

Internet Use among Intern Doctors-A Cross Sectional Study at Government Medical College, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, INDIA

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Research Article

Abstract: Background: The Internet has become the world's biggest library where retrieval of scientific resources can be done within minutes. Young adults are heavy users of internet. It is integrated into their daily communication habit and has become a technology as ordinary as telephone or television. **Method:** A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted in Government Medical College Aurangabad from Feb to April 2013 with the objective to estimate extent and purpose of internet use among intern doctors and its impact on their daily, academic and social routine. The participants also completed the Internet addiction test (IAT). **Result:** 95.48% intern doctors were using internet. The age of starting internet use ranges from 13-23yrs. About 57.43% participants started using internet at the age of 18-20 yrs. The average time spent online was 100 min. About 91.09% intern doctors have email ID. Getting information was the main purpose of use of internet (84.16%) followed by media for social communication (60.40%). About 63.5% participants were average users of internet with IAT score of 20-49. In about 30.5% of participants occasional problematic use of internet was found with IAT score of 50-79 while 1% of participants were found addicted to internet with IAT score of 80 onwards.

Key words: internet use, social communication, internet addiction test

Introduction

Internet is a worldwide computer network allowing communication among millions of users and access to different resources. The Internet has become the world's biggest library where retrieval of scientific resources can be done within minutes. Young adults are heavy users of internet. It is integrated into their daily communication habit and has become a technology as ordinary as telephone or television. Internet use first became widespread on college campuses in 1990's and in many ways the internet is a direct outcome of university based research. Yahoo! Napster and many other internet tools were created by young generation.¹ Young generation may be particularly susceptible to the problems related to internet use and specifically to excessive internet use as they have largely unfettered, unsupervised access to internet and independent control over their time. Researchers have begun to explore the consequences of excessive internet use; terms such as Internet addiction, Internet dependence and pathological computer use have appeared. Internet

addiction disorder (IAD) is expected to be recognized by the NHS (UK) in a mental health manual for GPs. Meanwhile China is looking to recognize this addiction as new disease.² Studying Young generation's internet habits can yield insight into future online trends. So the present cross sectional study is carried out with the objective to estimate extent and purpose of internet use among intern doctors and its impact on their daily, academic and social routine.

Material and method

This cross sectional descriptive study was conducted in Government Medical College Aurangabad from Feb to April 2013 with the objective to estimate extent and purpose of internet use among intern doctors and its impact on their daily, academic and social routine. The participants were two batches of intern doctors one completing the one year rotator internship and another joining. A predesigned and pretested questionnaire was used to collect data. The participants also completed the Internet addiction test (IAT)³. IAT is reliable and valid measure of problematic internet usage developed by Kimberly Young. It consists of 20 items that measure mild, moderate and severe level of internet addiction. Each item has 5 point Likert-type scale and participants were asked to rate, using this scale, the degree to which their internet use affected their daily, academic and social routine. Then IAT score is calculated by adding score of all 20 items. The score of 20-49 signifies average use, 50-79 occasional problem and above 80 signifies addiction.

Observation and discussion

210 intern doctors participated in the study.

Table 1: Age wise distribution of study participants

| Age in years | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| 21 | 8 | 3.80 |
| 22 | 77 | 36.67 |
| 23 | 81 | 38.57 |
| 24 | 30 | 14.29 |
| 25 | 10 | 4.76 |
| 26 | 2 | 0.95 |

Table 1 shows that age of study participants were 21 to 26 .75.24% participants were in the age group of 22-23. Among the participants 47.17% were females. 95.48% intern doctors were using internet. The age of starting internet use ranged from 13-23yrs.About 57.43% participants started using internet at the age of 18-20 yrs. The average time spent online was 100 min. About 91.09% intern doctors have email ID.

Table 2: Participants view on impact of internet on academic performance

| Internet has positive impact on academic performance | No. of participants | Percentage |
|--|---------------------|------------|
| Yes | 164 | 82 |
| No | 22 | 11 |
| Don't Know | 14 | 7 |

82% participants agree that internet has positive impact on academic performance.

Table 3: Purpose of using internet

| Purpose of using Internet* | No. of participants | Percentage |
|----------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Getting information | 85 | 84.16 |
| Entertainment | 49 | 48.51 |
| Communicate socially | 61 | 60.40 |
| Playing games | 13 | 12.87 |

*multiple responses

Getting information was the main purpose of use of internet (84.16%) followed by media for social communication (60.40%).

Table 4: IAT score wise distribution of study participants

| IAT score | No. Of participants | Percentage |
|------------|---------------------|------------|
| <20 | 10 | 5.0 |
| 20-49 | 127 | 63.5 |
| 50-79 | 61 | 30.5 |
| 80 onwards | 2 | 1.0 |

About 63.5% participants were average users of internet with IAT score of 20-49. In 30.5% of participants occasional problematic use of internet was found with IAT score of 50-79 while 1% of participants were found addicted to internet with IAT score of 80 onwards .

Discussion

In present study, 95.48 % of intern doctors were using internet while Sharma R. et al found that 88% of students were using internet ⁴ Minimum age of starting internet use was 13yrs. The average time spent online was 100 min. About 91.09% intern doctors have email ID. Unnikrishnan B et al reported 73.4 % of medical students have email ID.⁵ Study conducted in America (Jones2002) found 62% students used email ID. In present study, the increased use of email might be due to easy access to internet. 82% participants agreed that internet has positive impact on academic performance. Getting information was the main purpose of use of internet (84.16%) followed by media for social communication (60.40%), similar observation was reported in other studies^{5,6,7}. In our study we found

that 48.51 % of interns were using internet for entertainment while Sharma et al(2006) revealed 52% UG students used internet for entertainment and Unnikrishnan B et al found 69.5% medical students using computer for this purpose. About 63.5% participants were average users of internet with IAT score of 20-49. In about 30.5% of participants occasional problematic use of internet was found with IAT score of 50-79 while 1% of participants were found addicted to internet with IAT score of 80 onwards while Dimitri A Christakis et al found 4% of students scored in the occasionally problematic or addicted range on the IAT.⁸ This increase in occasional problematic use of internet might be related with time passage.

Conclusion

Young adults are heavy users of internet. It is integrated into their daily communication habit and has become a technology as ordinary as telephone or television. They may be particularly susceptible to the problems related to internet use and specifically to excessive internet use as they have largely unfettered, unsupervised access to internet and independent control over their time which should be taken care of to prevent it's adverse effects on social milieu.

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