

Internet Usage among University Students of Punjab in Relation to Gender

Ramandeep Kaur*

Harpal Kaur**

Abstract

The study examined internet usage among university students of Punjab in relation to gender. Descriptive method of research was followed. The total sample consisted of 200 students (100 male and 100 female), selected from three faculties, i.e., professional, science and humanities from Punjabi University, Patiala. Self designed internet usage scale with 15 items was used to gauge the purpose of internet usage, its effect on well-being of university students, and self-regulation in internet usage. Collected data was analyzed in terms of percentage. The results revealed that almost all university students use the internet for different purposes such as educational purposes, career planning, and global affairs. Furthermore, one third university students reported ill effects on their wellbeing. They forget day specific assignments and household chores due to internet use. There were only one tenth male and female university students who attributed insomnia due to internet usage. It was also found that majority of university students use the internet for purposeful activities and a few reported need to regulate internet usage for better well-being.

Keywords: *Internet usage (purpose of internet usage, its effect on well-being, self-regulation), university students, gender*

INTRODUCTION

In this present scenario, the internet has become an indispensable part of human life. It plays a pivotal role in every field of life including education. In the earlier stage, education occurred simply through oral lectures, dialogues, reading books, and use of chalks etcetera. Furthermore, the traditional system of education was teacher-centered, but in this digital era, technology has brought a sea change in the education system. It has provided many facilities to all learners according to their capabilities and interests. Students involve more actively in the learning process with the help of technological gadgets. Apart from this, students can easily access to resources persons, experts, researchers, mentors, and professionals at their convenience and when required. The use of technology, especially the internet has been very much helpful for both teachers and

*Ramandeep Kaur, Ph. D. Scholar, Deptt. Of Education & Community Services, Punjabi University.

**Harpal Kaur, Associate Professor, Akal College of Education, Mastuana Sahib, Sangrur.

students in the teaching learning process, and provides a new orientation to teaching strategies for the teachers to satisfy the need of each and every student, in pursuit of excellence.

On one side, the internet provides more affirmative impact on learners' lives, but on the other hand it can get through some users, particularly students, to the point that interferes with normal living, enforcing them into internet overuse. Therefore, it becomes important for us to be aware of the impact of internet usage on students' behaviour. Internet usage in the younger generations has become a buzz word all over the world of learning. It has been linked particularly in higher education for student academics and research/career pursuits. Institutions of higher education encourage learners to use Internet through several means. Many students are using the internet not only for their academic purposes but also for chatting, e-mail, music, career guidance, for world information, online shopping, e-banking, etc. Access to the campus's network is often provided free of charge or for a nominal fee. This makes it be a reasonable and convenient choice. The fear resulting from the COVID-19, the 'lockdown' situation, high levels of uncertainty regarding the future raise the level of anxiety experienced by people all around the world. Furthermore, the importance of information and communications technology (ICT) is even higher in the present crisis than usual. ICT has been important in allowing large groups of people to work and study from home, enhancing social connectedness, providing greatly needed entertainment, etc. (Kiraly et al. 2020). In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, interest in mobile learning technologies has grown exponentially (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2020). Given the explosive pace of technological development allied with the sheer creativity of tech-savvy teachers, and entrepreneurs (including student entrepreneurs), it is certain that technology will impact education in multiple ways involving artificial intelligence, machine learning, block chains, smart boards, handheld computing devices, adaptive computer testing for student development, and other forms of educational software and hardware (National Education Policy 2020). In many higher institutions, the move to distance learning has been an opportunity to expand flexible learning modalities, setting the stage for a sustained shift towards more online learning in this subsector in the future (IAU Global Survey Report 2020).

Literature Review

Gender differences were found in the severity of online gaming addiction and motives for playing along with its relationship with daily life, lower self-esteem, and lower satisfaction with daily life among university males, but not among university females (Ko et al. 2005). Internet access via the school environment was a significant

deterrent among low internet users, while access via internet cafés was a significant predictor for high internet users among Greek adolescents. Accessing the internet for the purposes of game playing was the most significant predictor for excessive internet use. Which was predicted solely by the location of internet access (own home portal) and the scope of internet use (i.e., sites relating to socialization and game playing) and may lead to internet addiction, mainly among male adolescents (Tistika et al. 2008). The majority of high school students were classified as normal users of the internet, 89.2%, with 10.2% moderately and 0.6% severely addicted to the internet in Guangzhou city. The finding revealed 50% increased odds for males to be addicted to the internet when compared to females. Stress-related variables were associated with internet addiction among adolescents (Lam et al. 2009). Boys indulged into computer and internet use for various purposes. As children grew old, their internet use purposes got changed as well as their everyday computer use amounts increased. 6th graders were more into online gaming and used the internet for studying, whereas 8th graders primarily used the internet for chatting. Majority of the 8th graders spent more than 5 hours on the internet each day (Sipal & Bayhan, 2010). Male students were more addicted to the internet as compared to their female counterparts (Serin 2011). Gender differences in usage perceptions of the internet could be detected among college students. Particularly, differences were found in that male college students had a higher level of perceptions of internet self-efficacy, experience, and information overload than females (Hu et al. 2012). Majority of the male and female respondents had less than 2 hours of access to internet. Significant difference between male and female respondents was found with respect to their place of using internet. (Thanuskodi, 2013). Male students were more addicted to Internet for making new friendships and getting into relationships online, and having a permanently logged-in status increased the risk for Internet addiction, whereas using the Internet more for assignments was favored as a protective factor for addiction (Krishnamurthy & Chetlapalli, 2015). Most students access the internet before they attended university; there is a positive attitude towards Internet; and they used it mainly for social websites, chatting and information gathering (Tamara et al., 2016). There was no gender difference in relation to problematic internet use and no difference in psychological wellbeing in relation to “Average internet users” and “Risk internet users” among high school students (Pal, 2017). Internet usage was positively and significantly related to depression, anxiety, and stress among university students, whereas; internet usage had no significant correlation with self efficacy (Bodhi, 2018). There was no significant difference between male and female college students. Female counterparts had higher depression than male ones (Dey & Chatterjee, 2018). In continuity to the researches being undertaken by researchers in this emerging area of technology driven teaching learning process, the

present study was undertaken to investigate the frequency of internet usage and gender differences in the frequency of internet usage among university students.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 200 university students (both boys and girls) from Punjabi University, Patiala. Sample was selected randomly from social science, science, and professional stream shown in table-1

Table-1
G-ender and Stream wise Sample Distribution of University Students

Sr. No.	Stream	Gender		Total number of students
		Male	Female	
1.	Social Science	35	35	70
2.	Science	30	25	55
3.	Professional	35	40	75
Total		100	100	200

Research tool

Self designed internet usage scale was used to seek the information of internet usage for different purposes, namely, education, career and worldly affairs, effect of internet usage on mental health and wellbeing, and regulation of internet usage. Internet usage tool consisted of 14 items. Response was sought in yes/no options. Distribution of items is given in table-2.

Table-2
Distribution of items in internet usage scale for university students

Sr. No.	Aspects	Sr. no. number of items
1.	Purpose of internet usage	1-10
2.	Effects of internet usage	11-13
3.	Regulation of internet usage	14

Total	14
-------	----

Results

The percentage response to all items for total as well as male and female university students may be shown in table-3

Table-3
University student's response to Internet usage scale (in percentage)

Sr. No.	Statements	Response in percentage		
		Male	Female	Total
	Purposes			
1.	I make a search on internet for different government jobs.	97	88	92.50
2.	I use internet to know about different events happening in the world.	93	98	95.50
3.	I use internet to see the latest news of different countries.	99	89	94.50
4.	I use internet for getting information about career planning.	85	96	90.50
5.	I use internet for searching different jobs in corporate sector.	93	86	89.50
6.	I use internet for getting the information about best institutions for career development.	83	94	88.50
7.	I use internet for helping in preparing for tests and competitive examinations.	85	91	88.00
8.	I use internet for getting guidance to choose different streams and subjects.	79	86	82.50
9.	I use internet for getting guidance to	78	86	82.00

	choose suitable jobs.			
10.	I use video conferencing instead of formal education.	79	84	81.50
	Effects on well-being			
11.	I forget day specific assignments while surfing internet.	31	37	34.00
12.	I neglect household chores (routine jobs) to spend more time on internet.	32	19	25.50
13.	After using internet daily I have become the victim of insomnia.	9	14	11.50
	Self-regulation in internet usage			
14.	I repeatedly make efforts to control habit of use of internet.	28	33	30.50

Results of the study show internet usage among university students in terms of different purposes of internet usage, effects of internet, and regulation of internet usage. Majority of students use the internet for different purposes, specifically educational, career, and worldly affairs. Almost all university students use internet for latest news and searching for jobs in both sectors, government and private, i.e., 94%, 92.5%, and 89.5%, respectively. Usage of internet to know about different organisms present in the world has been revealed 95.5% university students. A large number of students use the internet for career planning 90.5%, for the preparation of competitive examinations 88%, and career development 88.5%. Almost the same percentage of the students use the internet to choose different streams and subjects for video conferencing and to choose suitable jobs that, i.e., 82.5%, 81.5%, and 82% respectively.

One fourth university students' neglected routine jobs and one third respondents ignored specific assignments due to internet usage. Only a few (11.5%) university students have attributed insomnia due to internet usage. It also shows that nearly one third (30.5%) respondents make efforts to control the habit of internet usage.

There are gender-wise variations in internet usage for different purposes of internet usage. In terms of internet usage for different purposes, male students use more

internet for searching jobs in government sector (97%) and private sector (93%) as compared to their female counterparts (88%, 86% respectively). On the other hand, female students had more internet usage to get information for career planning (96%) and for the best institutions for career development (94%) compared to male students, they used internet for these purposes (85% and 83% respectively). Female university students use internet to know about different organisms 98%, whenever male students use internet for this purpose 93%.

In case of internet usage effects, almost one third university students forget day specific assignments (37% female & 31% male). On the other hand, household chores are affected more in case of male university students as compared to female university students due to internet usage, i.e., 32% & 19%. There was only one tenth male and female university students attributed insomnia due to internet usage, i.e., 14% and 9%, respectively.

In relation to internet regulation, only one third female and one fourth male students make efforts to control the habit of internet usage.

Educational Implications

The present study was an effort to investigate internet usage among university students. Results of the study revealed that almost all university students use the internet for different purposes such as educational, career, and global affairs. Male university students use more internet to get information about career, but female university students are less interested, so they should be encouraged to use the internet for seeking information about job opportunities. On the other hand, male university students should be involved in education through video conferencing. One third students have reported to be negatively affected by internet for them, hence lectures and seminars about worth use of internet and time management should be arranged at universities to make them aware and university students should also be aware by experts about the impact of excessive internet usage on well-being and male university students should be encouraged to use internet for preparation of competitive examinations.

In nutshell, it may be stated that a large majority of university students use the internet for purposeful activities related to education, career, and global affairs and the majority of them did not have any problem in daily life due to internet usage. Apart from this, only one tenth student attributed insomnia due to internet usage. It may be safe to say that university students are internet savvy and it is a good sign in this period where COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated the use of online mode of learning.

REFERENCES

- Bodhi, V. (2018). *Psycho-social correlates of internet usage among university students* (Ph. D. Thesis). Department of Education and Community Service, Punjabi University, Patiala.
- Dey, R., & Chatterjee, S. (2018). Comparative psycho-social profile of internet addicted male and female students of Kolkata. *Journal of Indian Health Psychology, 12*(2), 91-104.
- Government of India Economic Survey (2020-21). *Ministry of Finance, Department of Economic Affairs, Vol (1)*, Available at (<https://www.abpeducation.com/news/economic-survey-2020-21-key-highlights-for-education-sector/cid/1206627>)
- Hu, T., Zhang, X., Dai, H., & Zhang, P. (2012). An examination of gender differences among college students in their usage perceptions of the internet. *Educational Information Technology, 17*, 315–330.
- International Commission on the Futures of Education. 2020. *Education in a post-COVID world: Nine ideas for public actions*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond. 2020. Available at https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-covid19_and_education_august_2020.pdf
- International Association of Universities, *IAU Global Survey Report: The Impact of COVID-19 on higher education around the world, 2020*, available at https://www.lau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/lau_covid19_and_he_survey_report_final_may_2020.pdf
- Kiraly, O., Potenza, M. N., Stein, D. J., King, D. L., Hodgins, D. C., Saunders, J. B., & Demetrovics, Z. (2020). Prevention problematic internet use during the COVID-19 pandemic: Consensus guidance, *Comprehensive Psychiatry, 100*, 15-20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.comppsy.2020.152180>
- Ko, C. H., Yen, J. Y., Chen, C. C, Chen, S. H., & Yen, C. F., (2005). Gender differences and related factors affecting online gaming addiction among Taiwanese adolescents. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 193*(1), 273-277.
- Krishnamurthy, S., & Chetlapalli, S. K. (2015). Internet addiction: Prevalence and risk factors: cross-sectional study among college students in Bengaluru, the Silicon Valley of India. *Indian Journal of Public Health, 59*(2), 115-121.
- Lam, L. T., Peng, Z. W., Mai, J. C., & Jing, J. (2009). Factors associated with internet addiction among adolescents. *Cyber Psychology and Behaviour, 12*(5), 551-555.
- Government of India (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. New Delhi: Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- Razieh, J., Ali, G., Zaman, A., & Narjesskhatoon, S. (2012). The relationship between internet addiction and anxiety in the universities students. *Interdisciplinary*

- Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 4(1), 942-949.
- Serin, B. N. (2011). An examination of predictor variables for problematic internet use. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 10(3), 54.
- Shaheen, H. M., Farahat, T. M., & Gaber, H. M. (2016). Problematic internet use among medical school students in Menoufia University Egypt. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Behavior*, 4, 298.
- Sipal, R. F., & Bayhan, P. (2010). Preferred computer activities during school age: Indicators of internet addiction. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 9, 1085–1089.
- Tamara, J., Majdalawi, Y & Mohammad, H. (2016). Internet usage, challenges, and attitudes among university students: Case study of the University of Jordan. *Journal of Software Engineering and Applications*, 9(1), 577-587.
- Thanuskodi, S. (2013). Gender differences in internet usage among college students: A comparative study. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*, 1052.
- Tsitsika, A., Critselis, E., Kormas, G., Filippopoulou, A., Tounissidou, D., Freskou, A., Spiliopoulou, T., Louizou, A., Konstantoulaki, E., & Kafetzis, E. (2008). Internet use and misuse: A multivariate regression analysis of the predictive factors of internet use among Greek adolescents. *European Journal of Pediatrics*, 168(6), 655–665.
