, and may lead to anxiety and stress. In the present study, prevalence of internet addiction was found higher in male students than in female. Our findings are consistent with the findings of previous studies, which also revealed a higher prevalence of internet addiction in men than in women [37],[38],[39],[40],[32], gender playing a significant role in this respect. It appears that male students are more internet addicted than female students. Additionally, our present findings are supported by another studies that concluded male show more symptoms of internet addiction than female [19],[41],[42]. Some studies have shown that age is a potential factor that positively correlates with the risk of internet addiction. Internet addiction is in some way connected with age. Our research confirmed that prevalence of severe, moderate, and mild internet addiction in students of ≤ 25 y age was significantly higher when compared to the ≥ 25 y age students. In this context, our results of the research related to students age and internet addiction correspond to studies showing that younger respondents have higher prevalence of internet addiction as compared with advancing age [43],[44],[45]. In addition, our present investigation revealed that a significantly higher prevalence of severe internet addiction was observed in postgraduate students than in Ph.D. students. Our result also depicted that prevalence of mild and moderate internet addiction was significantly higher among the postgraduate students. However, there is no concrete data for

comparison of current finding that associates internet addiction in postgraduate and Ph.D. students. Several limitations of the present study should also be considered. The relatively small study population was one such issue. Moreover, all of the participants were university students, and may not represent the total population. All subjects were well-educated adults. Longitudinal studies and samples with different educational and age backgrounds are needed.

4. CONCLUSION

Summing up, it can be stated that internet addiction is more common among younger male Indian university students. Similar findings were also reported in several peer reviewed literature. However, more research on this topic is needed to understand the mechanism behind.

ETHICS APPROVAL AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Not applicable.

HUMAN AND ANIMAL RIGHTS

No Animals/Humans were used for studies that are base of this research.

CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION

Not applicable.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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