

Mini review

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Internet Addiction; Symptoms, Impacts and Treatments

Hamed Taherdoost*

University Canada West, Canada

*Corresponding author: Hamed Taherdoost, University Canada West, Vancouver, Canada.

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Minireview

The internet as a rich source of information has turned into one of the global necessities. It has provided new opportunities for shopping, entertaining, learning, and social interaction for individuals of all age groups. As of January 2021, 4.66 billion active internet users have been recognized. It means that 59.5 percent of the population is using the Internet globally [1]. Although the prevalence of internet usage has facilitated tasks in many ways and helped to an equal share of information all around the world, it is also becoming problematic in case of being misused and may lead to internet addiction. The rapidly growing epidemic of internet usage can lead to serious long-lasting issues in case of being overlooked. In this study, the particular definition of internet addiction is provided. Then, its determinative and diagnosis factors [2], are offered to help distinguish if an individual is suffering from internet addiction. Also, preventative and remedial approaches are suggested to address the internet addiction problem.

Do you usually lose track of time when surfing the web? Do you use the Internet to feel better in case of being depressed, distressed or anxious? Do you commonly fail to fulfill your major daily roles at work, home, or university because of internet use? Do you constantly check your social media notifications?

If you have answered yes to any of these questions, you are likely to suffer from internet addiction disorder. The inception of the 21st century has been marked with a convulsive growth of the Internet use worldwide. Due to the ubiquity and ample applicability essence of technology, it has brought about enormous revolution in both individuals' usual and academic lives [3]. Two thirds of the global population are currently internet users with over 33 million internet Canadian users [4]. It is a fact that everything is getting

online nowadays, and the Internet has changed the way that we live in multidimensional aspects including our shopping behavior, communications, entertainment, and learning. That is the reason why we have spent a considerable amount of time surfing the web [2].

The prevalence of internet usage has been three to four hours for 26% of Canadians with 36.39 million internet users as of March 2021. Besides, 20% of Canadian spend 21 to 29 hours on mobile internet usage weekly. It seems that times spent on internet usage in considerable. But how much time to surf the web is too much and how to make sure if we are suffering from internet addiction disorder?

Internet addiction is excessive and poorly controlled use of the Internet because of different purposes, watching online videos, shopping online, blogging, social networking, and gaming that interferes with your daily life. It is not just the amount of dedicated time that leads to troublesome internet addiction; however, it is the way that the Internet is used. The destructive use of the Internet is recognized as an internet addiction disorder that can influence normal psychological functioning as well as mental and general well-being [5]. Internet addiction has turned into a critical concern especially among younger generation and has brought many negative outcomes. Social and functional impairments, physical impairments, and emotional impairments are risky consequences of heavy dependence on Internet use.

Interestingly, internet addiction, like any other kind of addiction such as alcohol or drug, impacts the functionality of the brain by changing its structure [6]. Some studies have demonstrated that excessive dependence on the Internet affects the structure of

the white and gray areas that is positively correlated to planning tasks, attention, and remembering. Since the region in mind that is responsible to prioritize tasks will be affected, the use of the Internet will be prioritized as the first important task to fulfill. Therefore, other daily activities that are more significant in essence may be postponed after surfing the web. Besides, internet usage activities like gaming bring along a sense of pleasure by involving a region of the brain that releases dopamine. Constant engagement with the gaming activity makes the gamer more dependent and the level of released dopamine will be significantly reduced. Therefore, gamers thrive to game more over time to satisfy their demand to gain the same level of delight [7]. This disorder even deteriorates in individuals that are prone to biological predispositions in the level of dopamine release intrinsically.

Another origin of internet addiction is the unpredictable rewards that surfing the Internet can bring along. Announcements on brand sales, social media updates, rewarding news, new posts from friends and families motivate the user to check notifications constantly since they create a never-ending sense of delight and reward. Also, people that resent depression, anxiety, shyness, or social awkwardness are more inclined to get addicted to the Internet to relieve negative emotions that they may find in real-world interpersonal interactions.

The symptoms and signs to realize if an individual is truly addicted to the Internet are both physical and psychological. Psychological symptoms include depression, anxiety, loneliness, isolation, fear, procrastination, and boredom with daily tasks [5]. Physical symptoms of high dependence on internet usage are abnormal headaches, backache, carpal tunnel syndrome, neck pain, sleep disturbances, vision difficulties, and weight gain. These symptoms affect individuals' personal life, work life, and personal relationships [8].

To diagnose internet addiction disorder, studies have designed mental tests to assess presence of the following criteria:

- Being excessively occupied with thinking about using internet;
- Using internet and logging in account many times to satisfy;
- Failure to cut excessive internet usage for several time;
- Feeling depressed, isolated and anxious while trying to stop internet usage;
- Staying online for considerable amounts of time;
- Losing a real-life opportunity in career, relationship or education because of the Internet;
- Avoiding to tell the accurate amount of internet usage honestly when asked by others;
- Using internet to relieve real-life challenges;

After recognizing the symptoms and finding some criteria that reveal internet addiction through a testing questionnaire, it is

essential to consider measures for treatment seriously [9]. The truth is that the Internet has provided an opportunity to hide individuals' deficiencies in real life by wearing a beautiful mask and doing activities that are impossible to do in person. This becomes even more appealing since it is not accompanied by any accountability or responsibility since the connections will be lost as soon as pressing the internet connection button on your device [10]. That is the reason why most people escape to accept if they are affected by the disorder and proceed with self-corrective behaviors that include managing time to get online and installing software to alarm and control internet usage [11]. In addition to self-corrective behaviors, medications are also effective to treat internet addiction disorder contemporary to treating underlying depression and anxiety [12]. Treating depression and anxiety and trying to spend more time engaging in physical activities make a profound impact to decrease the level of a tendency to use the Internet for long hours.

All in all, hitting upon internet addiction requires attention in all institutions. It is recommended to hold thorough multimodal programs to enhance general awareness with regard to the detrimental state of internet addiction. Such programs should tap on matters pertinent to lifestyle, time management skills, and social bolstering; further, preventive roles in detecting addiction in individuals at danger before getting pathological are required.

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Conflict of Interest

Author declare no conflict of interest.

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