Internet addiction's effect on today's society

In societies where Internet usage is prevalent, the excessive use of the Internet, typically referred to as Internet addiction is recognized globally as a mental health issue as well as a social issue. Internet addiction can be defined as " excessive or poorly controlled preoccupations, urges, or behaviors regarding computer use that leads to impairment or distress" (Weinstein & Lejoyeux 277). When faced with addiction, an addiction is considered to be addicted when excessive Internet usage " interferes with work, daily life and personal relationships" (Adams). In other words, a person can be considered addicted to the Internet if spending time online is prioritized over daily obligations such as eating, sleeping and avoiding work or school.

Extensive use of the Internet is a common occurrence today in many modern societies; However, a percentage of Internet users lack the awareness regarding the potential negative effects that are associated with Internet addiction. However, many positive effects of the Internet exist, including the access to an abundant source of information, research, as well as a convenient means of communication. However, recent studies have established a connection between excessive Internet usage and an individual's health, stating excessive Internet use " ruins lives by causing neurological complications, psychological disturbances, and relational chaos" (Kaur 106). Based on the results of this research, it can be concluded that Internet addiction is a significant negative consequence that negates the positive aspects of the Internet. With the rise of prevalence of the Internet in todays societies, the number of users that end up becoming Internet addicted have risen exponentially and have suffered from the adverse health

effects of Internet addiction. In a minority of extreme cases, Internet addiction has led to death. Therefore, the Internet has brought more harm rather than positivity in modern society.

Many social, psychological as well as physical health issues exist alongside users that face Internet addiction. More specifically, " Neglect of family and friends, feeling depressed while irritable when not at the computer, Carpal tunnel syndrome, eating irregularities, sleep disturbances, and failure to attend to personal hygiene" (Hecht) are several symptoms that exist among Internet addicted users. Furthermore, there is a strong affiliation between internet addiction being linked with negative effects such as anxiety, stress and depression (Bodhi). This connection between negative health effects and Internet addiction holds relevance due to Internet usage becoming more prevalent today. Due to this, a larger percentage of Internet users are likely to become Internet addicted. If the population of those who become Internet-addicted rises, these individuals will end up facing these adverse effects that will potentially harm their social, mental and physical health.

Kimberly Young was among the first of people who introduced the concept of Internet addiction and how it could be considered an addiction. Based on her study, "[the] excessive use of the Internet resulted in personal, family, and occupational problems" (Young). After the writing of this paper, extensive research towards Internet addictions as well as possible solutions to the rising issue have been introduced. More recently, a researcher, Bagherianfar, establishes a link between Internet use and health effects such as " depression, overactive disorder, lack of attention, drug use and other disorders" (Bagherianfar). Another case done by Bardwaj concludes that

Internet addiction can also cause " anxiety, backache, blurred vision, dry eyes, headache, sleep disturbance, depression, [and] poor academic performance" (Bhardwaj 277). These studies both express the excessive use of the Internet leads to negative health effects. After the conception of the idea of Internet addiction, being nearly two decades ago, the negative effects of Internet addiction continue to be reiterated and its constant influence today as a legitimate health hazard.

Irresponsible use of the Internet is the cause for the rising number of users facing Internet addiction. A study done by Kumari places an emphasis on Internet usage rapidly rising on college campuses in Ludhiana, a northern state in India. Due to the Internet playing an important role in a college student's life, there has been an increase in reports of Internet addiction among students. In order to further understand Internet addiction among students, a study was done by Kumari to understand the effects of Internet addiction as well as its prevalence in several college campuses. The data presented that Internet addiction existed among 54% of students. (Kumari) While this research done by Kumari does not exactly present the specific effects Internet addiction has on people, this research does express the idea that Internet addiction is a relevant and common issue today. This article presents the idea that Internet addiction is a global issue and holds significance.

In Kumari's research, the prevalence of the Internet amongst students was heavily emphasized. However, when this article is compared to many research cases similar to this one, Kumari presents positive aspects of the Internet which were non-existent in the other articles. Aside from this,

Kumari also focuses more on the positive aspects and did not focus on negative problems that are often associated with Internet addiction. It is important to note that although many negative effects are associated with Internet addiction, there exists many positive aspects alongside them.

The Internet is just as capable of strengthening interpersonal relationships as it is capable of harming them. An example of the Internet strengthening or forming new interpersonal relationships can be found in social media, messenger applications and chat rooms. Due to the easy accessibility of the Internet, " users can easily find a group that shares similar interests, whether it is involved with literature, travel, cooking, religion, and almost anything else. (French) With access to the Internet, people can express ideas as well as communicate with people outside of their physical range. It is quite peculiar how the Internet has opened doors for people to many social interactions with people who share common interests and ideals. Along with the access to easy communication, the Internet also provides a near endless supply of information and services. Several examples of normally inaccessible information are " international libraries, museums, and schools." (French) These examples of easily accessible pools of information can be accessed with a simple Google search, along with " Vacation plans, hotel, airline reservations [and] online banking" (French), which are easily accessible services most people end up taking for granted. The efficiency of delivering, storing and receiving information on the Internet is often overlooked by the negative effects the Internet has and plays a large factor when comparing the good and bad of the Internet.

While the Internet has allowed its users to access information and interact with other users on a global scale, the convenience the Internet provides a risk of users becoming addicted to the Internet. As of today, The U. S. has not presented a response to Internet addiction and has yet to provide any solutions to Internet addiction backed by any evidence. While no evidence-based solutions of Internet addiction exists, there have been suggestions in order to curb addiction, such as " marital and family therapy, online self-help books and tapes, and a self-imposed ban on computer and Internet access." (Shaw and Black) In terms of self-regulation and control, certain precautions can be implemented in one's daily life, such as setting a limit in a computer's integrated settings or enabling the ' Do Not Disturb' feature found on many modern smartphones. With the easier access to the Internet today, it is only safe to assume the population of those becoming addicted to the Internet rises as well. By taking these precautions suggested, it will reduce the possibility of those who suffer from Internet addiction.

In other developed countries such as Korea, Internet addiction is held on a much higher pedestal and is treated differently, being seen as a severe public issue. According to Cornish, one in ten teenagers face severe Internet addiction. A reported case shows a student who normally plays computer games for over twenty hours a day, and ten to fourteen hours a day on a school day. (Cornish) The habits presented is a relevant issue in today's societies because if gone unnoticed, many negative effects will emerge and amongst a greater population than what currently exists. The first instance of a death being directly linked to the overuse of the Internet was a young South Korean named Kim Kyun-jae, who played video games online "

virtually nonstop for three and a half days." (Meek) This incident is what caused the South Korean government to take precautions and attempt to solve the emerging problem of Internet addiction.

Early attempts in order to put a stop and reduce Internet addiction included " punish[ing] excessive playing by confiscating gamers' virtual wealth" (Hartvig) and to " block those under the age of 1y from accessing gaming websites after midnight." (Lee) Both of these attempts to curb Internet addiction ended up failing due to simple loopholes that were discovered in order to negate these punishments for extensive Internet use. As a result, South Korea has shifted their means of solving Internet addiction from prevention to rehabilitation. These rehabilitation camps, most notably the Jump Up Internet Rescue School have been the most recent attempts to solving the issue of Internet addiction. Camps like these push abstinence as well as forced social interaction amongst one's peers. These rather unconventional methods attempt to " break their bad habit of Internet addiction" (Chulmo 393) and as a result of this rehabilitation, those who participate in these programs are able to " manage their time well regularly, balance their activities, and live normally within their community. (Chulmo 393) It is important to recognize the significant impact the Internet has on people as well as its ever-increasing influence. Therefore, it is important to develop and implement a reasonable means of curbing a severe issue, such as the rise of users becoming Internet-addicted.

While the attempts to solve the rising issue of Internet addiction through rehabilitation camps seem like a viable method to solving addiction, it has led to many complications as to the true viability of these camps. It has been

questioned whether forced social interaction and abstinence is the most optimal method of solving Internet addiction. Comparable to banning cars from a freeway, outright banning the use of the Internet is questionable. While banning cars significantly reduces the number of car accidents, the efficiency of travel also is reduced, similarly to banning computer usage to certain users reduces productivity. As Cash states, " total abstinence from the Internet should not be the goal of the interventions." (Cash) By placing an addict in the situation where Internet is completely inaccessible, it also removes the addict's only form of solace and in result, only intensifies the desire to access and abuse the use of the Internet. (Bhardwaj) Simply put, removing the source of addiction from the addict may result in counterproductivity, intensifying one's addiction.

Although the implementation of rehabilitation camps demonstrates an attempt to reduce the number of Internet addicted users, it is clear that this method is not the most optimal means of ceasing Internet addiction. As opposed to the outright banning a user from accessing the Internet, it would be a more realistic goal to push moderation and " controlled and balanced Internet usage". (Cash) If a user is eased into less use of the Internet as opposed to outright banning their use, it is significantly more likely that an addict will be able to reduce their usage of the Internet and maintain this habit.

The Internet possesses the capability of bringing both positive and negative effects to a modern society. While the Internet provides a person with an easily accessible means of obtaining information and interacting with others across the globe, it also possesses an equal possibility of causing a user to

become addicted to these positive aspects. While it is not possible to prevent everyone from being addicted to the Internet, there are many precautions people can go through in order to lessen or create positive habits out of excessive Internet use. If no action is taken to the eve rising number of Internet addicted users, a significantly larger number of people will end up facing the negative effects of Internet addiction, such as depression as well as the several negative physical and mental health effects Internet addiction has on an individual. In an extreme case, the abuse of Internet use will end up leading to one's death.

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