NEGATIVE IMPACT OF INTERNET USAGE ON LIFE SATISFACTION OF ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

In this age of technology, internet has become an integral part of one’s life. The internet is developing very fast and its cost is becoming cheaper day by day as number of users are increasing. No doubt, there are so many benefits of internet usage but it has serious effects on life satisfaction of people specially adolescents. Today, the life satisfaction of people is changing due to internet. The aim of this study is to discuss the negative impacts of internet on life satisfaction of adolescents.

Key words: Internet usage, Life Satisfaction, Adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, adolescents are increasingly becoming early adopters of the internet and as such they are using this resource for study purpose, communication and the mostly for their entertainment but heavy use of internet is influencing their life satisfaction adversely such as increase in mental health problems, isolation in family relationships, increase in fake social identities and poor academic performances. Cyber related crimes are increasing due to excessive usage of internet.

INTERNET USAGE

The internet has positive aspects including informative, convenient, resourceful and fun, but for the excessive internet users, these benefits turn out to be useless. Most individuals use the internet without negative consequences and even benefit from it, but some individuals do suffer from negative impacts. Psychologists and educators are aware of the potential negative impact from excessive use and related physical and psychological problems (Griffiths & Greenfield, 2000).
The internet is a global linking of computers that allows information transfer. The internet was established in the early 1960s by the U.S. department of defence (Schneider, Evans & Pinard, 2006), primarily for military purposes. Since then, the continual improvement of the internet technology has provided an extraordinary level of public accessibility to a wide range of forms of communication, e.g. intra-organizational and inter-organizational email; data storage, management and transfer; social websites like Facebook; text messaging such as Twitter, WhatsApp and so forth.

ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood whereby identity formation, peer relationships, sexuality and self-worth are exploited. It is also a stage when young people extend relationships beyond their parents and family. It is a time of intense influence of peers, and the outside world in the society.

According to World Health Organization (2013), Adolescent is a person between the ages of 10-19 years. Today, for adolescents, the internet is acting as a new social environment where their issues are being explored. A transformation is being noted in how they communicate, establish and maintain relationships and find social support (Ramdhonee, 2014).

LIFE SATISFACTION

Life satisfaction has been defined as “a global evaluation by the person of his or her life” (Pavot, Diener, Colvin, & Sandvik, 1991) and has been identified as a key aspect of quality of life and subjective well-being. Life satisfaction is one of the most well established indicators of general wellness and positive functioning (Suldo, Huebner, Friedrich, & Gilman, 2009).

Traditionally, life satisfaction referred to a rational comparison of what people have, to what they think they deserve, expect, or to which they may reasonably aspire (Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976). More recently, life satisfaction has been conceptualized as a cognitive, global appraisal that people make when considering their contentment with their life as a whole or in regard to specific domains (i.e. family, friends and living environment) (Suldo, 2004; Suldo, Shaffer & Riley, 2008).

In general, positive evaluations of life satisfaction are associated with happiness and the achievement of the “good life”, whereas negative evaluations of life satisfaction are linked with depression and unhappiness (Proctor, Linley & Maltby, 2009).

LIFE SATISFACTION IN ADOLESCENTS

In this cyber world era, the adolescent’s social world is changing fast due to excessive internet use. Life satisfaction in adolescents relates to a variety of important variables relevant to their adaptive functioning (Huebner, Suldo, Smith & McKnight, 2004). Evaluations of life satisfaction in adolescents are likely to be
influenced by factors such as personality traits, changes in life domains and major life events (Pavot & Diener, 2008). The bulk of research to date, however, has focused on identifying relationships between the life satisfaction of youth and their families, stressful life events, and intrapersonal characteristics (Suldo, Shaffer & Riley, 2008).

NEGATIVE IMPACT OF INTERNET USAGE AND LIFE SATISFACTION OF ADOLESCENTS

New digital technologies have become an integrated part of adolescents’ lives, thus their misuse can have a significant influence on the well-being of young people. With the number of internet users increasing, more and more studies had been conducted with regards to the excessive use of the Internet. A small percentage of the online population have reported problems such as neglect of academic responsibility, work, domestic responsibilities, disruption of relationships, social isolation, and financial problems due to their Internet use (Young 1996a; Griffiths 2000; Neimz, 2005, In Bhagat & Shegal, 2011).

PROBLEMATIC/PATHOLOGICAL INTERNET USE/INTERNET ADDICTION

Despite of internet benefits, internet usage is a potential risk factor for adolescents because of its negative outcomes as related to addiction and pathological usage. The Internet was originally designed to facilitate communication and research activities. However, the dramatic increase in the use of the internet in the recent years has led to pathological use. Problematic or pathological internet use is an area of great concern because of its negative effects on social and emotional functioning of internet users. Problematic internet use is “a psychiatric condition which involves maladaptive thoughts and pathological behavior” (Davis, 2002). Problematic internet use is excessive time spent on various activities on the internet to an extent that might have negative effects on the user’s physical and psychological health; social, academic, professional, and marital relationships, and other areas of life (Young, 1997).

In the scientific literature, several terms have been proposed to describe pathological internet use: Internet addiction, cyberspace addiction, Internet addiction disorder, online addiction, Net addiction, Internet addicted disorder, pathological Internet use, high Internet dependency, problematic Internet use and others (Widyanto & Griffiths, 2006; Byun et al., 2009). Internet addiction, also described as pathological internet use, is defined as an individual’s inability to control his or her use of the internet, which eventually causes psychological, social, school and/or work difficulties in a person’s life (Davis 2001; Young & Rogers, 1998). Cao and Su (2006) observed that like other addictions, furthermore, internet addiction has been linked to a variety of problems. Besides little sleep, failure to eat for long periods and limited physical activity, it also disrupts the studies and other aspects of the daily life of an individual.

Types of internet addictions include (Ramdhonee, 2012):

- Cyber-relationships (social networking addiction, online friends etc.),
- Net compulsions (compulsive use of online gaming, online gambling etc.)
- Cybersex addiction (compulsive use of internet pornography)
Young and Rodgers (1998) reported that the average Internet use among problematic Internet users is 38.5 hours a week and among healthy users is 4.9 hours a week.

Criteria for problematic internet use include (Young, 1999):

- Preoccupation with Internet
- Need for longer amounts of time online
- Repeated attempts to reduce Internet use
- Withdrawal when reducing Internet use
- Time management issues
- Environmental distress (family, school, work, friends)
- Deception around time spent online
- Mood modification through Internet use

Based on the fact sheets of the Childnet International (2006), the problems associated with internet addiction include:

- Skipping meals, losing sleep and quality time for other things
- Rearranging daily routines and neglecting studies or other activities and responsibilities to spend more time online.
- Affected school performance and relationships with friends and family.
- Financial problems depending on the nature of the communication, for instance, dial-up connection or text messages and the activity online like paying for content, gambling and
- Physical problems associated with bad diet, lack of exercise and also with extended computer use (for example, dry eyes, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, and backache).

INTERNET USAGE AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

The Internet usage has negative effects on the physical well-being of adolescents. They spend hours in front of internet that leads to eye problems and lack of physical activity leads to obesity problems. Related physical impairments are mostly mild to moderate, including dry eyes, blurred vision, sleep deprivation, fatigue, and musculoskeletal discomfort or pain (Chou, 2001, In Bhagat & Sehgal 2011). Therefore, the addictive nature of internet usage leads to eating disorders, obesity, heart problems, sleep disorders, and other pertinent health issues.

INTERNET USAGE AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Mesch (2006) found that the increase in family conflicts is associated with more frequent time and use in adolescents’ internet use and that internet addiction was negatively correlated with maternal and paternal care(Bhagat & Sehgal, 2011).
INTERNET USAGE AND BEHAVIOURAL /PSYCO-SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Shapira, Lessig and Goldsmith (2003) found that internet use increases in direct proportion to problematic behaviors. As a result of unhealthy internet use, the internet can increase individuals’ vulnerability to various difficulties in their social, academic, and professional lives (Ceyhan, 2008). KOÇ(2011) suggested that students who use internet six hours and more a day have psychiatric symptoms. Students whose addicted internet usage have psychiatric symptoms such as Somatization, Obsessive Compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation and psychoticism more than students whose non addicted internet usage. Ceyhan, Ceyhan and Kurtyilmaz (2012) found that depression is a significant factor for problematic internet use or internet addiction and it has a medium direct effect on internet abuse. Depression and self-esteem are two main causes and amplifiers of internet addiction (Bahrainian & Khazaee, 2014). Mbatha (2010) supported by internet addiction (2012) points out that internet addiction disorder not only threatens the psychological well-being of individuals, but quite possibly the entire social fabric. Studies have shown that excessive time spent online can lead to truancy problems, a decrease in school results, hobby abandonment, increased family tension, emotional problems, or even physical health issues (Young, 2010).

Based on the viewpoint of relationship between using the internet and users' psychological behaviors, the addicts often feel lonely, tend to play violent games, and have a high tendency to suffer from depression. Kraut and his colleagues (1998) claimed that greater use of the internet was associated with negative effects on individuals, such as a diminishing social circle, and increasing depression and loneliness. Researchers point out that use of the internet for social interactions could be an important risk factor for the development of the problematic internet use symptoms (Caplan, 2002; Ceyhan, 2011; Chak & Leung, 2004; Choi, 2001; Li & Chung, 2006; Young, 1998). Loneliness is directly related to deficit in social skills and preference for online interactions and compulsive internet use (Kim, LaRose & Peng, 2009). Ceyhan & Ceyhan, (2008) investigated the levels of loneliness, depression and computer self-efficacy as predictors of problematic use. They found loneliness was found as the most important predictive variable followed by depression and computer self-efficacy.

Researchs on internet addiction demonstrated that the greater use of the internet is associated with some social and psychological variables such as, declines in the size of social circle, depression, loneliness (Kraut et al., 1998), lower self-esteem and life satisfaction (Ko, Yen & Chen, 2005), sensation seeking (Lin & Tsai, 2002), poor mental health (Yang, 2001; Young & Rogers, 1998), and low family function (Armstrong, Phillips, & Saling, 2000).

CONCLUSION

It is very much clear from the above discussion that internet addiction has become the serious problem in the adolescents. Their life satisfaction have negatively affected in many ways as they are suffering from depression, loneliness, poor self-esteem, eye problems, sleep disorders, eating disorders, deteriorating
relationships and family conflicts etc. The parents and teachers should take the necessary steps to look into this serious problem.

REFERENCES


