INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON INTERNET ADDICTION IN STUDENTS OF PROFESSIONAL COURSES IN DAKSHINA KANNADA DISTRICT, KARNATAKA: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Background: Extensive use of the internet has led to the exacerbation of mental and social disorders that is widely becoming prevalent across societies of the world. Internet addiction has created new opportunities for relevant researchers to delve deeply into the problem and understand its pervasive effects on diverse population strata.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of the study was to understand the influence of socio-demographic factors and academic performance on Internet Addiction (IA) in students undergoing professional courses in Dakshina Kannada District in the state of Karnataka in India.

Methodology: Cross-sectional study design that used structured questionnaires as survey tools to obtain socio-demographic details. The data collection instrument was administered to 330 students studying professional courses in various universities across the Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka. To assess levels of Internet Addiction, we conducted the Internet Addiction Test among the respondents. We evaluated the relationship between socio-demographic factors and Internet Addiction levels using Cross Tabulation tables. IBM's SPSS 2.0 software was used for data analysis. A Chi-Square test was performed to determine the significance of relationships between socio-demographic factors and Internet Addiction levels.

Findings: We find mild and moderate levels of Internet Dependence in students undergoing professional courses. The Internet Addiction levels varied across strata of socio-demographic factors considered to different levels. We find a significant relationship between the Internet Addiction level and academic performance of students enrolled in professional courses.

Conclusion: Internet Addiction was found to be mild to moderate in students from professional courses in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka. Internet Addiction significantly affected the academic performance of the students. We suggest actions be taken to reduce Internet Addiction before the menace worsens among students from professional courses, in particular.

INTRODUCTION

Excessive dependence on the internet, which leads to its addiction is a grave menace of contemporary times. Internet Addiction (hereafter IA) is characterized by poorly controlled behaviors concerning internet usage. Uncontrolled behaviors, from excessive internet usage, are known to produce physical and mental health conditions with little evidence showing proven treatments for the addiction peril. According to the 2021 World Internet Usage and Population Statistics, the total number of internet users was found to be 510 million. The continent of Asia alone has 2762 million internet users (as of March 2021). The most vulnerable population to IA are the adolescents and young adults. The ever-evolving internet that provides online gaming and networking opportunities in the form of social media applications is a primary cause for IA among young population groups. Numerous studies have evaluated the medically recognized disorder, particularly among the young population groups. Studies identified that students are specifically categorized under the high-risk Internet Addiction Category.

The causes of IA were identified as follows: (Young (2004) listed the causes of IA for students as follows:

a) Mass of uninterrupted time

b) Free Access to the Internet

c)Free of parental control if the students are in the age group of 18-22

d) Pursuing friendships through internet applications

e) Spoon feeding from faculty

f) Deliberate avoidance of tension from university-related chores

g) Social life and university life are different.

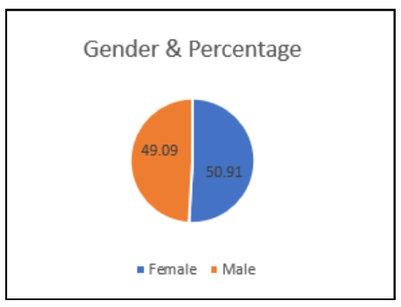
On this basis, researchers attempted to show levels of internet addiction among students especially from professional courses in India. Professional courses do not have as much uninterrupted time as students' non-professional courses do. Alternatively, prior research has also studied the extent of internet addiction in management institutes in India. Prior research on internet addiction has consistently used the Young Internet Addiction Test that was first introduced by Young in 1998.

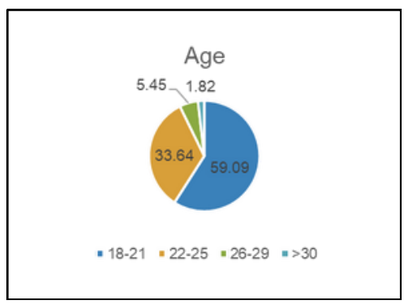
MATERIALS & METHODS

This quantitative study used a cross-sectional study design. The research was carried out in the Dakshina Kannada (DK) district of Karnataka state in India. The study sample was students enrolled in professional courses from different universities in the district. We considered students from M.B.B.S, B.D.S, B.E, Pharm, BHA, MS, MDS, ME and MPharm professional courses. The sample size was calculated to be 330 (n = 330) using the online sample size generator (Calculator.net). The respondents were selected randomly and the questionnaire was sent through online mode - Google forms. The questionnaire, with a total of 20 items, was divided into two sections - Socio-Demographic information and Young's Internet Addiction Test (IAT). The Young's Internet Addiction Test was developed by researcher Kimberly Young (1998). The test comprises a Likert scale of 1 to 5. The scores from the IAT test can be interpreted as follows: Higher the score, higher degree of compulsiveness and addiction to the Internet. A cumulative score between 0 to 30 points shows a typical internet standard and 31 - 49 suggests mild Internet dependence, 50 to 79 reflects a moderate internet dependency, and 80 to 100 are representative of an extreme Internet dependency. We analyzed the data using IBM's SPSS 2.0.

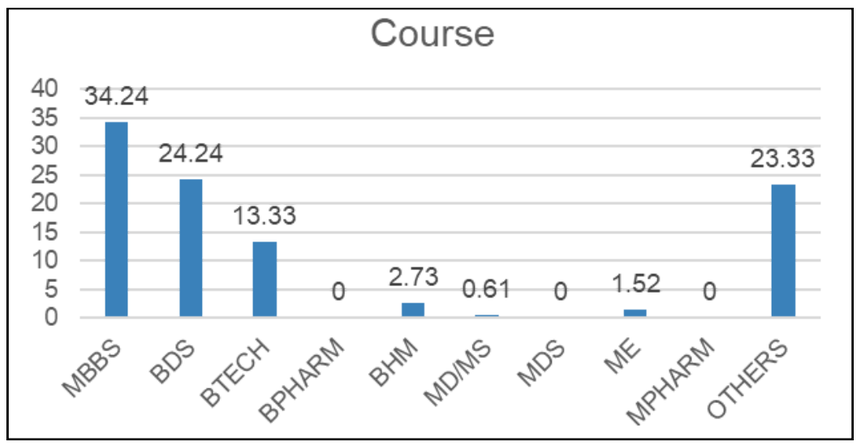
RESULTS

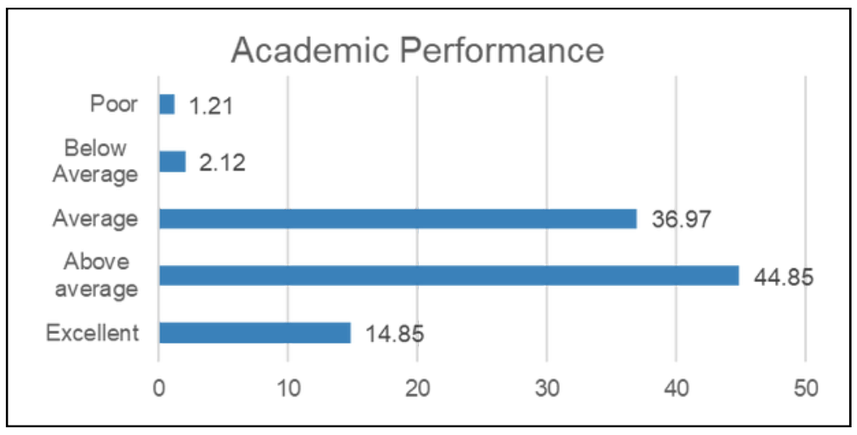
As a part of the analysis, we produced socio-demographic information of the respondents (Table 1). We also included (in the table) data pertaining to the percentage of students studying various professional courses selected for the study and their academic performances. A total of 330 students from various universities in the district participated in this study. 50.91% and 49.09% of the study participants were female and male respectively. 59.09% of the participants were of the 18-21 years' age group. 33.64% were of the 22-25 years' age group.





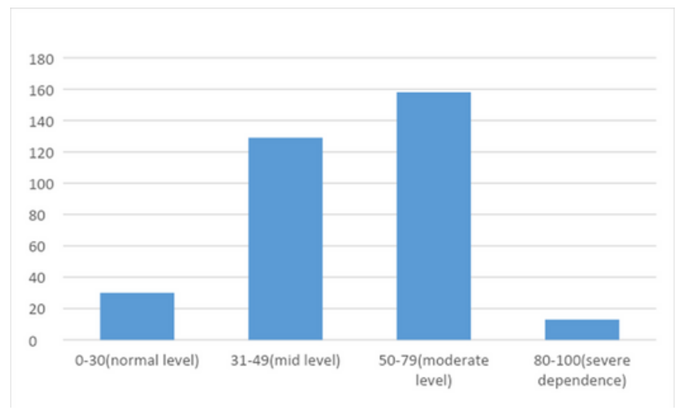
A major bulk of the participants (34.24%) were enrolled in the M.B.B.S course, 24.24% were B.D.S students and other students 23.33% enrolled in different courses like BHM, MDS, etc. 44.85% students' academic performance was found to be above average.





64.85% of parents' education level was found to be graduate or higher. 98.48% of students' family structure was integrated while the rest 1.52% of the students had divorced parents. Most of the students live with both parents (52.42%) and 33.64% of the respondents were found to be living with a roommate(s) in a hostel/Paying Guest/ or Apartment. Most of the student's family monthly income per capita in the year previous to this study was above 1,00,000 (54.55%).

From Young's Internet Addiction Test, we calculated the scores of each respondent to assess IA levels. We find 9.09% of students from professional courses used the internet at normal levels. 39.09% and 47.88% faced mild and moderate internet dependence respectively. Finally, 3.94% were severely dependent on the internet.



To assess the significance of the relationship between Socio-Demographic factors and IA levels, we performed the Chi-Square test of significance. Results shows the significance values for socio-demographic factors, the academic performance of students and IA levels. We found only academic performance of students was significantly associated with IA levels ($p<0.01$). None of the socio-demographic factors was found to be significantly associated with IA levels.

Factor	Chi-Square Significance (Significant if P<0.05 or 0.01)
Gender	0.6
Area of Residence	0.395
Parent Educational Qualification	0.462
Family structure	0.834
Academic Performance	**0.00**
Family income per capita	0.958
Living companions	0.503

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Internet Addiction levels were found to be in mild to moderate levels for students from professional courses in Dakshina Kannada district, Karnataka. Other than academic performance none of the socio-demographic factors had significant influence on IA levels. This could be attributed to increased access to devices like mobile phones and laptops. At the time of this study, Covid-19 pandemic had just begun to affect the masses in Dakshina district of Karnataka. Adoption of online education was at its nascent stage. Our study findings contradicted findings of previous studies on IA. For instance, one study that assessed Internet Addiction in students of Professional courses from Central India found dependency on the internet to be at normal levels – based on Young's Internet Addiction Test. Alternatively, another study found IA levels, among management students, to vary among gender and older and younger individuals. In contrast to our study, IA was not significantly associated with academic performance (measured in GPA). A 2017 study by showed the association of IA with the male gender.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

We conclude this study by indicating that IA is an ongoing problem that requires serious consideration by researchers. Research on IA in India continues to remain fragmented. With the advent of social media applications- Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram especially, IA continues to grow. IA levels in subgroups of the population must be assessed extensively. The problem must be addressed through strategies and interventions developed and implemented at home, colleges and universities.

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