



Internet Use Disorder and Its Psychological, Sleep, and Academic Impact Among Adolescents and Young Adults in an Urban Area of Barabanki: A Community-Based Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract

Background: Internet Use Disorder (IUD) is an emerging behavioral addiction among adolescents and young adults. Objective: To estimate prevalence and assess its association with depression, sleep quality, and academic performance.

Methods: Community-based cross-sectional study conducted from 1 September 2023 to 31 July 2024 among 600 participants aged 13–24 years. Young's Internet Addiction Test (IAT), PHQ-9, and Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) were used.

Results: Prevalence of IUD (IAT ≥ 50) was 26.7%. Significant association was observed with depression, poor sleep, and academic decline ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: IUD significantly impacts psychological well-being and academic functioning.

Keywords: Internet Use Disorder; Psychological; Adolescents; Depression

1. Introduction

Internet access has expanded exponentially over the past two decades, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Excessive and uncontrolled use may lead to Internet Use Disorder (IUD), first conceptualized by Young.¹

Systematic reviews indicate varying prevalence across countries, ranging from 5% to 30% depending on methodology.²

The DSM-5 recognizes Internet Gaming Disorder as a condition warranting further study, reflecting growing concern.³

Problematic internet use has been associated with depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and impaired academic performance.⁶

Community-level evidence from Uttar Pradesh remains limited; hence this study was conducted in an urban area of Barabanki.

2. Methods

Study Design: Community-based cross-sectional study.

Study Area: Urban Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh.

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Study Period: 1 September 2023 to 31 July 2024.

Sample Size: 600 adolescents and young adults aged 13–24 years.

Tools: IAT¹, PHQ-9⁴, PSQI⁵.

Statistical Analysis: SPSS v26; Chi-square, t-test, logistic regression; $p < 0.05$ significant.

Ethical approval obtained; informed consent secured.

3. Results

Total participants: 600; Mean age: 17.8 ± 2.6 years; Males: 312 (52%).

Prevalence of IUD: 160 (26.7%). Depression: 132 (22.0%). Poor sleep: 264 (44.0%).

4. Discussion

The present study demonstrated that approximately one in four adolescents and young adults in urban Barabanki met criteria for Internet Use Disorder. This prevalence aligns with higher-range estimates reported globally.⁷

The significant association between IUD and depressive symptoms observed in this study supports earlier findings suggesting bidirectional relationships between problematic internet use and mood disorders.⁴

Sleep disturbance was another major correlate. Excessive nighttime screen exposure disrupts circadian rhythm and melatonin secretion, resulting in poor sleep quality.⁵

Academic decline reported by 60% of participants with IUD indicates functional impairment. Digital distraction, reduced concentration span, and procrastination behaviors may explain this association.

Neurobiological studies suggest that excessive internet use activates reward pathways similar to substance dependence, raising concerns about long-term behavioral addiction patterns.⁸

From a public health perspective, early screening at schools and colleges, parental counseling, and digital literacy programs are recommended to mitigate adverse outcomes.

Limitations include cross-sectional design, self-reported measures, and lack of longitudinal follow-up. Future research should explore intervention models and long-term trajectories.

5. Conclusion

Internet Use Disorder is prevalent among adolescents and young adults in urban Barabanki and significantly associated with depression, poor sleep quality, and academic decline. Community-based preventive strategies are urgently needed.

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