

HARMFUL EFFECTS AND TREATMENTS OF INTERNET ADDICTION, SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND CYBER BULLING ON YOUTH OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In last few decades, the use of social networking sites has been one of the major breakthroughs among people which are now a socially accepted behaviour. Given the ubiquity of social media, especially among youth, Internet Addiction (IA) is increasing exponentially day by day. With increased use of social media platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, etc., have permeated the realm of online communication among youth and thus extended the purview of cyber bullying experiences among youth. It is observed that cyber bullying among youth has a correlation with mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, which can further potentially, influence them down a path of maladaptive practices like smoking, drinking alcohol and taking illegal drugs, etc.

Also, cyber bullying has been associated with Youth, overwhelmed by Internet Addiction are more vulnerable to bullying and co-morbid substance abuse. Hence, both issues should be covered by a dual diagnosis option in which both cyber bullying and substance abuse are treated simultaneously. Individual therapies and treatments can help youth explore healthy ways to cope with such distressing situations. The purpose of this paper is to provide a more nuanced understanding of cyber bullying victimization among youth and enhance the growing body of literature on the relationship between online harassment and co-occurring substance abuse. This paper also makes recommendations for educational authorities and parents to understand and reduce cyber bullying and co occurring substance abuse among youth.

Keywords: Internet Addiction (IA), Youth, Social Media, Cyber Bullying, Substance Abuse.

INTRODUCTION

Internet Addiction (IA) is increasing exponentially day by day especially among youth. With increased use of social media platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, etc., have permeated the realm of online communication among youth and thus extended the purview of cyber bullying

experiences among youth. Cyber bullying has been associated with Youth, overwhelmed by Internet Addiction are more vulnerable to bullying and co-morbid substance abuse.

INTERNET ADDICTION

The appropriate definition and categorization of Internet Addiction has been deliberated. Some

studies coupled Internet Addiction to addictive clutters, grouping it with alcohol and drug abuse disorders. Internet expansion and accessibility have risen at an exponential rate in recent years. Figures from June 2018 show that around 55.1 percent of the world's total population is now using all internet platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, etc. At that time, the average person spent around 9.4 hours weekly online, with just 3.3 of those hours at home. New data shows that at present, the average internet user spends almost 24 hours each week online, with 17.6 of those hours occurring mostly at home (Village, 2019).

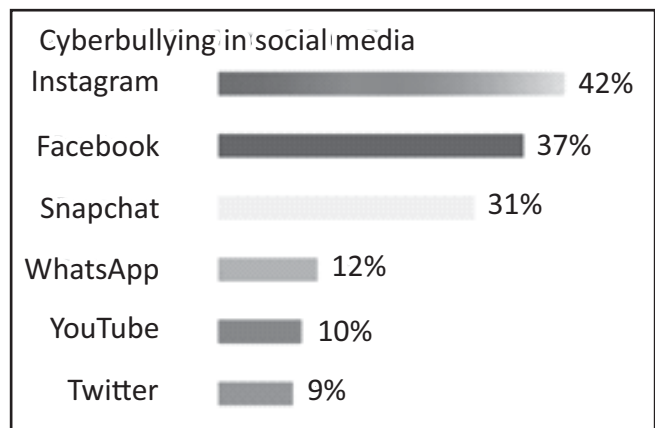
In psychiatric literature, IA is defined as a series of compulsive or addictive internet users with the sole requirement that subjects recognize compulsive computer use. This addiction of internet further leads to personal distress and social consequences, especially among youth, which can further be categorized between 18 to 25 years of age, in India. There are various types of IA like Cybersex addiction (viewing and downloading online pornography), Cyber addiction (addiction to social networking websites), Net Compulsions (online gambling, shopping, etc), Information Overload (Compulsive behaviour involving excessive web surfing) and addiction to computers (playing pre installed games, watching videos, etc.) (Goswami, 2016).

CYBER BULLYING

Cyber bullying is a new platform exuding similar behaviours as that of traditional bullying that involves non-physical bullying and harassing behaviours such as sending or posting harmful or cruel text or intimate images, without the consent of the person, on Internet or other digital communication devices such as cell phones, via

social media platforms. Cyber bullying can thus be defined as the process of sending text or images using the internet or cell phones to hurt or embarrass other people, or any behaviour performed by individuals or groups via digital media that repeatedly transmits hostile or aggressive behaviours designed to harm others (Hester & Wright, 2012).

Figure 1



There are various forms of cyber bullying like harassing the victim through abusive messages, dissolving the victim by sharing something very personal or intimate about him, cyber stalking the victim especially on Facebook and Instagram, or impersonating the victim by signing in to their online accounts, or setting up fake accounts likely to damage their reputations, etc. According to a recent survey, Cyber bullying is most common on social media platforms like Instagram, followed by Facebook, and Snapchat, with the percentage of around 42, 37 and 31 percent respectively, where victim statistics suggest that a high percentage of women were engaged in such activities. More than 80 percent of youth own a mobile phone and 57 percent admit that they have seen or experienced harassment online (Petrov, 2019).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study conducted by (Nemati & Matlabi, 2017) on Assessing behavioral patterns of Internet addiction and drug abuse among high school students concentrated on Youth's behaviour, that it is a notable process among Youths towards the excessive use of Internet and its co-occurring substance abuse disorders. By Multivariate Logistic Regression Analysis, he concluded that by educating both students and their parents, can be an imperative step in promoting mental health of students.

Another study was conducted by (Tran, Huong, Hinh, & Nguyen, 2017), which concluded that Internet Addiction is a common problem among Asian Youth and that both male and female have equal access to internet and stated that to alleviate the negative consequences of IA, Healthcare Professionals can design effective interventions. Chi-squared test was used to identify factors associated with IA. (Goswami & Singh, 2016) explained how excessive use of internet is causing physical and mental impairment among youth, that how it is disturbing academic performances and emotional wellbeing of youth. The study demonstrated the prevalence of IA is more in boys as compared to that of girls, which is further having detrimental effects on their mental health.

Another study performed on Internet Addiction Disorder by (Saliceti, 2015), demonstrated that IA can be simply reduced by just lowering daily hours being spent in Internet. Research have highlighted the increased risk of developing Internet Addiction and its related escaping behaviour.

(V, Chandra, & Chaitanya, 2019) in their study founded that IA was highly prevalent among college students and further explained that the

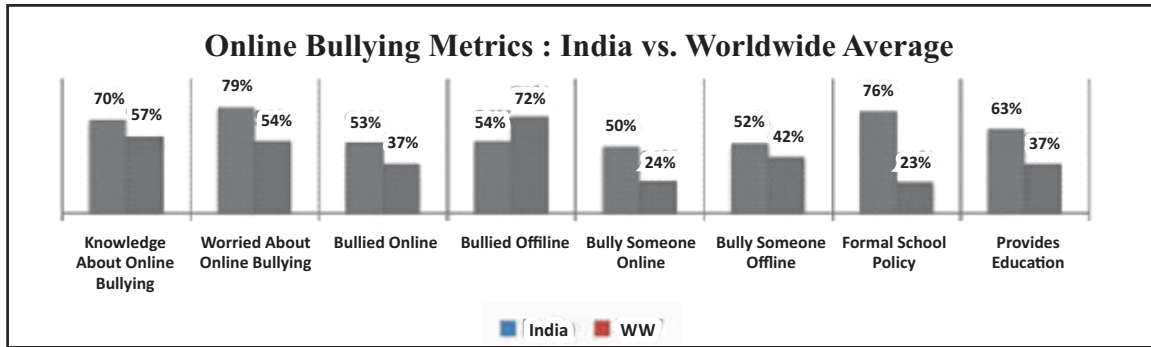
physical and mental health scores were higher among the normal students whereas anxiety and depression scores were significantly high among Internet Addicted students.

(Przepiorka, Blachnio, & Miziak, 2014) Studied effective therapies and concluded that best result come when psychological and pharmacological treatments are combined when treating Internet and drug addicts. These therapies changed maladaptive habits of addicts, by teaching them more constructive ways of using Internet along with implementing the control that they lost which they lost while using it.

STUDY OF INTERNET ADDICTION & CYBER BULLYING AMONG YOUTH IN INDIA

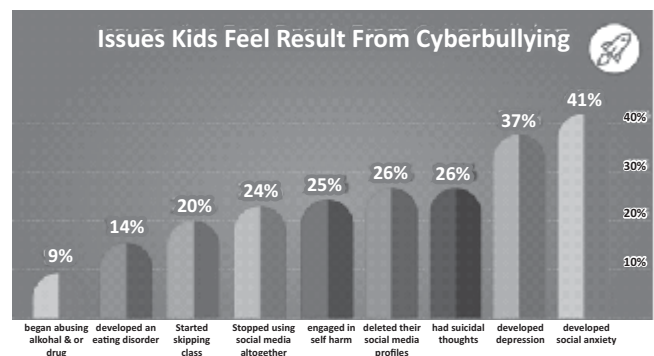
According to a recent study, the Indian subcontinent apparently overtakes other nations with a rough estimate of around 53 per cent of the total nation's population connected to the Internet every waking hour (Ginige, 2017). The growing access by Indians to the Internet has led to the threat of cyber bullying, with youth being the most vulnerable victims. According to Forbes, Cyber bullying is most prevalent in India followed by Brazil and the United States (Cyberbullying is Most Prevalent in India). Unlimited Internet Access, freedom from parental control, coping with stress; expanding social networks; social intimidation and alienation like to hide from the strenuous feeling of stress, anxiety and depression, are some of the prominent reasons why youth join the faceless internet platform. Youth who are bullied are likely to have anxiety; depression, unhappiness and poor sleep. Many researchers

Figure 2



noted that men tend to look for more ascendant and dominant online activities like interactive online

Figure-3



Effect of Cyberbullying

ii) Clinical Depression

Higher depression rates, increased anxiety reports, engaging in more self-harming behaviors, including lower self-control levels, suicidal thoughts etc are some of the serious impacts of cyber bullying. A study in 2019 found that youth with cyber bullying were also more likely to suffer from poor sleep and depression. Among youth, many a times a large percent of female respondents indicate that at some point in their lifetime they suffer from the threats of cyber bullying, compared to boys (Petrov, 2019). Studies have confirmed that girls who have been cyber bullied are at a certain point in their lives three times more likely to succumb to clinical depression. If the experience of bullying involves sexual content, the chances of depression among the female victims are six times greater. In the process the bullies might even end up becoming alcoholics. Clinical depression is not an attractive condition under which to suffer. Even adults who fall prey to online bullying can suffer from this condition (Avoidence, 2011).

Depression predicted cyber bullying victimization, and in turn cyber bullying victimization exacerbates the pre-existing depressive symptoms, according to a longitudinal study. Substance use, especially psychoactive in nature, by contrast, predicted an increased risk of online bullying but cyber bullying victimization did not predict increased psychoactive substance use. Online bullying is predicted on the use of psychoactive substances and problem Internet use. However, further factor's exploration in future research is recommended (Orosz, Zsila, & Urban, 2017).

iii) Substance Abuse

Internet addiction and co-occurring substance abuse can isolate people and damage many areas of

their lives from their loved ones. Studies show that the two types of addictions appear to be progressing conjunctly. Just as one addiction is getting worse, so does the other. When trying to stop acting on one type of addiction, it becomes more likely to relapse if the other is not addressed too. The use of alcohol and drugs is associated with problematic use of the Internet. In some countries, cannabis use is associated with Internet addiction and substance use among youth. Additionally, some youth associate Internet addiction with harmful alcohol use (Weinstein, Curtiss Feder, & Paul Rosenberg, 2014).

iv) ADHD and HRIA

Potential associations between overuse of the Internet and negative effects on health include attention-deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, alcohol consumption and other self-harming behaviours. A recent study has shown that youth use of the Internet has a significant impact on future use of alcohol and smoking. Several studies have reported associations between substance abuse and (High risk internet addiction) HRIA among youth, in line with the present study. It is therefore urgent that youth, especially those with HRIA, be protected from addiction to internet use. HRIA is closely related to a greater number of internalizing problems such as anxiety and depressive symptoms, as well as externalizing issues such as impulsive, delinquent and aggressive behaviours.

v) Addiction of bed habits

Compulsive use of the Internet is beginning to become more risky than other, healthier activities. Symptoms of withdrawal from Internet addiction are indistinguishable to the psychological withdrawal effects of alcohol or drugs. When compulsive internet users stop using the internet,

they may experience agitation, depression and anxiety. Some internet users have even said they find the urge to use the internet intolerable, much like descriptions of the unendurable for people with drug and alcohol addictions. While there are very few statistics on Internet addiction and its co-occurring substance abuse, drug and alcohol overuse may definitely place an individual at a higher risk of developing an internet addiction, and vice versa (Village, 2019).

Drug abuse among youth is often linked to bullying. Researches shows that cyber bullies show the same characteristics as sufferers of cyber bullying displays, such as: emotional agony distress, inability to concentrate, other-related difficulties, sleeping disturbances, self obsession, fear for their own safety, and misunderstanding of socially acceptable behaviour, etc. Substance abuse includes the consumption of alcohol and drugs as an "escape" for the youth who is being bullied on social media platforms. The cyber bullying can also trigger social isolation and depression. This creates a toxic loop in which an adolescent assumes both the role of suspect and perpetrator and can also contribute to alcohol and drug abuse (Abuse, How Cyberbullying can lead to Teen Drug).

TREATMENT OF ADDICTION

In case of co-occurring disorders, in conjunction with substance abuse treatment it is best for internet addiction to be treated because both addictions influence and dominate each other in many ways. By simultaneously treating substance abuse disorder and internet addiction, individuals are able to understand and thereby developing better coping mechanisms and increase the chances of long-term recovery (Village, 2019).

For Pathological Internet Use, individual

practitioners who have worked with internet addiction individuals and research findings from other addictions, there are several different techniques used to treat internet addiction, including cognitive-behavioural approach strategies like practising the contrary i.e. once the usual pattern of connecting to the internet is realized by the patient, change or mould this pattern by using the internet at alternative times by proposing a different schedule or time, joining a support group, and most importantly, domestic therapy (Smyth, Curran, & Nigel, 2018).

Many disorders such as substance abuse, affective disorders such as depression, are treated with Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy. CBT's goal is to teach patients how to control their thoughts and feelings that may be detrimental to their functioning and may trigger an impulse to escape into the virtual world. A recent study of meta-analysis revealed that both psychological and pharmacological interventions were beneficial for Internet addicts in terms of time spent online, resulting in depression and anxiety. Focusing on changing addicts' maladaptive habits as well as teaching them new constructive ways to use the Internet and implementing the control they lost while using it is paramount importance among youth. Pharmacotherapy can be a therapy that supports the reduction of negative symptoms. Effective therapies, however, requires an individual and personal approach, and must be adjusted to the needs of the victim, as it might have different impact on person to person, as IA coexists with other disorders (Aneta, Blachnio, & Miziak, 2014).

Although, many clinicians and therapists have tried to get some direction from existing types of treatment mainly by extrapolating methods used

for addictions to substances. Many methods have been used worldwide such as, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), family therapy, groups or guardian's therapy, behavioural therapies such as training and counselling on social skills. Most of the psychological treatments used had originated in CBT. Given that major depression in Internet addicts may be found relatively frequently, many antidepressant drugs have been tried against IA. Also, it is found in a study that Bupropion, a dopamine inhibitor drug is also used to treat Internet Addiction and substance dependence (Weinstein, Curtiss Feder, & Paul Rosenberg, 2014). The scientific community is increasingly considering IA as a very complicated phenomenon involving many aspects like psychological, social and cultural, multimodal approaches for treatment. Like in 2012, a broad IA recovery initiative with mindfulness relapse prevention and detoxification that can be done digitally was proposed among many other multidisciplinary approaches (Ginige, 2017).

- Indian government is also playing a vital role for controlling this Internet Addition problem in Youth. For some particular sites there are some constraints like age, personal details are applied.
- Here some important points are mentioned which are following by the government.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN REDUCING CYBER CRIMES

In the case of cyber bullying, the following sections are the focus of attraction like Section 67 of the Information Technology Act that deals with online harassment. Also Section 66 E of the IT Act states that any person who intentionally breaches privacy

by sending, capturing or posting private pictures of others without the concern of the person shall be punished with up to three years in prison or up to three lakhs in fine (Limited). Also, there's a law called Protection of Youth from Sexual Offenses Act (POCSO Act), which protects youth under the age of 18 from any form of online sexual assault, shall be punishable under this act. Although there are certain laws that protect and work for youth regarding cyber bullying, still there's a need for more strict laws to tackle this rampantly increasing cyber-bullying crime.

Also, Ministry of Human Resources has directed all colleges to form Anti-Ragging Committees, having realized the gravity of cyber bullying. Even the National Council for Research and Training in Education (NCERT) has developed a detailed set of guidelines that define the role of teachers, parents, guardians and youth to use Internet ethically. The gist of the guidelines states that all the educational institutions should use built-in filters to inspect and prevent cyber bully or any kind of online harassment (Era, 2018). The University Grants Commission (UGC) has also set up anti-rage committees in the colleges and universities approved by the UGC (India Ranks Third in Cyberbullying: What Needs to Be Done).

As governments around the world are attempting to control cyber bullying by providing legal framework for mitigating and monitoring cybercrimes, there is a dire need for specific legislation' to be in place.. So, parents should also teach their children, positive coping skills, so that, their wards feel open in sharing issues related to cyber bullying, thereby empower them to firstly gain control of the situation and in case something happens, should report the same. Parents who are

concerned that their ward is suffering from depression, anxiety, or a substance use disorder, can talk with educational counsellors or health care providers and ask them to provide the necessary evaluations. Individual and family therapy can also help youth to explore healthy and productive ways to cope with distressing situations occurring as a result of substance abuse. In general, any person with access to Internet, especially on social media platforms must be aware of the risks associated with going online and socializing.

CONCLUSION

Due to use of social networking sites has been one of the major burst through among people which are now a socially accepted behaviour, especially among youth, Internet Addiction (IA) is increasing day by day. It is observed that cyber bullying among youth has a correlation with mental health issues such as depression, attention-deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), alcohol consumption and other self-harming behaviours. Several studies have reported associations between substance abuse and (High risk internet addiction) HRIA etc.

Hence, both issues (IA and CB) should be covered by a dual diagnosis option in which both cyber bullying and substance abuse are treated simultaneously. Individual therapies and treatments can help youth explore healthy ways to cope with such distressing situations. With the help of this paper, it is provided a more nuanced understanding of cyber bullying victimization among youth and enhances the growing body of literature on the relationship between online harassment and co-occurring substance abuse. This paper also makes recommendations for educational authorities and parents to understand and reduce

cyber bullying and co occurring substance abuse among youth and youth must follow the all guidelines given by government.

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