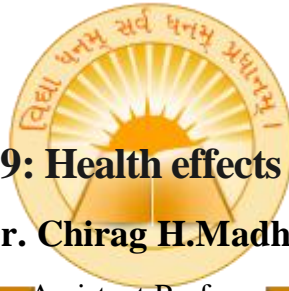




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After Covid-19: Health effects of being online

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Preface:

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced all of us to stay at home or maintain social distance for necessary activities for living. It has been more than forty days of complete lockdown throughout the country. People are to stay at their home. What activity can a person do if he has to stay at home 24×7? The only answer will be being online. From small children to adults, from students to teachers, from small workers to officials everybody is online. The virus has changed the way we look at smart-phones, internet, social media etc. everybody has embraced it. Movie theatres are closed. No social gathering and celebrations, no restaurants, no shopping. In the last month the internet data usage has increased drastically. Some applications has seen more than forty percentage rise in its usage. Social media usage has grown as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, as more users go online to stay connected with family, friends and colleagues. Now, new data from insights and consulting firm Kantar reveals exactly how much some apps are benefiting. According to a survey of more than 25,000 consumers in 30 markets conducted from March 14 to 24, WhatsApp is the social media app that has experienced the greatest gains due to COVID-19. (Sarah Perez. 2020) This is good as well as bad. Too much usage of internet and being online converts into an addiction. This internet addiction has adverse health effects. The effects cannot only be physical but also psychological. We shall look at these effects in this paper. First of let me discuss what is internet addiction?

What is internet addiction?

Internet addiction is a behavioral addiction in which a person becomes dependent on use of the Internet, or other online devices, as a maladaptive way of coping with life's stresses. Internet addiction is not yet an officially recognized mental disorder but it causes some health problems. Increasingly, addiction to mobile devices, such as cell phones and smart phones, and addiction to social networking sites, such as Facebook, are being investigated. Moreover, sex material, gambling and video games cause addiction. Research of Morgan C. & Cotten S. R. (2003) and Ng Brian D. & Wiemer-Hastings P.(2005) indicate

Excessive use of the Internet for gaming and gambling has been tied to increased depression. During the past 10 years, the rapid development of social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and so on has caused several profound changes in the way people communicate and interact.

Mental effects of being online:

There are many mental side effects of being online for too long period or spending too much time on computer and internet. The internet has taken over the youth by a storm. The effects are too vivid to be ignored. Almost everyone that we come across nowadays has access to smartphones with internet connection in various forms. This has made our lives easier, or so it seems.

- **Depression:** people who spend too much time on the internet end up losing touch with reality and live in a fantasy world. Without access to the internet, they feel lost and this result in depression, anxiety. • “Some social media use can be a good thing because it helps us keep up with family and friends, but we need to be careful about how it affects our psyche,” he says. Studies have shown excessive social media use can lead to feelings of depression and dependency in some people.
- **Inability to stick to schedules:** These people get so lost in browsing and lose the sense of time once they are on the net that important schedules become irrelevant to them.
- **Social isolation:** Internet addicts end up developing numerous close relationships online, but losing out on real-time relationships with peers and families.
- **Mood changes:** Most heavy-internet users get euphoric and happy when online, but get gloomy and irritated when they are denied access.
- **Laziness:** Online activity makes you lazy. You don't move fro your sofa. Online games, music, movies, social media platforms entertain you so much. You almost forget to give time to your dear ones. Everything goes online shopping, payment, etc.



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- **Cyber Crime:** The internet is not a very safe space. It is prone to a lot of criminal activities and threats to privacy. The internet is home to a lot of illegal websites and unethical content which when accessed, can lead to trouble for the user. This use can be unintentional, but the dangers are uniform for all. The youth today remains vulnerable to a lot of fraudulent activity online, which they must be careful with. Moreover, a thousand kinds of viruses and other such unwanted entities can attack an individual's gadget, putting their sensitive information at risk. Unethical hacking is quite rampant these days, and the common man is not as well equipped to handle risky situations like this. Social media applications use the phone's location to post online

Physical side effects of being online

The physical side effects of being online and spending too many hours in front of the screen understandably include headaches, backaches, and blurred or strained vision issues coupled with weight loss or gain. Such teenagers end up with problems of the nervous system, eyes, muscle wastage, headaches and obesity.

Sleep deprived: People are increasingly going to bed with their phones and continue browsing well into the night, losing out on sleep and increasing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Excessive smart phone, computer and tablet use can disrupt your sleep. Bright lights from these devices block melatonin secretion, the hormone that regulates sleep.

With the development of social networks, the time children and adolescents spend in front of the computer screens have significantly increased. This has created problems with eye strains, eye sights. Strained vision is only one of the conditions that can be due to computer vision syndrome. According to the American Optometric Association (AOA), a significant number of patients complain about eye strain, as well as neck and back pain in association with using a computer or mobile device. Headaches, blurred vision, dry eye, and light sensitivity may be experienced from long hours in front of a computer screen.



Failing Memory: You drive while talking on the cell phone, text while listening in on a conference call, surf your iPad while watching TV. Multitasking is the new normal, and though it feels like we're more efficient, studies show it has the opposite effect. "Your performance level drops if you stop one activity to pick up another," says Gazzaley, who conducts ongoing studies on the effects of media on our brains. Multitasking participants had more difficulty filtering out irrelevant information than those focusing on one task at a time. Multitask also took longer to switch tasks, juggle problems and wasted time searching for new information when information they had was better and more reliable.

Hearing Loss: Too much time spending to listening to music on phone online may cause hearing loss.

Conclusion

Technology has crept into every corner of our lives, No one expects you to put down your smart phone and live like our ancestors did. Researchers are conflicted so far, though, about whether the effects of media are good or bad for our brains. They *do* agree that it's changing how we think. As is known to all, internet was created to make our lives more comfortable and for access to vast knowledge with the touch of a finger. However, it has been exploited to such an extent that people are now wondering whether it is a bane than a boon. The nation's youth especially, is highly influenced by this technological advancement, and with good reason. Virtually everything is available to them in the blink of an eye, be it good or bad. Having said so, it is also true that the youth is more prone to be victims of the negative impact of internet probably because of their still raw and vulnerable minds. During this time of Covid-19 people has used internet excessively, we need to pay attention that it does not become an addiction because it will have great impact on the health of people especially youth.



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