

Internet Usage among Adolescents: A Study of Its Benefits and Potential Negative Effects in Kishtwar District, Jammu Division

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Abstract

Today, the internet plays a huge role in the daily routines of the young. Digital devices have become a part of our everyday lives. Teenagers now use the internet for many different purposes. They use it for studying, doing school work, learning new things, finding information about different subjects, and knowing more about career options. They also use the internet to communicate with their friends and family members. In many ways, the internet has made learning easier because students can find a large amount of information within a short time. At the same time, too much use of the internet can create some problems for teenagers. Spending many hours on digital devices may affect their studies, sleep, physical activities, and relationships with people around them. Some teenagers may spend more time online and give less time to outdoor activities or face-to-face communication with family and friends. Therefore, the use of the internet can be beneficial for teenagers when used properly, however, excessive or uncontrolled use can have negative effects on their everyday life. Teenagers may have different problems while using the internet. These can include cyberbullying, exposure to harmful or inappropriate content, and distraction from social media, gaming or other online activities. Therefore it is important for young people to use the internet in a moderate way. They should be able to enjoy the advantages of the internet without the adverse effects on their studies, health, daily activities and relationships. The present study is based on the internet usage trends of school going adolescents in Kishtwar District of Jammu Division. It looks into the daily challenges of youth as a consequence of overuse or unsupervised surfing as well as the positive aspects of the web for them. The sample consists of 500 adolescent students of the age group of 12-18 years, randomly selected from different educational institutions of the district. The sample consisted of 200 participants from government schools and 300 participants from private schools to provide a balanced perspective and to capture a broad demographic cross-section of the local student population. The main objective of the present study is to identify the main motivations for Internet use among adolescents, the time they spend using the Internet and the effects of these online habits on their daily lives and general well-being. The study provides a clear picture of local digital behaviour by looking into the benefits (skill development, educational support) and disadvantages (loss of sleep, less physical activity) of digital behaviour. The findings will provide practical insight to parents, teachers, educators and local authorities on how young people use technology. This work aims to enable actionable initiatives that lead students to develop healthy and productive digital habits.

Keywords: Internet Usage, Adolescents, Kishtwar District, School Students, Digital Habits, Online Behaviour, Screen Time.

1. Introduction

The rapid growth of information and communication technology has led to a drastic transformation in modern society. It has revolutionised the way individuals get knowledge, communicate with each other, undertake professional activities, spend free time. The internet is the most potent and the most transforming tool of the present period of all the technological breakthroughs. It has broken down geographical barriers, made instant communication possible across the world and instant access to vast amounts of information once difficult to find. It is the younger generation of today, the teenagers in particular, who are the main consumers of this digital revolution.

Unlike previous generations, today's teenagers are being raised as digital natives in a world where smart devices, personal computers, high-speed connectivity and digital media platforms are ubiquitous and integrated into daily life. For these young people, the virtual world has become more than a sporadic tool for entertainment or leisure, it is a primary platform for academic learning, identity exploration, peer networking, and self-expression [1]. Therefore, digital participation has a substantial impact on their social habits, behavioral patterns, cognitive development, and daily lifestyle choices. This constant connectivity has great potential for education and collaboration, but it also creates major shifts in the way young people manage relationships, time and information.

In the past, students learned their subjects mainly through textbooks, teachers and classroom instruction. Today, they can look for information on the internet, watch educational videos, read online books and articles, use learning apps, and take online courses. These resources can help learners to make sense of the topics that they may find difficult in the classroom. Online learning can be very useful for students who need more explanation or they like to learn by pictures, videos, or examples. Students have the opportunity to re-watch a lesson, find a different explanation, and learn at their own pace. They can also learn about subjects and topics that might not be part of their regular school syllabus. So, internet can encourage students to study independently, create interest in new subjects and continue learning outside the classroom. In addition to the formal course work, the digital environment has a large role to play in stimulating adolescents to be self-sufficient, self-directed learners. Instead of waiting passively for classroom instruction, curious students can take the initiative to find information that answers their own questions and satisfies their own curiosity. They can explore unusual subjects, play with ideas, solve problems and move at a pace that suits their own learning style. This open access is also a cultural window to young minds to other traditions, foreign languages, international perspectives and other social realities that they may not find in their local communities. In addition, frequent use of current digital apps provides teenagers with practical computer literacy, technical problem-solving skills, and information management skills that are essential to research at the higher levels of academia and success in the modern workforce. Entertainment, meanwhile, remains one of the most powerful drivers of adolescent Internet use. For teenagers, online gaming, video streaming platforms, trending social apps, films and interactive web communities are a regular way to relax during their leisure hours. Such recreational activities in moderation is a convenient way to relax, relieve school fatigue and have fun after long hours of study. The big problem is when entertainment becomes open ended and crowds out real world priorities. Unrestricted screen time often cuts into study time, physical sports, family meals and sleeping schedules. Recreational use of the internet is a benign activity but can easily become a habit that interferes with daily responsibilities without good boundaries. Thus every young user has to master the art of balancing and managing his/her time wisely. Thus, understanding adolescent Internet use requires consideration of not only the amount of time spent on the Internet but also the purpose and nature of Internet use.

3. Statement of the Problem

The internet has become more and more accessible to adolescents and has opened up many opportunities for learning, communication, entertainment and personal growth. However, increased access may also expose adolescents to problems of excessive or inappropriate use of Internet.

4. Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

1. To know the frequency of internet use by adolescents in Kishtwar District. To know the duration of internet use by adolescents in Kishtwar District. To know the devices used by adolescents in Kishtwar District for accessing internet. To know the frequency of access of internet by adolescents in Kishtwar District.

2. To understand the main reasons for internet use of adolescents like study, social media, gaming, watch videos and other entertainment activities.
3. To find out the role of internet for students' study such as understanding difficult topics, self-study, language skills improvement and extra knowledge.
4. To investigate the effect of internet use on communication and relationships of adolescents, with a special reference to communication with friends, classmates and others.
5. Identifying possible negative effects of overusing or misusing the internet, such as cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content, social comparison, emotional problems and loss of concentration.
6. To examine the effect of time spent on internet on students' study habit, home work, academic discipline and concentration in the classroom.
7. To examine the relationship between the use of internet and daily lifestyle of adolescents especially their sleep, rest, physical exercise and outdoor activities.
8. To compare the use of internet by students of government and private schools.
9. To evaluate adolescents' awareness of online safety, cyberbullying, privacy, cybersecurity and responsible use of the internet.
10. To recommend effective actions that parents, teachers, schools and counsellors can take to promote safe, healthy and balanced internet use by adolescents.

5. Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How frequently do adolescents use the internet?
2. What are the main purposes for which adolescents access the internet?
3. What educational benefits do adolescents obtain from internet use?
4. What are the negative experiences or problems of internet use among adolescents?
5. Does heavy use of the internet affect studies of adolescents?
6. Does internet usage affect sleep, physical activity and family interaction?
7. Are there differences in the use of internet among adolescents studying in government and private schools?
8. How aware are adolescents of online safety and responsible internet use?

6. Significance of the Study

Adolescents are an important section of society and their pattern of use of technology can influence their education, behaviour, relationships and future development. This study is important. The findings can help teachers and schools understand how students interact with digital resources and develop appropriate guidelines for responsible internet use. Schools can encourage the use of online resources to be used for educational purposes, and help students identify the possible online risks. The study may be helpful for parents, too. "Knowing what adolescents are doing online should allow parents to provide appropriate supervision without unnecessarily restricting effective digital activities. Parents should encourage good habits and talk to their children about safety on the internet. The study may also raise adolescent awareness about the importance of balancing online and offline activities. Internet can be a useful tool that teenagers can use in the purpose of education and self-improvement rather than just

wasting time on entertainment and other unnecessary online activities. This study may also be useful for the researchers and policy makers who are working on adolescent development, education, internet literacy and use of technology among the young people of Jammu and Kashmir.

7. Review of Related Literature

Past studies of teenagers and their use of the internet have found that it can have both good and bad effects. The internet is of great help to students in many ways especially in learning, communication and acquiring new skills. However, if the internet is used excessively or without proper control it can also cause problems in their study, social and personal life. It is therefore important to know how the internet is being used by the teenagers in terms of both the advantages and disadvantages [4]. As many studies have found, the internet can be useful for students in their education. Students are not just dependent on textbooks and class teaching. They can search for more information on the internet, watch educational videos, use online study platforms, read e-books and understand difficult topics with simple explanations. These online resources can make learning easy and help students to know more about their subjects [5]. The internet allows students to study in a way that fits them. Sometimes, a student may not understand a subject properly in the classroom. In such case they can look for another explanation on the internet or watch a related video. They can also do practice questions, take online tests and visit different educational websites to see how much they have understood. In this way the internet can make learning easier and can also help students to feel more confident about their studies [6]. Also, on the internet students can learn things that are not in their school subjects. They can also learn new languages, explore new topics, develop new skills and find out information about different careers and courses. They also can learn from teachers, experts and educational sources beyond their own part of the world. This can give students an opportunity to learn more than what they learn in the classroom and can make them more interested in learning new things.

But the effect of internet also depends upon the use of internet of the students. The internet can be a useful tool for studies but too much time spent on games, social media and entertainment can reduce the time available for studies and other daily activities. Therefore, when considering the impact of the internet on teenagers it is important to consider what students are doing online, how much time they are spending on the internet and how they are using the internet [1]. To summarise, the literature review suggests that the internet can be a useful tool for learning for adolescents if used properly and in a balanced way. It can help students to find information, understand hard concepts, develop new skills and become more independent learners. But there is also a need to guide adolescents in their use of online resources, so they can use them in a wise way and avoid excessive or harmful use of the Internet. This gives a great base of the study of use of internet among adolescents of Kishtwar District [2]. Many studies have found that adolescents use social media as an important means to connect to friends and classmates. Young people can use social networking sites to communicate and share information with others, to express their feelings, to maintain relationships, even when physically separated. Social media can therefore be a way for adolescents to feel connected and supported. It can also be a place to share interests, opinions, photos and creative work with others [3].

But there are also studies that have demonstrated that excessive use of social media can cause many problems. The excessive use of social media can lead to loss of concentration and can affect the student's study. While studying, adolescents can be distracted by messages, notifications, videos and new posts. They could also feel pushed to do what their friends are doing online. Comparison is another common problem. Young people are exposed to photos and posts that highlight the happy and successful parts of someone else's life. Comparing themselves to such content may make them feel less confident, unhappy or dissatisfied with their own lives. Research has also identified some common signs of unhealthy internet use. These symptoms may include the inability to control the amount of time spent on the Internet, repeatedly checking the phone for messages or notifications, neglecting schoolwork and household chores and continued use of the Internet despite problems. Some teens may have difficulty ceasing their Internet use once they begin. This will affect their studies, relationships, day to day activities and general routine. Adolescents are still growing and learning to control their behaviour and make decisions and so are perhaps more likely to develop such habits. At this age friends, social acceptance and new experience are important to young people. So they might have periods where they find it difficult to resist the temptation to stay connected or entertained online.

Another key issue identified in previous research is the impact of internet use on sleep. Adolescents who use mobile phones, computers or other digital devices late at night may not be able to fall asleep at a timely hour. Too much internet use may reduce the total hours of sleep they get and may interfere with their normal daily routine. Lack of sleep can result in fatigue, problems with concentration, low energy and difficulty in doing routine activities. In addition, the overuse of the Internet can lead to less time spent outdoors and in physical activity. "Screen time sitting a lot of free time that young people can become less physically active." It is important to be physically active for healthy growth and for health in general. Therefore, adequate balance between internet use, sleep, studies, physical activity, family time and social interaction is necessary for healthy development of adolescents. Research has shown that internet and social media can be a useful medium for communication and learning but it can also create a range of problems including academic, social, behavioural and health related problems due to overuse. Time spent on the internet, activity performed and use of the internet by adolescents are relevant aspects that should be considered when studying its effects. Nevertheless, despite the numerous studies on young people's use of the Internet, there is a need for research on specific local areas [7-8]. The experiences of adolescents may differ from place to place. Therefore, the findings of studies done in big cities or other regions may not be able to account for the full picture of internet use and daily experiences of the adolescents living in Kishtwar District.

Kishtwar has its own social, cultural, geographical and educational conditions. Internet facilities and network availability may also vary in different areas of the district. Some students may have easy access to smartphones and high-speed internet while others may have the problems related to network connection, availability of devices or limited internet facilities. The amount of support and supervision a family provides also may vary between families. These factors may influence how adolescents use the internet, and for what purpose. Students from rural and semi-urban areas may have a different lifestyle than students from big cities.

Their daily routine, family environment, education facilities and access to digital devices can influence the way they use the internet. Such differences mean that the use of the internet amongst teenagers should also be studied in their local area. "Results from big cities or world over may not always give a clear picture of the situation in places like Kishtwar The study is a study of the adolescents of Kishtwar District and their use of the Internet in their day to day lives. It attempts to investigate how students use the internet, why they use the internet, and what benefits or problems they have from the internet. The study also provides information about internet use by students in Kishtwar which can be useful for parents, teachers, schools and others who work with teenagers. It also can be of help in understanding how digital technology is becoming part of the everyday life of young people of the region.

8. Methodology

8.1 Research Design

The present study of article use descriptive survey method to know the internet use of adolescents of Kishtwar District. This method was chosen because it allows the researcher to gather information about students' internet use as it occurs in their normal daily life. The researcher does not change the routine or internet use of the students. The study examined how often adolescents used the Internet on a typical day. It looks at the time they spend on the internet, the usual devices they use and the main reasons for going online. It also looks at how the internet helps them with their studies, communication and other everyday activities. Moreover, the study examines some problems that students may encounter during the long-term use of the internet. These problems can include spending too much time on screens, difficulty concentrating on studies, getting less sleep, doing less physical activity and having difficulties in their daily routine. The data collected from the students will help the researcher to understand the students' internet habits and the positive and negative experiences they have while using the internet.

8.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study consists of 500 adolescents between 12 and 18 years of age studying in government and private schools in Kishtwar District, Jammu Division.

The population includes:

- 200 adolescents from government schools
- 300 adolescents from private schools

8.3 Area of the Study

The study will be conducted on selected government and private schools of Kishtwar District, Jammu & Kashmir.

8.4 Participants

The participants will include adolescents aged 12–18 years enrolled in the selected schools. Both male and female students are included so that the study can provide a broader understanding of adolescent internet usage.

8.5 Sampling

The study will be conducted on the respondents selected from the government and private schools through appropriate sampling procedure. The sample will provide a representation of adolescents attending both types of schools so that differences in levels of Internet access and patterns of use can be examined.

8.6 Data Collection Tool

The primary data will be collected through structured questionnaire. The questionnaire may ask questions about: Frequency of internet use

- Duration of daily internet use
- Devices used to access the internet
- Main purposes of internet use
- Educational use
- Social media use
- Online entertainment and gaming
- Effects on study habits
- Effects on sleep
- Physical activity
- Family and social interaction
- Online safety awareness
- Experiences of negative online behaviour

8.7 Data Analysis

Information obtained from the students will be verified, organised and inputted into appropriate statistical software for analysis. The data collected will then be analysed using simple statistical techniques such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. These methods will help to show the results in easy way. The analysis will show information about the students, the internet use, the time they spend online and the main reasons for using internet. Statistical tests will be used to compare the results of different groups of students. An independent samples t-test will be used to check whether there is a significant difference between the students studying in government and private schools. Chi-square (χ^2) test will be used to test if there is a relationship between the school type and how students use the internet. These statistical techniques will help the researcher to understand the data in an easy and organised way. They will also help to find out whether there are differences in internet use, screen time and other related habits between students of government and private schools.

9. Major Benefits of Internet Use among Adolescents

9.1 Educational Support

One of the most important benefits of the internet is the educational value. Adolescents can access study materials, educational videos, online lectures, digital books, sample questions, etc. and other learning resources. Students can review difficult topics and obtain explanations from various sources.

9.2 Access to Information

The Internet gives adolescents quick access to information on topics ranging from science and history to current events, technology, and job opportunities. This can encourage curiosity and independent learning.

9.3 Development of Digital Skills

The responsible and regular use of digital platforms can help adolescents to acquire skills such as online research, communication, document preparation, evaluation of information and the use of digital learning tools. "Such skills can become increasingly important in higher education and employment.

9.4 Communication

Adolescents can communicate via the internet with classmates, teachers, relatives and friends. Messaging and video chat can help people stay connected especially when they are far apart.

9.5 Career Awareness

The Internet can also be used by teenagers to know about different courses, scholarships, entrance tests, career options and job opportunities. You can search for information about courses after school and find out what qualifications are needed for a range of careers. Students can also check out various online resources and websites for scholarship forms, important dates and entrance exams. Knowing of this information early can help students comprehend what options are available to them. It might also make them think a little bit more about their future study and career plans.

9.6 Creativity and Self-Expression

The internet provides teenagers with a variety of opportunities to be creative and to use their talents. They have a variety of digital platforms on which they can write, take photos, draw, make videos, share music and do other creative activities. Some students will find interests and talents that are not available to them in school. They may improve their creative skills and get more confidence in their capabilities, if they use these platforms in a proper way and get educated by parents or teachers. These activities also offer learners useful means of learning and communicating their ideas.

10. Potential Negative Effects of Internet Use

10.1 Distraction from Studies

One of the common concerns is that adolescents may spend more time on entertainment and social media than on academic activities. Notifications, videos, games and online chats can distract concentration and reduce study time.

10.2 Excessive Screen Time

Teens who spend too much time on smartphones, computers and other digital devices may not be as physically active outside. They might also spend less time on hobbies, games and direct contact with people. If they're spending most of their free time looking at a screen, they may not be as physically active in their day-to-day lives. It may also mean less personal contact with relatives and friends. Thus, the balance between screen time and physical and social activities is important for adolescent's overall well-being.

10.3 Disturbed Sleep

Use of the internet at night can impact on the sleep patterns of young people. Students who spend a lot of time on the net at night, may stay up late and not get enough sleep. That can make it difficult for children to establish a regular sleep schedule. They can feel tired or sleepy during the day which can affect their school work or other daily activities. Thus, spending too much time online at night may have harmful effects on adolescents' sleeping habits.

10.4 Exposure to Inappropriate Content

The open nature of the internet can expose adolescents to content that is not age appropriate. With insufficient internet literacy and supervision, young users might find it difficult to identify harmful or unreliable material.

10.5 Cyberbullying

Not every teenager views online communication in a positive light. Students may also be the target of rude messages, insults, threats or other harassment while on social media sites or other online platforms.

This kind of behaviour is often referred to as cyberbullying. This can upset or worry teenagers or make them uncomfortable and can affect how they behave with other people. Repeated cyberbullying can sometimes also affect their confidence and emotional health.

10.6 Misinformation

Information on the internet is sometimes not correct and reliable. Rumours, misinformation, edited content and claims that are not based in facts may be encountered by teenagers. Sometimes, students have difficulty determining whether the information they find online is true or not. Students have to learn to verify the source and compare the information before they accept or share it. Being able to read and evaluate information online is a crucial element of online literacy.

10.7 Reduced Face-to-Face Interaction

The internet has made it easier for teens to talk and communicate with each-others. They can keep in touch with friends, family members and classmates through messaging, calls and social media. But if they spend more time chatting online they may have less time to talk face-to-face. It can also affect the relationship they have with their friends and family immediately. Therefore, teenagers should try to combine communication on the web with communication with people in real life.

10.8 Online Privacy and Safety Risks

Teens may not always understand why it is important to protect their personal information online. Sometimes people post pictures, passwords, location information, phone numbers or other personal information on the internet without thinking about the consequences. There are safety and privacy risks and this information can be abused by other people. So, it's important to educate teens on the importance of protecting their personal information and to be careful while using online platforms.

11. Internet: A Tool Rather Than an Inherently Positive or Negative Influence

The internet is neither all good nor all bad for teenagers. It is contingent upon how it is used, for what purpose and for how long. A student can get many benefits by using internet for studies, communication, learning new skills and some entertainment. But spending too much time online without proper control can affect studies, sleep, physical activities, and time with family. So, the objective should not be to ban teenagers from the internet altogether. Instead, parents, teachers and schools should guide them on how to use it in a proper and responsible way. The teenagers should be taught when and why should they use the internet and how to be safe online. The main objective should be to develop good and balanced internet habits so that students can make good use of the internet without letting it affect their day-to-day life.

12. Government and Private School Context

The present study includes comparison of students from government and private schools. Students in the two types of schools may differ in their access to mobile phones, computers, internet facilities and online learning resources. These differences may have some effect on how they use the internet. But access to digital devices does not always mean students will engage with the internet in the same way.

Other factors that can influence their internet habits can be their family environment, the guidance they receive from their parents, their level of digital knowledge, the support they get from teachers and schools, their personal interests and the financial conditions of their family. Therefore the study covers the students of both government and private schools. It will compare their internet use to see if there are any similarities or differences in the length of time they spend using the internet, the reasons for using the internet and the experiences they have when using the internet.

13. Suggestions

Based on the objectives of the study, some simple steps can be taken to encourage healthy and responsible internet use among adolescents:

1. Schools should teach students the basic use of digital devices, online safety, and the importance of protecting personal information.
2. Parents should talk openly with their children about how they use the internet and the activities they take part in online.
3. Students should be encouraged to use the internet for studies, learning new skills, finding useful information, and exploring educational opportunities.
4. Adolescents should try to maintain a proper balance between screen time, studies, sleep, physical exercise, hobbies, and spending time with family and friends.
5. Schools can conduct awareness programmes about cyberbullying, false information, online privacy, and the responsible use of social media.
6. Parents and teachers should guide students about the importance of proper sleep and encourage them to avoid unnecessary internet use late at night.
7. Students should also be encouraged to check information before believing or sharing it online and should be made aware of the possible risks of sharing personal details on the internet.
8. Students should be taught how to identify reliable and unreliable information online.
9. Adolescents should avoid sharing sensitive personal information with unknown people online.
10. Educational institutions should encourage productive use of digital resources rather than focusing only on restrictions.
11. Further research should examine the long-term effects of internet use among adolescents in different areas of Jammu and Kashmir.

14. Conclusion

The internet is an important part in the lives of adolescents and is likely to remain an important educational and social resource in the future. There are many ways in which the Internet can be of great use to the adolescents of Kishtwar District.

It can help students with their studies, finding information, communicating with others, developing creative skills, learning new digital skills and obtaining information about different careers. But too much and wrong kind of internet use can cause so many problems. Students may be distracted from studying, less physically active, stay up late or find harmful content on the internet. They also can run into problems like misinformation and cyberbullying. Too much time on the internet can also mean less interaction with family members, friends and other people around them. Therefore the benefits of internet usage are highly dependent on students' internet usage in their daily lives. The question is not whether adolescents should use the internet, but how they should be using it.

The responsible and balanced use of the internet can help adolescents to benefit from the digital technology while minimising its potential disadvantages. Parents, teachers, schools and the adolescents themselves all have an important role in creating a healthy digital environment. The present study of adolescents in Kishtwar District is expected to give a local perspective on these opportunities and challenges. This study can help raise awareness on the responsible digital behaviour by considering the pros and cons of internet use and can help educational institutions and families to guide adolescents to a balanced relationship with technology.

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