

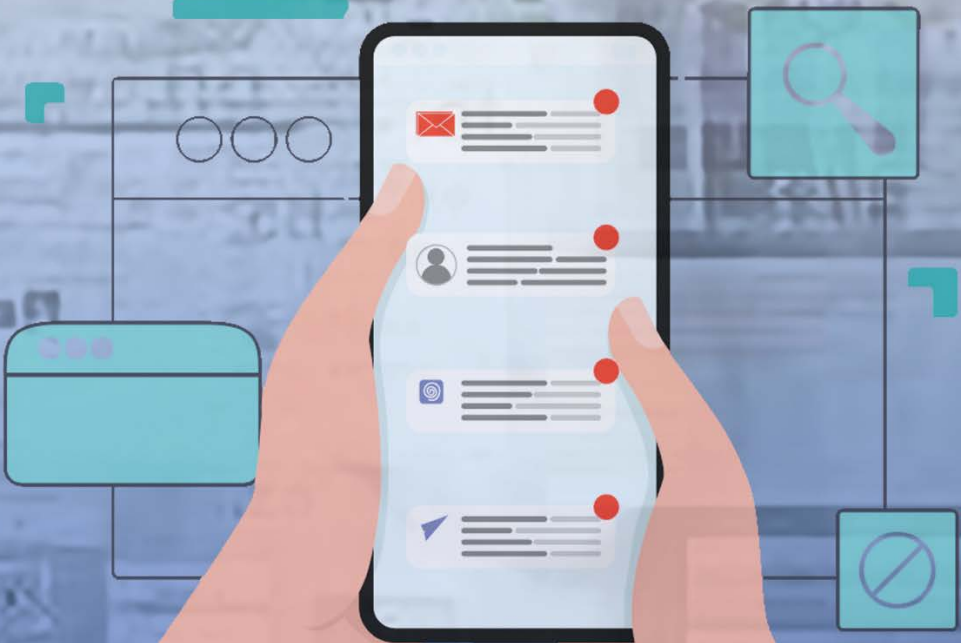
विद्यया ऽ मृतमश्नुते



एन सी ई आर टी  
NCERT

A  
Module on

# INTERNET ADDICTION



**Population Education Cell,**  
(Under National Population Education Project)  
**North East Regional Institute of Education, NCERT**

Module:

# Internet Addiction

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NCERT

(2024-2025)

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**Population Education Cell,  
(Under National Population Education Project)  
North East Regional Institute of Education, NCERT**

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## **About the Module**

Understanding Internet Addiction is perhaps the most essential thing because excessive internet use has become a growing concern, especially among students and adolescents. This module is intended to help educate students, parents, and teachers about the risks and signs and symptoms of excessive internet use. It is necessary to teach responsible and balanced internet usage, with increasing reliance on technology. This module will help provide strategies to individuals manage screen time effectively. Excessive internet use has been associated with problems such as anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, and physical health issues like poor posture and eye strain. Educating adolescents about these risks can encourage healthier lifestyle choices. It also negatively impacts academic performance and social interactions. This module can guide students on maintaining a balance between online and offline activities. This module also introduces self-regulation techniques, digital detox plans, and mindfulness strategies to help individuals reduce their dependency on the internet. Lastly, parents and teachers play a vital role in guiding young individuals. The module can equip them with tools and strategies to monitor manage and ration internet usage effectively.

Prachi Ghildyal

Tulika Dey

# Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Different types of internet related addiction	2
3.	Science of internet addiction	5
4.	Adverse consequences associated with internet addiction	7
5.	Self – help Suggestions	8
6.	Role of teachers	10
7.	Role of parents	18
8.	When and where to seek help	20
	8.1 Red flag signs of problematic internet use	20
	8.2 From who to seek help	22
9.	Importance of working together	25
10.	Internet addiction: Case Studies	27
11.	Where do you stand on Internet Usage?	30
12.	References	31

# Internet Addiction

## 1. Introduction

The Internet is one of the most influential forms of mass media having revolutionized human behavior, with people spending more and more time online—studying,



learning, communicating, creating, and entertaining themselves. However, excessive Internet use, which is also termed as "Internet Addiction", can have negative consequences for an individual as well as the society in which they reside (Wallace 2014). Internet addiction has become one of the most widely discussed global issues in modern society. Its impact has reached such an extent that it significantly affects relationships, academic performance, professional productivity, and social interactions. Over the past two decades, the use of the internet for socialization and gaming has surged dramatically, particularly among children, adolescents, and young adults, driven by advancements in internet technology.

Excessive internet use has led to numerous negative consequences, including negative affect on personal relationships with friends and family, reduced productivity at work, reduced sleep duration, increase in cyberbullying, and a growing prevalence of internet addiction (IA). The situation has

worsened in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdown restrictions and the pandemic-induced rise in anxiety and emotional distress have driven individuals to rely heavily on certain online applications as a means of coping with negative emotions, further contributing to problematic internet use. The internet addiction also has a physical impact, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, severe headaches, and problems sleeping and eating

## 2. Different types of internet related addiction

**2.1 Social Networking:** Social networking is the new norm of the society as most of the people remain online 24 hours of the day. However, excessive use of Social Media platforms like Facebook and Facebook Messenger, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Pinterest, YouTube, TikTok, etc. results in social networking addiction. Social



Networking is used mainly for entertainment purposes. It helps to connect with friends and family members. Besides these, watching videos/ reels and passing time through scrolling are the main reasons for wide usage.

But there is a huge population, as well, utilizing social media for work. For example, connecting with customers, advertising products and services,

providing updates by celebrities for their fans, etc.

**2.2 Online Shopping:** Compulsive online shopping or compulsive buying disorders is characterized by excessive, unnecessary spending on different online products which leads to the development of emotional disturbances and financial problems.

**2.3 Gaming:** Gaming or digital / video gaming is an extremely popular, ever increasing activity worldwide. The number of people who play games is estimated to be over 3 billion. Of the 3.03 billion global video gamers, 2.82 billion game online (Statista). Gaming is usually played on three kinds of platforms: a video game console, PC or mobile device. All can be played by people individually or with multiple players locally or over the internet.

The harmful consequences of excessive gaming were also recognized by the World Health Organisation (WHO), and gaming disorder (GD) was included in their 2016 release of the 11<sup>th</sup> revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) (Saunders, et al., 2017).

**2.4 Online gambling:** Online gambling (also known as iGaming or iGambling) refers to any form of gambling conducted over the internet. This includes virtual poker, online casinos, and sports betting, as well as bingo, lotteries, mobile gambling, virtual sports, etc. The online gambling industry

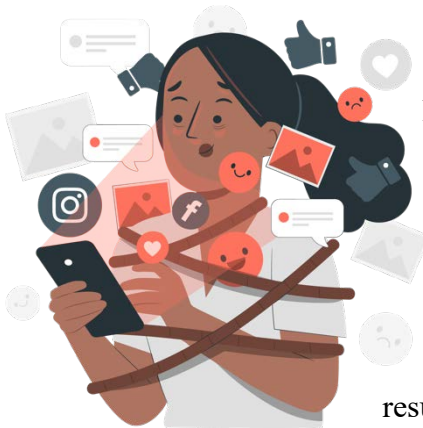




has grown into one of the most popular and profitable sectors on the internet.

Some individuals develop an addiction when they gamble compulsively. Compulsive gambling is marked by an intense, uncontrollable urge to gamble. When people gamble, their brains release dopamine, a hormone associated with pleasure and reward. Winning bets triggers excitement and a surge of feel-good chemicals. However, for those who become addicted, these chemicals are no longer released in response to other enjoyable activities.

**2.5 OTT:** Over-the-top (OTT) platforms, such as Netflix, Disney+, YouTube, and Amazon Prime Video, provide endless entertainment options for viewers. While these platforms offer educational and recreational content, excessive use can lead to addiction, especially among children.



The OTT revolution is transforming India's media landscape, driven by a vast market and evolving consumer habits. The massive expansion of OTT is driven by changes in lifestyle, along with the widespread availability of fast and affordable internet. As a result, web-based content is rapidly replacing traditional television programming.

**2.6 Information overload:** Information overload is a state of being overwhelmed by the huge amount of data / information made available from multiple sources of information. This can lead to anxiety, negative emotions, reduced accuracy, difficulty in managing information, avoidance of information, reduced productivity and quality and effectiveness in decision making.

Information overload can be of three types: (a) task-related or work overload, (b) message and (c) media messages.

**2.7 Pornography:** With the rise of digital technology and easy internet access, children are increasingly exposed to online pornography, often unintentionally by accidental exposure, like, Pop-up ads, misleading links, and social media. Besides, curiosity, peer influence, and unrestricted internet access also exposes them to these sites. As a result children develop distorted views on relationships & sexuality.

### **3. Science of internet addiction**

Over the years research has explored the role of our brain in the development of addictions. Studies have been carried out that have compared persons with internet addiction with healthy persons. In these studies the images of the brain of the study participants were captured using different techniques. These studies have found that the structure and functioning of the brain of persons who have internet related addictions is different from the persons who do not have such addictions.

Parts of the brain have been identified that are involved in the emergence and progression of such addictions. Many of these

parts of the brain overlap with the parts of the brain that are involved in the development of addiction to alcohol and other drugs. This is one of the ways in which internet addiction is similar to addiction to alcohol and other drugs.

Different parts of our brain are responsible for controlling different functions and activities. For example, the frontal part of our brain is responsible for making decisions. Impaired functioning of this part of the brain makes us take decisions that may be risky. Another part of the brain, commonly known as the reward pathway, is involved in the experience of pleasure that we derive in certain activities. When the reward pathway overrides the regulatory part of the brain it makes us engage in behaviours that we enjoy but may be detrimental to our own well-being.

These changes in the functioning of our brain help us understand why certain internet related behaviours become the priority and we ignore other important activities and responsibilities. Also, these changes help us explain the lack of control that is seen in internet addiction. This is why we continue to engage in problematic behaviour and are not able to stop or reduce it despite experiencing problems because of these behaviours.

Various psycho-social factors also play a critical role in the emergence and development of internet addiction. Factors such as emotional regulation issues, low self-esteem, impulsivity, fear of missing out, and loneliness often contribute to excessive internet use. Students may access the internet for validation, escape, or instant gratification. Social influences, including family dynamics, peer pressure, and academic stress, can also drive individuals toward excessive and problematic internet use.

Additionally, environmental and cultural factors, such as easy and unsupervised access to the internet, peer norms promoting digital engagement, and a lack of alternative recreational activities, further increase the risk.

Emergence of internet addiction results from a complex interplay of these biological, psychological and social factors.

#### **4. Adverse consequences associated with internet addiction**



The rapid global spread of the internet especially after COVID has resulted in numerous problems in children and their addiction to the internet. The habits acquired during adolescence may continue into adulthood. Therefore, identification and prevention is an important goal. Internet addiction has been observed in all age groups; however, the most at-risk group is adolescents. Internet addiction can cause many personal problems, including social, psychological, and physical health problems, especially among adolescents. The dependency on the internet and less social communication or rather more online than physical communication can have a long-standing impact on the psychology of adolescents.

The prevalence of uncontrolled, unintended and long-term internet use by adolescents has resulted in various negative

consequences. Gender differences related issues – for example young male teenagers can develop different traits of behavioural responses like aggression, depression, introvert traits, while young females can develop a complete set of different behavioural traits like complexities like superiority, inferiority, incompleteness, failure, loss etc. Adolescents may struggle to maintain social relationships and social activities lie about online activity and experience irregular eating and disrupted sleep.

Behavioural changes -

1. Spending less quality time with family
2. Low academic performance or less interest in academic pursuits
3. Interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts
4. Disrupted sleeping pattern
5. Delay in carrying out daily activities
6. Procrastination
7. Maintaining secrecy

## 5. Self – help Suggestions

Since young people are spending a large proportion of their waking hours with the internet, the very first thing that they can do is surf the net to find out the adverse consequences of excessive internet use, just like you seek information about everything else. Please do try to get information about how much

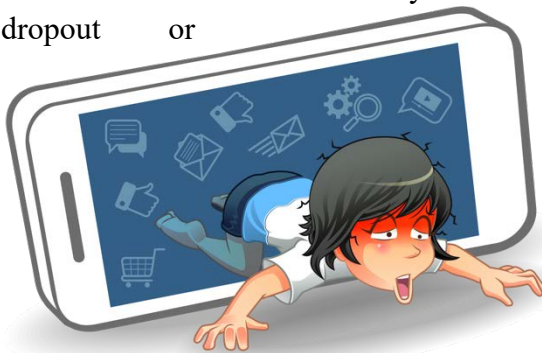


internet use is appropriate and when does it begin to qualify as an addiction and the negative consequences especially the impact on the brain of spending hours with the internet.

Understand that technology and in this case specifically internet, is to be used as your slave and you should not become a slave to it. Use it only as long as it helps you- and it does in many spheres. But you need to be very alert to signs of it trying to overpower you. These signs include being hooked to the internet despite pending school work, avoiding face to face interactions with friends and family and always choosing to meet them virtually, preferring virtual events and games rather than real life ones. it can also be seen in poor school performance, sleep disturbances, poor appetite, weight loss or gain that is unexplained, posture problems, body strain, spondylitis, eye strain, headaches, dehydration, etc. and in extreme cases, cardiovascular issues due to sedentary lifestyle.

Engage in rigorous, enjoyable physical activity for a fixed time every day. And keep your phones away when you do this.

It is a good idea to engage in altruistic activities- where you help someone or contribute to society. It could be teaching a school dropout or



spending time with the elderly in your community or volunteering in a special school or any thing else that makes you feel good.

Follow a routine with specific time allotted to each activity like exercise, relaxation, games, studies, and screen. Spending time thinking over spiritual questions and meaning of life can also be a rejuvenating experience. Do not miss your internet time. But also DO NOT miss the time slotted for other things.

Keep some time for ‘Digital Detox’ - at least a day a week that is free from all digital media. Spend this time with family, friends, for outings or reading a book. You may want to use this time to explore some local or traditional games.



Last, know what you miss out on when you have no time for anything but the screen. Life is much more stimulating and enriching if lived in the real world by getting out there and engaging with it rather than getting to know all about it from your couch. Try it out.

## **6. Role of Teachers**

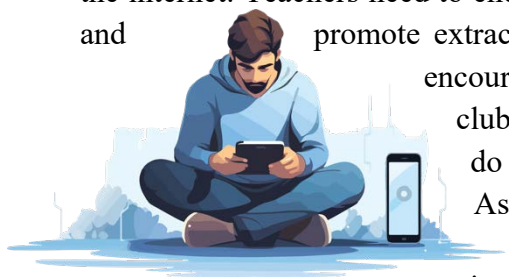
Technology and the internet have steadily integrated into people's lives, becoming a routine and widespread aspect of daily activities. With demand continuously rising, they have also made their way into the lives of young children.

The internet plays a significant role in the lives of young students today. With technological advancements, students have

become deeply engaged with and reliant on the internet. They heavily depend on it for various tasks, from completing assignments to preparing for exams. Whether it's schoolwork, researching information, socializing, or staying connected with the world, the internet has become an integral part of their daily routines. Additionally, many adolescents use technology and the internet as a means of entertainment, escaping loneliness, and passing their leisure time. While technology and the internet are undoubtedly beneficial to humanity, they also contribute to stress. In particular, the excessive use of technology and the internet for non-educational, unproductive, or undesirable purposes among adolescents is a growing concern.

Teachers have an important role to play in addressing and mitigating the internet addiction among the adolescents/students.

- **Assignment** that requires use of cognitive aspects to be given/ reduces homework/assignment which requires from the internet. Teachers need to encourage offline activities and promote extracurricular activities, also encourage students to form clubs, hobbies, sports which do not involve screen time. As teachers we need to create a balanced environment for the students.



- **Organize interclub or inter-house debate, quiz etc.:** As teachers we can organize these literary events in areas related to internet use, social media, what are the pros and



cons, the impact that it has on our mental health and well-being. Through these activities a platform will be provided for the students to research, discuss the causes, effects and solutions for internet addiction and to think and reflect on how to use the internet judiciously.

- Teachers can take the lead in **organizing workshops and seminars** inviting experts to educate students as well as parents about internet addiction and the impact it has on the mental, social, educational as well as psychological aspect of the students' life. Create or plan an interactive lesson involving skits, dramas, role-plays, street plays focusing on the topic of internet addiction and its positive and negative impact. As teachers we can focus on issues like attention span, concentration, sleep pattern, temperament, cyber bullying as these are outcome of overuse of social media/internet

- Organize School wide initiatives programmes** involving students, guide students to make posters, placards, signboards on issues related to internet addiction



- Teachers with the help of parents can monitor** use of screen time by students at home, monitor the kind of conversation students carry out inside and outside the classroom. Following strict rules regarding use of the internet both at home and school. Ensuring positive reinforcement for

those who can control screen time. By being vigilant, teachers and parents can help students maintain a healthy relationship with the internet.

- **Peer mentoring:** Seniors can play a pivotal role in a peer mentoring programme on internet addiction due to their maturity and experience. They can serve as role models, demonstrating healthy internet habits and balanced lifestyles. They can take on the role of lead mentors and guide junior mentors in their efforts. One-on-one mentoring by seniors to younger students can also help, guide and support students on managing internet use. Seniors can offer emotional support to mentees, helping them cope with stress and internet-related issues. They can motivate and encourage mentees to adopt healthier internet habits and stay committed to their goals.
- **Peer evaluation/assessment of internet use:** Seniors can help track the progress of mentees, providing feedback and suggestions for improvement. They can gather feedback from participants to assess the program's effectiveness and identify areas of improvement.
- **Reflective journal:** A reflective journal can be a powerful tool to a student going through internet addiction. It allows them to document their thoughts, experiences and progress,



fostering self-awareness and continuous improvement. It also serves as an emotional outlet as it offers a safe

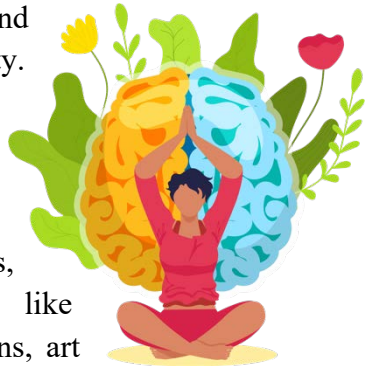
space for expressing feelings and coping with emotions related to internet addiction.

- **Survey by teacher:** Conducting surveys by teachers can help assess the prevalence and impact of internet addiction among students, identify areas for intervention, and evaluate the effectiveness of various programs, clubs, events etc. Surveys can also identify certain risk factors that contribute to internet addiction. By conducting surveys, teachers can gain valuable insights into students' internet use habits. The effectiveness of current interventions and areas needing further attention. This can lead to more targeted and effective strategies for managing internet addiction among students.
- **Updating oneself:** Teachers themselves need to be updated with the online internet activities so as to help students, talk/discuss with students and create an environment where students feel comfortable talking to them.
- **Be role model:** Teachers can also serve as powerful role models in addressing internet addiction and promoting healthy internet use among students. They can do so by setting examples like:



- Ø Demonstrating moderation- limiting their own screen time during school hours and prioritizing face to face interactions
- Ø Sharing of personal experiences and strategies for managing internet use such as the importance of time management, breaks etc.
- Ø Avoiding multitasking, showing the importance of focusing on one task at a time etc.
- Ø Implementing technology-free zones in campuses and classrooms to encourage student engagement and interaction.

· **Mental wellness Week:** Organizing a Mental Awareness Week in schools and educational institutions plays a crucial role in promoting mental health and well-being among students, teachers and the school community. Activities and programs could be organized during this week such as:



- Ø Workshops and seminars, interactive activities like yoga, meditation sessions, art therapy to promote relaxation and creativity.

- Ø Peer support groups to facilitate discussions where students can share their experiences and support each other.
  - Ø Mental health screenings to identify students who may need additional health.
  - Ø Awareness campaigns through use of posters, social media etc.
  - Ø Resource fair: invites local mental health organizations or resource persons to give a talk and set up informational booths etc.
- **Interactive PTM:** Parent-Teacher Meeting can greatly enhance communication and collaboration between parents and teachers and students. This makes meetings more engaging, informative and effective. Teachers may provide an agenda to be sent out to the parents prior to the meeting. They may include ice-breakers and introductions, student presentations, breakout sessions, Q&A sessions etc.



**As teachers we should remember the following points:**

Social media can either empower or destroy a school child depending on how he or she uses it.

Addiction is a real concern and we cannot shy or look away.

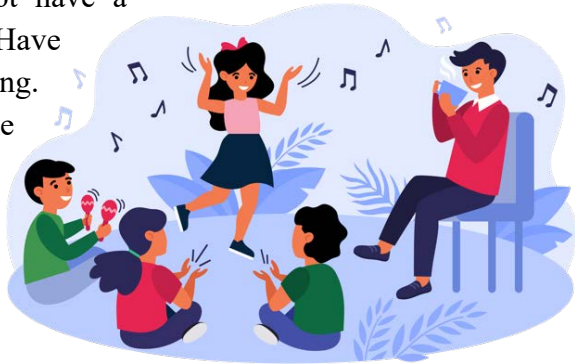
Children get exposed to the dangers of social media without knowing its long-term impact on their mental health and well-being.

There is an urgent need to tackle this menace before it destroys the well-being of our children.

Keep a close watch on student's behavior, their academic performance, social interaction/withdrawal, excessive drowsiness, topic of discussion in the classroom/among friends.

Observe objects/materials children bring to school/school bags if school does not have a prescribed bag. Have regular checking.

This will give some ideas/hints to the teachers as to what the young students are engaging in.



## 7. Role of parents

Parents play a critical role in shaping their children's internet habits and mitigating the risk of internet addiction. Their influence can help children develop healthy boundaries with technology and reduce potential negative impacts. Here are some key ways parents can address internet addiction in children:

### 7.1. Setting Boundaries and Rules

It is crucial for parents to define specific hours for internet use, especially for non-essential activities like gaming and social media which has become a matter of serious concern. Parents should also keep track of the kind of content their children are viewing hence, using parental control tools to restrict access to inappropriate

or addictive content is a must. Internet use should be prohibited during times such as during family meals, while spending quality family times, functions or before bedtime.



### 7.2. Encouraging Healthy Habits

Encouraging children to participate in sports, hobbies, and face-to-face social interactions to balance screen time. Children often emulate their parents. Parents who demonstrate healthy internet use set a strong example. Parents should also motivate their

children to prioritise physical health i.e. emphasising on regular sleep, daily exercise, and outdoor play.

### **7.3. Open Communication**

It is important to note that parents should take a step forward to talk about the benefits and risks of the internet, such as cyberbullying, privacy issues, and addiction. Parents should be approachable and create an environment where children feel comfortable discussing their online experiences. Children should be able to come forward to their parents and open up about their experiences and share with their parents where they don't feel judged and scared.



### **7.4. Monitoring and Guidance**

Monitoring what children are doing online and who they are interacting with should not go unnoticed so that children do not get carried away or fall into a harmful scenario. Parents should help children differentiate between productive and unproductive internet use.

### **7.5. Providing Emotional Support**

Internet addiction can sometimes stem from stress, anxiety, or social challenges. In such a situation instead of being too harsh, parents should provide emotional support to their children as they are at a very vulnerable stage. Parents should identify and



address these issues and avoid overly punitive measures, which might push children towards secrecy and worsen the problem.

## 7.6. Seeking Professional Help

If internet addiction persists or becomes severe, parents should consider consulting a psychologist or counselor who specializes in digital behavior. Seeking professional help is always helpful as a therapist will be able to handle the situation best.

## 8. When and where to seek help

### 8.1 Red flag signs of problematic internet use

Internet addiction is characterized by loss of control, excessive preoccupations, and increasing priority given to internet use over other activities to the extent that it takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of internet use despite the occurrence of negative consequence, often resulting in functional impairment or distress among the affected individuals. Those with problematic Internet use may spend progressively increasing amounts of time on the internet, with the duration frequently longer than what was originally intended. Individuals may be excessively focused on engaging solely in specific internet-specific activities, and may have experienced several unsuccessful efforts to control or cease internet use.

Research has found that the subjective



experience of feeling preoccupied with the internet when offline is a significant indicator of problematic internet use. Individuals may report difficulty resisting an impulse to use the internet, increased tension before engaging in the desired activity, a release of the tension after the activity is initiated, and feeling stimulated and euphoric while engaging in the activity. This cycle can become persistent for those affected.

Time distortion is also a commonly reported subjective experience, as documented by discrepancies between self-reported and objectively measured amounts of time spent on the Internet. Internet use can often also become a form of escape or unhealthy coping, as subjects report finding relief from dysphoric or unpleasant states through engagement in internet activities.

The internet may become prioritized over other aspects of life, leading to reduced quality time spent with peers and family, and a neglect of previously enjoyable activities or hobbies. Academic performance may suffer, evident through incomplete homework or declining grades. Neglecting school assignments, household chores, and personal hygiene to maximize internet usage is a crucial indicator of problematic internet use. Individuals may jeopardize their interpersonal relationships and educational or career prospects due to excessive internet engagement.

Minimisation of the problematic behavior is also observed. There may be feelings of irritability, anger, or emotional outbursts when questioned about their online activities.

Physiological symptoms such as fatigue, carpal tunnel syndrome, dry eyes or strained vision, back and neck aches, headaches, sleep disturbances, and unintended changes in diet/weight may also accompany the psychological distress caused by heavy internet use.



At times those with problematic internet use may also develop other mental health problems. These can range from a few clinical features to diagnosable disorders. Depression and anxiety features are two of the most commonly observed mental health concerns.

When Internet use related problematic behaviour begins to significantly disrupt everyday functioning and disruptions in academic work, relationships, and/ or personal responsibilities, it is crucial for individuals to seek professional assistance.

## **8.2 From who to seek help**

The first and the most essential resource to turn to for help is yourself. Taking a step to identify and acknowledge that a problem exists can be significant. If one finds that they have one or more of the red flag signs associated with problematic internet use mentioned above, it may indicate that a more detailed assessment is needed. Being mindful of one's internet use is critical. Be aware of the duration of use, context of use, expectancy and its impact on your day to day life. Asking yourself questions, like, how much time are you spending on the

internet, the kind of online activities you are engaging in, and the impact it may be having in your everyday life can be significant in understanding if there's a problem and if so, which area that problem lies in. Further introspection can assist the individual in comprehending how their internet usage affects different facets of their daily lives. By being more self-aware, one may be able to overcome denial or minimization of the issue and change the focus from possible justifications or excuses to a more proactive approach to problem solving.

At times, others may observe these red flag signs. Considering feedback from close friends, teachers or family members can be helpful. Others around you can share their observations about change in your behavior or functioning that might be linked to excessive internet use.

If the students identify that they are experiencing problematic patterns of internet use, they may talk to their parents, teachers and school counsellors, who can in turn guide them to self-help resources or more professional help. Initiating a conversation around these issues is critical because an open dialogue can lead to a better understanding of the issue and its impact. Students reaching out to trusted adults can open up a space to provide them with guidance and practical strategies for moderating their internet usage. However, it must be ensured that the

partners, teachers and peers are accepting, non-critical



and supportive in their approach. This collaborative effort helps to provide an environment in which the person feels empowered to make healthy changes and develop functional relationships with internet.

If there are one or more red flag signs as described above, then it may be helpful to seek professional help. The help should be sought as early as possible as it minimizes the adverse consequences and improves the outcome. The issues related to the addiction are handled by mental health professionals. One can seek consultation from a qualified psychiatrist or a clinical psychologist. These days specialised clinics are being set up that cater specifically to persons who have behavioural addictions including internet addiction. This also helps address associated mental health issues, if any.

In addition, if one is experiencing any physical health problems, then consultation should also be sought from a physician depending on the nature of the problem. Medical guidance can provide crucial insights and interventions to address specific health issues exacerbated by prolonged screen time or sedentary behaviors. Physicians can conduct assessments to evaluate any physical symptoms related to posture, vision strain, sleep disturbances, or other conditions linked to excessive device use. They can also offer personalized recommendations, such as ergonomic adjustments, eye care routines, physical activity plans, or referrals to specialists if necessary. By addressing physical health concerns in tandem with behavioral adjustments, individuals can take comprehensive steps toward improving their overall well-being and managing the impacts of excessive internet use effectively.

## 9. Importance of working together

Effective prevention and management of problems related to internet addiction require a collaborative approach between the students, parents, teachers, school counsellor, clinicians (pediatricians) and mental health professionals. The self-help resources, as described above, can help students ensure safe and healthy internet use and avoid the problems that are associated with problematic internet use. The teachers, counsellors and parents can help create an environment at school and at home that promotes safe use of the internet. In addition, the teachers and school counsellors can also help detect any problems associated with problematic internet use among the students early, and offer support to such students. They can also play a role in connecting these students and their parents to mental health professionals, if required.

Teachers, counselors, and parents can provide assistance for the students at school and home. They can start conversations about the responsible use of the internet, set rules and boundaries, and model appropriate behaviors. They can encourage children to communicate freely with them so that challenging issues can be communicated easily and steps can be taken to resolve them.

Teachers and school



counselors are well-positioned to look out for early indicators of problematic internet usage among students and also respond in an appropriate manner to any concerns surrounding internet use being brought up by the students. Regular monitoring can reveal behavioral, academic, and social changes associated with excessive screen time or dependency on the internet. Students are most responsive to interventions and support from adults, so teachers and counselors can help them access appropriate services. Prompt intervention and support from educators and counselors can prevent the escalation of problems and guide students towards appropriate resources for help.

In cases where professional intervention is necessary, teachers and counselors can initiate communication between students, parents, and mental health professionals. These collaborations ensure that students receive care and support tailored to their individual needs. By working together in a coordinated manner, the educational and clinical community can address internet

addiction and promote digital well-being, which might help foster a positive learning environment conducive to overall student wellbeing.



## 10. Internet addiction: Case Studies

### Case study 1

Subhadip (name changed to ensure anonymity) is a very bright and hardworking boy belonging to a well to do family. He has been participating in various co-curricular activities and bagging several prizes. He passed out of



school and enrolled in a prestigious college. His parents have noticed some changes in his behaviour lately. He is mostly drowsy and uninterested in completing his college assignments. His performance in college as well as co-curricular activities dropped drastically and he also reported not being interested in meeting friends. On the contrary, he was having frequent arguments and conflicts with his parents and demanding that more pocket money be given to him. His mother became alarmed when she found a cigarette lighter with him. She also noticed some funny marks on his arms. Subhadip complained of high anxiety and started consulting a Psychiatrist who also referred him to a counsellor. He had got into Substance Misuse to keep up with his ‘hep’ group of friends. His parents provided all support to him in his struggle to overcome his habit and with the expert treatment, care and full non-judgmental support of his family. Subhadip is now on his way to recovery. The counsellor was of the view that since it had only started and the intervention



was timely, coupled with Subhadip's own personal resolve to overcome the habit, his recovery was promising.

### **Case study 2**

A 16 year old girl Mrinalini (name changed to ensure anonymity) has always been a 'loner'. She found it difficult to make friends since school and with the recent change in school due to her parents' transfer; she was struggling with adjusting to the new school. Her performance went even lower than before and she started hating school. Her parents got a letter from the school that Mrinalini has been absent for a week. On being questioned by her parents she revealed that she was meeting a group of people during school hours. This group accepted her as she was and encouraged her to be happy. She felt very relaxed and confident when with them. Parents wanted to meet this new group of friends but she was not willing to introduce them to her parents. On being threatened by the parents, she revealed that she was 'hanging out' with a group of youngsters who were 'experimenting' with pills that could make you forget all your woes and make you feel that everything was ok. Since she also wanted to feel that way , she was also thinking of trying these pills.

### **Case study 3**

Master J, a 17 year old boy studying in 11th standard, was brought for a psychiatry consultation by his parents, who expressed concerns over his excessive internet use. Over the past year, J.'s internet use and screen time had significantly increased, and this had begun to result in physical, emotional, and academic difficulties. J., on the other hand, does not share the concern of his parents who first noticed these issues after J.

complained of persistent eye strain for the past month. When they took him for an eye exam, they inquired about his screen habits, leading them to realize how much time he had been spending online.

Since last month, his parents have started noticing several other signs that may have been linked with problematic use of the internet. J. also struggles to maintain a consistent sleep-wake cycle, often staying up late into the night using his devices. He often experiences daytime tiredness, hindering his whole schedule and impacting his capacity to focus and concentrate. During weekends, he sleeps for long hours leading to the development of irregular sleep patterns. His eating habits have also become erratic, often skipping meals to continue using the internet. When he does eat, he prefers junk food, which he consumes while engaging in online activities. This has contributed to recent weight gain and has raised concerns about his overall health.

J.'s internet addiction also seems to have profoundly impacted his emotional well-being. His mood fluctuates, gets annoyed when asked simple questions interrupted while using the internet. J. becomes anxious and restless when he is unable to access the internet. His mood fluctuates, gets annoyed when asked simple questions interrupted while using the internet.



He often responds evasively when questioned about his internet use. He has been unwilling not just to visit professionals, but also in communicating about the same to his teachers or school counselors.

Despite multiple attempts by his parents to regulate his screen time, J. has become a lot more defensive and argumentative, creating strain and tension in family relationships. His parents feel frustrated and unsure about how to manage the situation.

J.'s academic performance has taken a down-turn. His grades have dropped. Teachers say he gets distracted easily and doesn't participate in classroom discussion the way he used to do earlier. He often puts off his homework and blames other things for his struggles instead of admitting that his internet use might be the cause.

Despite the negative consequences of his internet use, J. continues to spend excessive hours online. He seems unable to stop even when he acknowledges that his online habits interfere with other aspects of his life. Other activities, such as school, hobbies, and friends, have been neglected as his focus has become entirely centered on the internet.

## **11. Where do you stand on Internet Usage?**

People may range from no usage to pending hours together on internet. Where do you think you stand? If you want to know whether your internet usage is problematic, you could check where you stand by using one of the several tools available online. One such tool is the Internet Addiction Test adapted by IIT Kanpur, the link for which is as follows:

<https://www.iitk.ac.in/counsel/resources/IATManual.pdf>

There are several other tools available but it will be advisable to consult a professional or discuss with your parents or teachers about problematic internet usage. Remember that it requires courage to accept that one is having a difficulty and a strong will to ask for help and bring about a change.



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