Internet Addiction among Elementary School Children

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Abstract: *The present study aimed at comparing internet addiction among elementary school children with respect to variables gender, socio - economic status, family type (nuclear/joint) and mother's status (working/ non working). The study was conducted in Rohtak district, Haryana state, India. The sample consisted of 546 students studying in standard VI of DAV Centenary Public School, Rohtak. They were administered the 'Internet Addiction Test' developed by Young (1998). The results indicated that i) girls are more addicted to internet as compared to boys; ii) students of high socio - economic status are comparatively more addicted to students of low socio - economic status; iii) internet addiction is more in children of working mothers as compared to children of non working mothers; and iv) children living in nuclear family system are more addicted to internet as compared to children living in joint family system.*

Keywords: Internet Addiction, Elementary School children

1. Theoretical Background

According to Oxford Dictionaries, *"internet is a global computer network providing a variety of information and communication facilities, consisting of interconnected networks using standardized communication protocols. "* Today's era is the era of knowledge and technological progress. The invention of the internet has revolutionized every sector of the society, be it education, economy, or culture.

The internet is a virtual treasure trove of Information. The biggest advantage that the Internet has given us is that we can access information in different ways. Today, if we want information on any subject, it is easily available on the Internet.

Nowadays school children have started using internet a lot, especially after outbreak of covid - 19. The active internet user base aged 12 years and older has grown more than 20% year - on - year to reach 595 million in 2022. According to Nielsen's India Internet Report (2023), "India had 700 million or more active Internet users aged 2 years and older as of December 2022. " With the number of internet users increasing every year, internet addiction has also become a problem among the users.

The term "internet addiction" was proposed by Ivan K. Goldberg in 1995. In Internet addiction, the person does not consume drugs, but it has been considered as a disorder that controls impulse. A person who suffers from it use the internet as a, substitution for real life human connection, which they are unable to achieve normally.

Young (1996) sees addiction as "the destructive effects on the psychological, physical, social, mental and economic status of an individual as a result of a certain activity or substance use, one's inability to give up, the impulse created by habit. " In words of Campbell (2003) "internet addiction is a disease with symptoms such as the emergence of negative behaviors that are not observed in healthy people in

personality and behaviors as a result of the continuous use of a habit - forming substance, damage to cognitive perception, and inhibition of willpower".

Chou and Hsiao (2000) stated, "overuse of the Internet can cause problems with health, relationship and time management. " It has also given rise to many social problems and concerns about privacy, security, pornography, internet crime and virtual community.

Internet use among students is on the rise. A public health concern over it is emerging. "Letting your kids use the web completely unsupervised is like opening your own door and saying 'They don't know how to cross the road but they'll work it out (Bylon, 2010). " In a study by Common Sense Media (2006), 85 % of the parents reported that of all forms of media, the internet has become the biggest problem for their children. Parental concerns are justified, as during adolescence, children can see any kind of content on the internet and can be friend with any person they want (Louge, 2006).

Internet access and use among all age brackets have grown exponentially over the past decade. Due to the overuse of social media, the mental and social development of children is depreciating (Dilci and Eranıl, 2019). Thus, a better understanding, of how internet addiction levels differ in children, is an important line of scientific inquiry. The undertaken study has got special significance in view of the fact that it was planned to investigate the internet addiction of elementary school students as development of children is important in formative years. If the child becomes susceptible to internet addiction at this age, it will affect their social, mental as well as emotional development negatively.

The present study aimed at investigating the internet addiction of elementary school children of district Rohtak according to the variables of gender, socio - economic status (SES), family type (joint/nuclear) and working status of mother (employed/ unemployed). Here *elementary school*

children refers to the children studying in class VI of D. A. V. Centenary Public Schools situated in Rohtak district.

Objectives of the Study
1) To investigate the level of internet addiction among the elementary school children.
2) To compare the internet addiction among the elementary school children on the basis of gender.
3) To compare the internet addiction among the elementary school children on the basis of SES.
4) To compare the internet addiction of elementary school children of working and non working mothers.
5) To compare the internet addiction of elementary school children living in joint and nuclear family system.

Data Collection Tools
1) SES schedule developed by Prof Rajbir Singh and Dr Radhey Shayam and adapted by the investigator.
2) Internet Addiction Test developed by Young (1998). It consists of 20 items that measures mild, moderate and severe level of internet addiction.
3) Personal Information form by the researcher. It included questions about the participating student's name, gender, family type (joint/nuclear), Mother's status (working/non - working).

2. Sample and Procedure

A study was conducted on 546 children studying in class VI who were randomly selected from various DAV schools located in Rohtak district. The investigator personally visited the schools one by one. After rapport formation investigator administered the tools to all students of class VI present on the day. Primarily 620 students of class VI present on the day of data collection were included in the sample. However some cases were finally rejected and not considered in the study. These rejected cases included the subjects lacking - both the parents and those who did not respond against all the items. The final sample size consisted of 546 students as shown in table 1:

Table 1: Distribution of Sample (N=546)

Variable	Levels	Number
Gender	Boys	295
	Girls	251
SES	Low SES	220
	High SES	326
Family Type	Joint	300
	Nuclear	246
Mother's Status	Working	310
	Non - Working	236

3. Analysis and Interpretation

In pursuance of the objectives, data was analyzed and interpreted under the following heads:

1) Level of Internet Addiction among elementary school students
Based on the classifying criteria told by Young (1998), 546 subjects were divided in to groups as follows:

Table 2: Classification of subjects in to groups on the basis of their score in internet

Level of Internet addiction	Range of Scores	N (%age)
Normal	0 - 30	18%
Mild	31 - 49	20 %
Moderate	50 - 79	38%
Severe	80 - 100	34%

Results in Table 2 reveal that majority of students had moderate (38 %) followed by severe level of internet addiction (34%). A small percentage of subjects (20%) fell in the category of mild level of internet addiction followed by normal level of internet addiction (18%).

2) Comparison of the internet addiction among the elementary school students on the basis of gender, SES, Family Type and Mother's status (working/non - working)

Table 3: Significance of difference in mean internet addiction scores of elementary school children with respect to four variables

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t – ratio	Level of Significance
Girls Vs Boys	295 251	67.8 78.4	12.01 13.53	9.60	.01
High SES Vs Low SES	220 326	79.4 73.55	11.0 12.1	5.86	.01
Nuclear Family Vs Joint Family	246 300	72.41 66.5	8.93 7.98	8.07	.01
Working Mothers VS Non- Working Mothers	310 236	74.5 69.5	11.02 12.01	5.99	.01

Table 3 indicates that the boys and girls; children belonging to low SES and high SES; children living in nuclear families and joint families; and children of working and non - working mothers yield comparable mean scores on internet addiction test.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings of the study (vide table 2) revealed that 34 percent of the students have severe internet addiction.

Further, the boys have higher addiction to internet than girls (vide table 3). The results are in consistent with the findings of Gökçearslan and Durakoğlu (2014). They reported that male are comparatively more addicted to internet as compared to their female counter parts. In words of Ko et. al. (2010) "characteristic of boys such as; resourcefulness, openness to experience such as; creativity, imagination and innovation to engage in pleasurable activities led them to use more of internet. " In this context, Aunola et al., (2000); van Rooij & van den Eijden, (2007) reported that when it comes to rules of using internet, it has been observed that parents are more defining rules with their daughters than sons.

Results also indicate that Internet addiction is significantly more in students belonging to high SES families as compared to students belonging to low SES. The finding of the study are supported by research results of Kayri and Gunuc (2016) who concluded "students with better socio

economic status have higher addiction levels than with those lower levels" This may be attributed to the fact that high status families have more access to digital devices and tools. Children can take mobile phones and tablets with them to any place and can approach social media. In this way there is no restriction of time and place on them for using internet.

Further, children living in nuclear families are more addicted to internet as compared to those living in joint families. This may be attributed to the fact that in joint family, there is a possibility that children get playmates while in nuclear family, children do not get bigger group especially if it is a single child family.

Table 3 also exhibits that internet addiction is significantly more in children of working others as compared to children of non working mothers. The reason for this is very obvious.

In this case the judgment that working mothers may not get sufficient time to spend with their children becomes important. They may not perform interactive activities with their children and children compensate that by indulging in other activities.

5. Educational Implications

Orientation programs on appropriate use of internet and bad effects of excessive internet usage may be organized for school students by the school administration from time to time. Parents and school can motivate the students regarding proper use of internet and balancing time with internet usage, studies and playing outdoor games.

In developing internet addiction among elementary school children, mother plays an important role. The results of the study has got special significance for working mothers and health care providers. The situation is alarming which must be controlled in time, otherwise this disorder might take a huge form of social problem.

Working mothers may not be physically available when their children connect the internet. But they can monitor the internet use of children, establish the rules of internet use. Thus the maternal intervention to promote internet regulation is necessary to prevent Internet addiction.

To understand it more deeply, there is also need to study the interactive effect of gender, SES, type of family and mother's status on internet addiction.

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