INTERNET ADDICTION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES AMONG ADOLESCENTS: A NARRATIVE REVIEW

Priya Malik  
Research Scholar, Shree Guru Gobind Singh Tricentenary University, Gurugram  
Email: priyamalik9811@gmail.com

Dr. Nudrat Jahan  
Assistant Professor, Shree Guru Gobind Singh Tricentenary University, Gurugram  
Email: dr.nudrat@sgtuniversity.org

Abstract

Background: Internet addiction is a growing concern which is being debated worldwide. Problematic internet use is escalated with adverse childhood experiences in their life.

Purpose: The purpose of the present study is to understand the relationship between internet addiction and experiences among adolescents

Methodology: Different databases like Google Scholar, Pubmed, Web of Science were used to find research papers for this narrative review paper. Previous research papers were taken into consideration for this study.

Results: The results have shown that maltreatment, family violence, family cohesion, neglect, dysfunctional family, domestic violence, aggression, parental alcohol use is significantly associated with internet addiction among adolescents. Adolescents who have experienced psychological abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse are at a greater risk for internet addiction.

Conclusion: There is an increasing need to plan and formulate effective prevention and treatment strategies for internet addiction.

Keywords: Internet, Internet addiction, Childhood Experiences, Adolescents

1. Introduction

In the modern times important modifications have taken place around the world with respect to the qualitative and quantitative expansion of the Internet. There has been an uncontrollable expansion in the use of internet not only in India but also worldwide. Reports explained that there were approximately 137 million Internet users in India in 2013 (Internet and Mobile Association of India, 2015). New research done in the field explained that adolescent population had a greater risk to develop Internet problematic behavior also known as Internet Addiction. Internet Addiction is characterized as an individual’s failure to control his or her use of the internet that ultimately causes intellectual, societal, school and work distress in an individual’s life (Davis 2001; Young & Rogers, 1998). Internet Addiction was first popularized in 1996 at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (Young 1996). Internet addiction is explained as an irresistible and detrimental use of the
Internet, and conceptually framed as an uncontrollable -impulsive situation (Ghassemzadeh et al., 2008). Internet addiction is defined as an urge control disorder that does not involve the use of an stimulating drug and is very like to pathological gambling (Young, 1996). The term “Internet Addiction” formulated by Goldberg, was basically used to analyze the adverse effects of excessive internet usage on personal lives (Goldberg, 1996). Internet addiction is also acknowledged as cyberspace obsession, net obsession and problematic internet usage (Davis, Flett, & Besser, 2002). Internet addiction is a description for disorderly, harmful use of the technology and it is a warning clue that an individual is having trouble controlling their internet use (Beard, 2002). Griffiths (2000) revealed that internet addiction has six basic components which are common with other type of addictions mainly salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict and relapse. According to the Illinois Institute for Addiction recovery (Young & Abreu, 2010) signs of internet addiction include engrossment with the Internet, use of the internet in rising amount of time to in order to attain comfort, numerous, futile efforts to discipline internet use, sense of anxiety, depression as well as annoyance when trying to cut down internet use, staying online for a prolonged period of time than you planned, loss of significant relationships, job as well as educational opportunities because of excessive internet use, dishonest with family members and others to conceal the hours you spent online, use of the Internet to escape from the difficulties and obstacles of life. Internet Addiction results in personal, family, financial and occupational problems. Therefore, this paper aimed at understanding the relationship between internet addiction and experiences among adolescents.

2. Selection Criteria

Previous research papers were taken into consideration for this study. Papers were searched using different electronic databases like PubMed and Google Scholar. Keywords used for searching papers were Internet Addiction and Adverse childhood experiences.

3. Results

Table 1 *Studies included in the narrative review.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author and Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Comparator</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lo et al., 2021</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>1204 adolescents</td>
<td>——</td>
<td>Internet Addiction, Child Maltreatment, Parental Harsh Discipline, Bullying and Social Support</td>
<td>Cross sectional school survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Sample Description</td>
<td>Measures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karaca, Demirci, Caglar, &amp; Konsuk Unlu, 2021</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>adolescents</td>
<td>Internet Addiction, violence towards parents, domestic violence experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demir, 2021</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>314 adolescents</td>
<td>Happiness, Social Media Addiction, negative childhood experiences, unhappiness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hsieh et al., 2021</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>6233 adolescents</td>
<td>Internet addiction, resilience, neglect, school experience, community violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dong, Su, Du, Hu, &amp; Wang, 2021</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>102 Left Behind Adolescents and 1399 Non-Left Behind Adolescents</td>
<td>Internet Addiction, Childhood Trauma, Depression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson, Testa, &amp; Fox, 2021</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Children and adolescents aged 6-17 years</td>
<td>Adverse childhood experiences, digital media use, family, parent and child level factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donmez &amp; Soylu, 2020</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>adolescents</td>
<td>Socio-demographic characteristics, internet access facilities, psychiatric disorders, internet use characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaeb et al., 2020</td>
<td>Lebanese</td>
<td>1810 Adolescents aged 14 and 17 years</td>
<td>Bullying Victimization, Child Abuse, Internet Addiction, Social Phobia and Depression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Sample Description</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Dependent Variables</td>
<td>Additional Measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seo et al., 2020</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>180 students between ages 9 and 18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Depression, Childhood Adversity, Problematic Internet Use</td>
<td>Children Depression Inventory, Socio demographic characteristics, semi structured questionnaires, Smartphone addiction proneness scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tras et al., 2019</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>492 High school students</td>
<td></td>
<td>Internet Addiction, Perceived Emotional Abuse, Well Being</td>
<td>Young Internet Addiction Test Short Form, Short Form for Perceived Emotional Abuse scale for adolescents, Measure of Adolescent Well Being, Personal Information Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schimmenti et al., 2017</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>358 high school students</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Internet Addiction, late adolescence, traumatic experiences, Alexithymia, Gender Differences</td>
<td>Self-report measures on traumatic experiences, alexithymia, and problematic Internet Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim, Park, &amp; Park, 2017</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>695 middle &amp; high school students</td>
<td></td>
<td>Depression, Problematic Internet Use, Self Esteem Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>Early trauma inventory self-report short form, Rosenberg self-esteem scale, Children Depression Inventory, Young Internet Addiction Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu et al., 2016</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>adolescents</td>
<td></td>
<td>Internet Addiction, parenting approaches, familial variables including family conflict and family functionality</td>
<td>Cross sectional study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tang et al., 2014</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Adolescents</td>
<td></td>
<td>Internet Addiction, stressful life events, coping style, psychological symptoms, interpersonal problems, school</td>
<td>Self-Rated Scales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>Related Problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang et al., 2014</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>3507 urban adolescent students</td>
<td>Specificity for mediating role of life events was demonstrated in comparison to alternative competing mediation models</td>
<td>Internet Addiction, Adolescent Depression, Life events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jang, Kim, &amp; Choi, 2012</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>743 Early adolescents aged 11-12 years</td>
<td>Internet Addiction Group</td>
<td>Internet Addiction, parental problem drinking, aggression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park, Kim, &amp; Cho, 2008</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>903 adolescents</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Internet Addiction, Family Cohesion, Family Violence Exposure, Family Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beard &amp; Yarnall, 2008</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Children and adolescents</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Secondary Data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim, Chae, Rhim, &amp; Shin, 2004</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>998 adolescents</td>
<td>Addicted Group &amp; Non-Addicted Group</td>
<td>Internet overuse, Family conflict, parent adolescent communication, family adaptability cohesion, children of alcoholics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
children of alcoholics
screening test

Table 1 presents the data that has been extracted from the past years showing authors, years, country, sample, comparator, variables, and measures. After reviewing all the papers included authors found that harsh parenting, maltreatment, family communication, family violence, family cohesion, aggressive behaviour, parental alcohol use and neglect was significantly associated with internet addiction among adolescents. Results have also shown a history of abuse like psychological, emotional, sexual contributes to the proneness towards internet addiction in later stages of life. Adverse childhood experiences and traumatic memories increase the risk of problematic internet use including anxiety, depression, interpersonal and school related stressors.

4. Discussion

After reviewing the review papers, it can be understood that internet addiction is an emerging and expanding phenomenon and needs considerable attention. Adverse childhood experiences have a significant impact on an adolescent’s mental health and is positively related to internet addiction. Prevention efforts for Internet Addiction is essential in the future. It is very crucial to highlight the importance of adaptive coping skills to deal with the mental stress resultant from adverse childhood experiences. World Health Organization characterizes adverse childhood experiences and trauma as all forms of physical and emotional abuse, inattention or exploitation that results in actual or potential harm to a child (Hughes et al., 2017). As described by Jacobs et al (2012) Childhood Adversity is classified as any vulnerability to abuse (emotional, physical, and intimate) neglect (emotional, physical) and family dysfunction (parental separation, domestic violence, substance abuse). Childhood adversity can be explained as a range of factors that can have a severe impact on a child’s physical or subjective well-being. Childhood Adversity has a significant impact on an adolescent’s life. Early childhood adversity is linked to various medical and psychiatric problems. Shi et al (2020) reviewed the components of Internet Gaming Disorder and the related interaction effects of childhood trauma, hopelessness and uncertainty in university graduates. Findings explained that childhood trauma had a powerful impact on internet gaming disorder. Lee, Chung, Kim, & Lee, (2016) studied the structural association among adverse childhood experiences, anxiety and internet addiction in young pupil. Findings from path analysis confirmed that adverse childhood experiences certainly determine risk for internet addiction. Forster et al. (2021) explained that adverse childhood experiences boost the probability of developing behavioural addictions. Wilke et al. (2020)
investigated whether the association among adverse childhood experiences and problematic media usage was moderated through attachment anxiety, attachment escapism or both. Results of the study explained that there was a relationship among adverse childhood experiences and problematic media usage.

Eşkisu (2021) presented a study which adopted cross-sectional correlational research design to understand the association among childhood trauma, internet addiction, dissociative experiences as well as online dissociation. Childhood trauma was positively associated with dissociative experiences, online dissociation and Internet Addiction. Evren et al. (2019) explained the associations among childhood trauma and internet addiction. The study also focused on investigating the mediator effects of dissociative experiences and emotional dysregulation on this association which revealed that childhood trauma mainly emotional abuse and physical neglect was associated with severity of Internet Addiction symptoms. Dong et al. (2010) examined the prevalence of psychological abuse, neglect and internet addiction in school students further explaining that those who had experienced psychological abuse, neglect had greater chances of being prone to the Internet.

Conclusion

This narrative has made an attempt to understand the relationship between internet addiction and adverse childhood experiences which has been increasing rapidly. In an effort to reduce heavy digital media use and problematic internet use practitioners who consistently interact with the youth should consider screening for adverse childhood experiences and referring high risk youth and their families for various interventions and treatment programs that can also focus on family and social vulnerabilities among adolescents.

References


Therapy. *AJNR. American journal of neuroradiology*, 41(7), 1293–1301. [https://doi.org/10.3174/ajnr.A6632](https://doi.org/10.3174/ajnr.A6632)


