

A Pandemic Called Digital Akrasia

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COMMENTARY

We feel immensely proud to be the part of the digital age where everything is at our fingertips but it is an irony that the man who was the creator of the technology ended up being its slave. If we talk about widespread accessibility of internet, it has revolutionized everything from education, business, healthcare, administration to our personal relationships. At the outset of the popularization of internet people used to be astonished by the benefits it offers but now there is more realization of the downside side of our digital dependency. We have become victims of the Digital Akrasia; tendency to be driven by digital world despite our better intentions. In simple words, we have the realization of our addiction but still are unable to come out of it because we lack self-control. Digital world is overwhelming us and has become a major public health issue of the millennium. We are suffering from Nomophobia (No mobile phone phobia); we can't visualize our life without phone and internet connectivity; if we forget the phone; we feel paralyzed as if we lost the limb.

In this write up we will be discussing impact of internet addiction on education, healthcare, children, youth and adults. An overview of various digital diseases like infomania, information cascade, Phubbing, Nomophobia, IDIOT syndrome, ego- surfing, internet gaming disorder, cyber pornography addiction and cyber bullying will be presented. Principles of digital citizenship will also be highlighted.

Education: Digital age offers tremendous benefits to the education sector; ranging from offering variety of exciting teaching learning apps to virtual labs; e libraries /e books /podcasts and tutorials are widely and freely accessible; making knowledge available at a single click but it has brought the challenges too; students have access to so much of information and content related to their studies that they start taking their teachers and classes for granted; they have the notion that they can download the content and retain it and thus no longer need help of teachers but they fail to realize that internet can offer answer to what to learn but not to how and why; it is a teacher who offers blend of

experience and knowledge; besides teachers don't only offer knowledge but they open the doors of intellect by posing questions; stimulating critical and analytical thinking; brainstorming session of online class can never compete with offline mode. Teachers help in personality development; character development and realization of potentialities. One more challenge that digital age offers is that students don't know about the quality sources; they don't know where and how to look for information; they get lost in the dense forest of internet. other challenge is increasing indiscipline; Many students don't know when and how to approach their teachers on social media handles. They share undesirable content with their teachers and keep texting beyond working hours posing an ethical dilemma to teacher whether to revert or not. Besides students waste their precious time in watching reels, chit chatting, updating their posts etc. which affects their productivity, learning engagement and academic achievement [1].

Healthcare: Internet has revolutionized health care by facilitating online appointment, online test reports and making health related information accessible but it has led to a challenge called IDIOT (internet derived information obstructing treatment) syndrome. people suffering from IDIOT syndrome google out their symptoms, self-diagnose and start treatment without consulting a doctor or some people google out the medicines prescribed by doctors and start checking their uses and side effects and then discontinue the treatment without realizing that a single medicine has numerous uses and doctors know best what a patient need. Many patients develop extreme health anxiety after searching their symptoms on internet as on google even a minor itching is shown to be linked to skin cancer. People

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blindly trust medical information available on internet; they lack knowledge to distinguish scientific facts from myths.; Likewise, many obsess and slim people start looking for medicines and supplements available to serve their purpose or many young females with skin related issues like pimples, pigmentation and facial hair start taking ointments and drugs by learning about them from google and end up falling victims to many secondary complications. In our neighborhood a 29-year-old female died due to kidney failure; which occurred due to the side effects of a supplement that she brought online to gain weight. Another 25-year-old male developed a deadly disease after doing self-treatment for hair fall. It is high time that people are sensitized about risks involved in being a google doctor and made aware about the importance of relying on the credible medical professionals [2].

Children: Children have become badly addicted to internet; be that watching reels, playing online games or chit chatting on social media. It is high time that parents keep an eye on the cyberdeath of their children; what their children watch, what they do on internet and with whom they chat. It is the duty of the parents, teachers and elders to educate children about the internet scams and the ways to prevent them. As goes the golden rule GIGO (gold in-gold out; garbage in-garbage out); we have to see what our children are taking in as their cyber diet; whether it is productive stuff and healthy entertainment or filth and undesirable beliefs. Because what they take in; they will give out. If they take in healthy cyber diet, they will end up being productive and creative; if they take in aggression and filth; they will end up being asocial and aggressive brats. We need to curtail the screen time of our children before their physical, social and moral health deteriorates [3].

Youth: Youth in the 15-25years age are most vulnerable to digital diseases due to their digital dependency. It has affected their social life. They prefer isolation. Even if they sit with family, they don't know what's going on around them; they don't spend quality time with family as a result parents and grandparents feel ostracized and unwanted; this widens the generation gap and escalates parent-child conflicts. Their lifestyle has become sedentary which has led to burgeoning increase in teenage diabetes and obesity. Most of the youth are deeply involved in ego surfing; compulsively checking the status of the personally updated information. In simple words, young buds keep uploading pics, posts and reels on their social media handles and then keep impulsively checking their accounts in order to see the comments, likes and reactions of others on their pics and posts. Their egos seek likes, shares and positive comments. This ego surfing is causing digital depression. Digital depression is experiencing of irritability, hopelessness and worthlessness while in e world. It is caused due to numerous factors; for instance, some develop depressive symptoms because they don't get ample likes or their friend list isn't that much lengthy as of their peers. Some develop

depression because they get envied by the luxurious or happy pics of others. They start feeling discontentment without realizing that everyone has his share of problems and nobody puts his downside on social media. Some develop depression when they have nothing worthwhile to share or due to the sleep deprivation caused by internet addiction. Some youngsters have become so deeply engrossed in the world of filters; that they start hating themselves or feel uncomfortable in their real looks. Internet addiction is fueling body image dissatisfaction. Many youngsters have become addicted to watching filthy items on internet as its freely accessible and nobody is there to stop them. Digital porn addiction has taken a heavy toll on their mental and moral development. Besides In the race of becoming a social media sensation many teenagers lost their lives during their risky selfie taking behaviors. Not only this, irresponsible social media use ruined many youths. An unknown person sent them friend request start chit chatting and then show them castles in air and they are gone. Their friendships turn into relationships and then are betrayed which cause great emotional and psychological trauma. There are many couples who met online but then the relationship ended in divorce. They enjoy online love across nations and religion but once they are in real life; they are unable to stand the challenges it offers. There are many reported cases where girls change their religion to marry their online lover and then were later deserted. According to a study conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, 81% of people online lie about their height, age, weight, Socio economic status or marital status on their dating profiles. Likewise, a study published in the journal of "Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social networking" based on a survey of 4000 couples revealed that couples who met online were likelier to breakup than those who met in person. It is imperative that youth are educated about responsible and prudent use of social media so that they can prevent themselves from emotional and psychological abuse. They should be sensitized about the ill impact that their bullying and roasting can have on somebody's psychological and social health [4].

Adults: In this digital era, internet addiction is no longer confined to children and adolescents; young adults are also into it. Many Employees keep using their phones during working hours; posting status updates; texting their friends. They are victims of FOMO (fear of missing out); they keep checking their social media accounts for new feeds and fear missing a text or update. Every pop up diverts their attention from work and affects their productivity. Culture of Social and literary discussion is fading due to the digital immersion. In the words of Shelly Turkler, author of "Alone together", our dependency on technology has increased to such level that we don't have time for each other. We remain glued to screens even in the company of our loved ones; thus, we are alone together; we are present together but still disconnected. There are many young couples who end up in

divorce or marital discord because they feel ignored and ostracized due to the internet addiction of their spouses. Many enter into online extra marital affairs online and then later bear its brunt. Besides, Young and old are equally in the game of information cascade. They check the news update or any piece of information and then copy and share without verifying; they are least concerned about ethical, social and legal ramifications of their acts. Many uploads fake stories for crowd funding and people blindly trust and promote them. Not only this many time a minor rumor can create a havoc if spread without confirming and can cause law and order issues or even bring religious or communal disharmony [5].

CONCLUSION

Internet addiction has added to our mental burden and has led to a new form of OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder) and this is a mass OCD; as almost all of us are into it with the difference of degree. Our minds remain obsessed with thoughts that on my fb /what's app/Instagram account someone may have texted me; someone may have uploaded something, somebody may have liked or commented on my post; this obsession creates distress and restlessness and to reduce these obsessions we are bound towards compulsions (repetitive actions to reduce obsessions). we check our phones frequently; after every ten minutes or one hour to ensure we didn't miss any popup. It is very important that digital citizenship is taught to both young and old so that they can learn respectful, responsible and reasonable use of internet. Since digital usage is inescapable part of our lives; it is very important that parents, teachers, clinicians, religious scholars, researchers and all stakeholders collaborate in imparting digital citizenship. Digital citizens should be sensitized about ways to be respectful in cyberspace; they should be briefed about their responsibility and accountability of what they watch and share online; they should be made skilled enough to use their critical thinking ability before trusting or propounding any information and update. They should be made aware of intellectual property rights. They should be helped to accept and respect themselves and others in real way; free from filters. Self-acceptance is the key to psychological health.

Suggestions for Future Research

There is a huge need for conducting intensive studies on the psychosocial, legal and economic ramifications of Infomania, information Cascade and ego surfing. Researches should be done to explore the antecedents, risk and protect factors underpinning this across all age groups. There are many out there in social media claiming themselves to be priests and ulemas and disseminate wrong and biased interpretation of religious texts; there's a huge need to boost awareness and critical thinking of public so that they don't fall prey to their malicious tactics.

“We are slaves of something we never left alone that is but our mobile phone; sweet seems its taste but our time it does waste, lovely it looks in our lap; this is but the biggest trap”.

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