

Research Article

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A study to assess the symptoms of internet addiction among school-going children at selected school, Puducherry.

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ABSTRACT

Background: Internet use has become an essential part of students' daily lives, offering educational opportunities and social interaction. However, excessive and uncontrolled internet use can lead to problematic behaviors and psychological dependence, termed internet addiction. **Aim:** To assess the symptoms of internet addiction among school-going children at a selected school in Puducherry. **Methodology:** A quantitative descriptive research design was adopted among 50 school-going children aged 15–18 years, selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured tool comprising demographic variables and a standardized Internet Addiction Scale. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. **Result:** Findings revealed that 46% of children sometimes experienced symptoms of internet addiction, 40% rarely, and 14% always. The mean score was 56.44, with a standard deviation of 15.85. A significant association was found between lifestyle diseases and internet addiction symptoms ($p < 0.05$), while other demographic variables showed no significant association. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that internet addiction symptoms are moderately prevalent among school-going children. Awareness and preventive interventions are essential to promote healthy internet habits and prevent psychological and physical consequences.

Keywords: Internet addiction, school children, symptoms, adolescents, behavioral health.

INTRODUCTION

The internet has revolutionized modern education and communication, providing unlimited access to knowledge and connectivity. However, its excessive use among children and adolescents has given rise to behavioral issues such as internet addiction, characterized by an uncontrollable urge to stay online despite adverse effects on health, academics, and relationships. Internet addiction is recognized as a behavioral concern that can affect mental and emotional well-being. Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable due to curiosity, lack of self-regulation, and peer influence. Common symptoms include preoccupation with internet activities, neglect of responsibilities, irritability when offline, and loss of control over online time. Prolonged screen exposure also contributes to physical problems like eye strain, headaches, back pain, and sleep disturbances. Studies indicate that internet addiction may co-occur with anxiety, depression, and academic difficulties. Hence, early identification of its symptoms among school-going children is essential to safeguard their holistic development.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Globally, internet usage has increased dramatically among young people. According to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (2018), India has over 1.1 billion mobile users, with a significant proportion being adolescents and students. In 2021, nearly 40% of Indian youth were reported to exhibit mild to moderate internet addiction symptoms. Studies show that overuse of digital devices disrupts attention, sleep, and emotional balance. Yoo et al. (2013) found that adolescents' dependence on smartphones and gaming platforms was associated with poor academic outcomes. In India, Goel et al. (2013) and Dutta et al. (2016) highlighted that uncontrolled internet use among school students leads to emotional distress and reduced productivity. Given the growing prevalence and potential consequences, there is a pressing need to assess the symptoms of internet addiction among school-going children in Puducherry to develop preventive strategies and promote balanced digital engagement.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the symptoms of internet addiction among school-going children.
2. To associate the symptoms of internet addiction among school-going children with selected demographic variables.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative descriptive research design was used for this study. The study was conducted among 50 school-going children aged 15–18 years at a selected school in Puducherry. Participants were selected through purposive sampling.

Tool for Data Collection

- **Section A:** Demographic variables such as age, gender, religion, standard, type of family, residence, and lifestyle diseases.
- **Section B:** A structured Internet Addiction Symptom Scale with four response options — Never, Rarely, Sometimes, and Always.

Scoring Interpretation:

SCORING INTERPRETATION	
1-25	Never
25-50	Rarely
50-75	Sometimes
75-100	Always

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of School-Going Children (N = 50)

S.No	Demographic Data	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Age	11–13 years	0	0
		14 years	0	0

		15 years	13	26
		16–18 years	37	74
2	Gender	Male	26	52
		Female	24	48
3	Religion	Hindu	23	46
		Muslim	19	38
		Christian	8	16
		Others	0	0
4	Standard	10 th Standard	13	26
		11 th Standard	25	50
		12 th Standard	12	24
5	Education	Illiterate	0	0
		Primary School	0	0
		Secondary School	50	100
		Graduate	0	0
6	Type of School	Government School	24	48
		Private School	26	52
		Others	0	0
7	Type of Family	Nuclear Family	17	34
		Joint Family	32	64
		Single Parent Family	1	2
8	Children in Family	1 Child	0	0
		2 Children	50	100
		≥ 3 Children	0	0
9	Type of Residence	Rural	0	0
		Urban	50	100
10	Lifestyle Diseases	Yes	23	46
		No	27	54

Table 2: Frequency and percentage wise distribution of the symptoms of internet addiction among school going children [N= 50]

SCORING INTERPRETATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Never	0	0
Rarely	20	40
Sometimes	23	46
Always	7	14

Table 3 : Mean and Standard deviation of the symptoms of internet addiction among school going children

MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
56.44	15.85

The findings reveal that mean (56.44) and standard deviation (15.85) of symptoms of internet addiction among school going children.

DISCUSSION:

The findings indicate that nearly half of the school-going children exhibited moderate symptoms of internet addiction. Similar results were reported by Park, Kim, and Cho (2018), who found that 10.7% of South Korean adolescents were at high risk for internet addiction. The presence of significant association with lifestyle diseases suggests that prolonged internet use may negatively influence physical health. This aligns with previous studies by Chen et al. (2016) and Young (1998), which reported that excessive internet use is linked to disturbed sleep, stress, and sedentary habits. Thus, the findings emphasize the importance of monitoring students’ internet habits and promoting awareness regarding balanced online engagement.

CONCLUSION:

The study concludes that a majority of school-going children exhibit moderate symptoms of internet addiction. Lifestyle diseases were significantly associated with higher symptom scores, while other demographic variables showed no association. Early detection and counseling can help prevent progression to severe addiction and improve academic and social well-being.

RECOMMENDATION:

Conduct awareness programs for students, teachers, and parents on healthy internet use.

- Implement school-based counseling services for managing internet addiction.
- Conduct large-scale studies to generalize findings across different age groups and settings.
- Encourage digital literacy and screen-time management among adolescents.

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