A study to assess the symptoms of anxiety among medical students with internet addiction

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I. Background

In the 21st century, we have witnessed an explosion in the internet usage. Though the benefits offered by internet are many, there is a rising concern about its negative effects. Adolescents and young adults are particularly more vulnerable to the psychological effects of internet.

Globally there is an 82% increase in 2009 with an average of 5.5 hours spend on internet and other social networks (Nielsenwire, 2010). This wide usage of internet made people get addicted to it. The prevalence of internet addiction in various studies have been in the range of 4 to 7%.

The term “Internet addiction disorder” was first coined by New York psychiatrist Ivan Goldberg (1995) which means excessive use of internet with symptoms like anger, tension, and anxiety. Dr. Young (1996) defined it 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”.

Internet addiction is an impulse control disorder which does not involve intoxication (Young, 1999). It is a psychological dependence on the internet, regardless of the activity once logged in (kandell, 1998).

Like other addictions, internet addiction may mask other problems such as depression, low self-esteem, and social anxiety.

Internet addiction can result in serious psychosocial, academic and occupational dysfunction. Various types of internet addiction-web surfing, pornography, chatting and video games characterized by dry eyes, headache, sleep disturbance, neglect of family, problems with school or job etc. (ASAM, 2012).

Problematic internet use may serve to worsen to social fears and avoidance to face the social interactions (Lee & Stapinski, 2012).

Adolescents with internet addiction showed reduce functional connectivity spanning distributed network (Hong, 2013).

Aims and objectives

To study the anxiety symptoms in the medical graduates with internet addiction

Study questions

To what extent students are addicted to internet?

What is the relationship between internet addiction and anxiety symptoms among the students?

II. Methodology

A two-stage cross-sectional study was carried out on 100 medical students (who were currently posted as interns in various medical and surgical specialties) of Andhra Medical College/ King George Hospital, Visakhapatnam, after taking the informed consent. The tools employed to conduct the study were Internet addiction test (IAT) & Beck’s Anxiety Inventory (BAI).

In the first stage, students were asked to fill IAT questionnaire and those who scored high were included into the 2nd stage. In the 2nd stage, these students were asked to fill the BAI, to assess the anxiety levels in them.

Study tools

Internet addiction test

Reliable and a valid measure of addictive use of internet Developed by Dr. Kimberly Young. 20 item scale that measures mild, moderate and severe level of internet addiction. Each item is scored from 0-5. The scores are graded as 0-30 (None), 31 to 49 (Normal internet usage/Average web surfing), 50 to 79 (Moderate), 80 to 100 (Severe). Higher the score, greater is the level of internet addiction.

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Beck's anxiety inventory
The Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) is a questionnaire of 21 items to measure anxiety. Each question is rated from 0 to 4. Not at all (0), mildly (1), moderately (2), severely (3). From 0 to 7 (low anxiety), 8 to 15 (mild anxiety), 16 to 25 (moderate anxiety), 26 to 63 (high anxiety). The maximum total score is 63.

III. Results
Data is analyzed and results are obtained and tabulated as follows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows frequency and percentage of students with respect to gender. Female students (f= 50) are equal in number as compared to male students (f=50).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severity of internet addiction</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal usage</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that 27% (27) of students are having moderate internet addiction who are liable to become severely addicted to internet over a time period. In present sample, 4% (4) have severe internet addiction. A total of 31% are addicted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-Distribution of severity of internet addiction among males and females.
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Table 4 shows that moderate levels of anxiety are found in 80.6% of individuals with internet addiction.

IV. Discussion
The study highlights the effects of internet addiction on the psychological status of an individual. According to a study done by (Nima et al; 2012), there exists a significant correlation between IA and level of anxiety. The results of my study are similar to above study, in which about 80% of the students with internet addiction have moderate levels of anxiety. These students who suffer from anxiety have a great deal of struggle in the community in interacting with other in a healthy, positive and a meaningful way.

V. Conclusion
Though internet is a useful tool that makes life easy, but it’s excessive use adversely affects one’s mental health, leading to anxiety and other related mental health issues- Downside of technology.

Further studies are needed in this field, to gather more knowledge on Internet addiction and it’s effects on mental health.

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