CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As Internet use among teenagers has grown exponentially in the last 10 years so has concern over its effect on their psychological well-being. Parents express concern that “going on-line too often may lead children to become isolated from other people,” and that “children who spend too much time on the Internet develop antisocial behaviour”. This had led to the research of the topic “Effect of psycho-social intervention on internet usage among college students in Chennai city”.

The objectives of the present study were,

1. To assess the internet usage and dependency among college students with respect to the frequency of usage.
2. To identify the influence of socio-economic factors on internet use among the college students.
3. To examine the effect of internet use on the general well being and loneliness among college students.
4. To study the influence of internet use on the social factors namely social interaction and communication skills.
5. To identify high internet users with symptoms of loneliness and poor social communication among college students.
6. To design a psycho-social intervention to reduce loneliness and improve social communication among high internet users.
7. To study the effect of psycho-social intervention on internet usage and dependency among the college students.
8. To study the effect of psycho-social intervention on the well being, loneliness, social interaction and communication among the college students.
Based on the review of related literature, the methodology for the present study was designed. The present study was carried out in two phases—Phase 1 and Phase 2. Phase 1 of the present study was ex-post facto and primarily descriptive in nature which analyzed the impact of internet usage of college students and also established the relationship of internet use on the social and psychological wellbeing of college students. Phase 2 of the study was Pretest–post test experimental research design with control group along with the intervention program for identified high internet users. A follow up study was carried out after two months of the intervention study.

College students were selected for the present study as they are both consumers and creators in the internet community. The study was conducted in Chennai district of Tamil Nadu. A convenience sampling technique was followed to select a total of Eight (Four Government and Four Private) Arts and Science colleges. The present study was conducted on 1200 male and female college students belonging to the age group of 17-21 years of whom 600 belonged to Government colleges and 600 were from the Private colleges.

The tools consisted of a Questionnaire to collect data to determine the effect of psychosocial intervention on internet usage for the phase 1 of the study and an intervention program that was designed for phase 2. A total of 50 High internet users were selected and an intervention program was conducted for five days of two and half hour duration on every alternate days. A follow up analysis using the same tool to assess the effectiveness of the intervention program was conducted by the investigator. Lecture cum discussion, demonstration and practice of relaxation techniques and activities were conducted.

The pilot study helped the investigator to equip with an understanding of the overall objective of the study, the research question and objective of each questionnaire and what it is measuring precisely. Test-retest reliability was adopted for the questionnaire. The reliability of the tool used for the study was checked using split-half and Cronbach’s alpha coefficients. The collected data was coded based on
the scoring procedures developed for individual scales and then analysed. Using the appropriate statistical tests, the mean differences, analysis of variance and the general linear models were computed with the help of SPSS version 16.

*The results are summarized as follows,*

**Demographic details of the selected college students**

Of the total 1200 students selected for the present research, A total number of 260 students (Male-74, Female-186) were Low Internet Users, the Moderate Internet Users were 538 in number (Male- 228, Female-310) and the High Internet Users were 402 in total (Male- 204, Female-198). The government college students use the internet lesser when compared to the private college students. Students studying in their 3rd year under-graduation course used the Internet more when compared to the other students studying in I & II year UG and I & II P.G.

The students whose family monthly income was more than Rs.30,000/- used the internet more than the college students who belonged to the other income groups. It was also observed that the usage of internet was more by the college students who had one sibling as compared to the ones who were a single child in the family. The birth order showed that the college students who were born first in the family used the internet more than the college students who were second last and only child in the family.

It was reported that higher the educational status of both the parents, the usage of internet was higher by the college students. With regard to the profession of the parents it is noted that the students whose parents were software engineers used the internet more as compared to the other professions. Also it was observed that the students used the internet in the presence of the parents.
Internet usage among the selected college students

A greater percentage of the parents of the college students were not computer literates. But it is interesting to note that the college students use the internet more if their sibling had computer knowledge when compared to the students whose siblings had lesser computer knowledge.

The high internet users owned a computer for more than 3 years but most of the college students did not own a computer in their home nor did they use a webcam. It is interesting to note that the internet café was the most preferred for internet use by the college students. With regard to the high internet users, the most comfortable place to access the internet was at their home especially their bedroom was the most preferred place of internet use.

The internet usage and dependency of the selected college students showed that the high internet users used the internet everyday as compared to the low and moderate internet users who used the internet once a month and once a year respectively.

Interestingly the most common online internet activity of the selected college students was online music, either tunes or downloads followed by the use of the internet for web browsing for data collection and emailing.

With regard to the level of internet use, it is interesting to note that the preference for common online activity for the high internet users was music, chat rooms and social networking sites, whereas the low internet users preferred music, web browsing and email. The use of internet for gaming and shopping purposes was found to be low compared to the other activities.

Academic activities, other activities, chat rooms, instant messenger, social networking, blogs, gaming, web browsing, music, file sharing, shopping, news, internet TV and email were mentioned to know the frequency of internet use by the
selected college students. Irrespective of the level of internet use, these activities were preferred once a week.

The daily frequency of internet use by the low internet users was to listen to music, watching news, gaming and emailing as compared to the high internet users who preferred the daily use of internet for emails, web browsing and music.

Also it is reported that the low internet users preferred to use the internet once a week for activities including blogs, file sharing, shopping and internet TV as compared to the moderate internet users who preferred the use of internet for blogs, shopping, file sharing and internet TV. The high internet users preferred the internet once a week for shopping, blogs, internet TV and instant messenger. The low internet users preferred the use of chat rooms, shopping, blogs and instant messenger once a month.

The most convenient mode for the college students to communicate with their friends/online contacts was SMS (Short Messaging Service) followed by the use of emails, voice call service and voice over IP which was used to a lesser extent. The most preferred ways to meet their instant messenger online contacts was through Chat rooms, contact lists, friends and social networking sites.

The students used the internet for less than one hour for activities that included talking on the phone, watching television with friends, socializing with friends, spending time with significant others, extracurricular activities (clubs, discussion forums, sports), watching TV while eating and checking emails at home. Also the college students preferred the use of internet for 1-3 hours for interacting with their parents whereas 1-3 hours on the internet was used to spend time with their brothers and sisters.

With regard to the state of mind of the college students it is noted that, it varied with respect to the connection of internet being slow or fast. The high internet users behave indifferently and are anxious when the internet connection is slow or fast. Males behaved more indifferently when the internet connection was slow or fast.
as compared to the females. The females were less nervous, calmer, less indifferent and less anxious when compared to their male counterparts.

The high internet users had a higher dependency towards using the internet when compared to the moderate and low internet users and also the high internet users have a strong necessity to use the internet when they are not online. The feeling of guilt or depression after using the internet for a long time was not avidly noticed in the selected college student. Also it is interesting to note that the high internet users while not using the internet always kept thinking about it and they deliberately restricted the internet usage due to previous excessive use. More so they lied to their friends about the time spent on the internet when compared to the moderate and low internet users.

The high internet users were the ones who lost track of time while using the internet. Therefore they received complaints that they spend too much time on the internet when compared to the moderate and low internet users. Due to excessive internet use the restriction by parents or brother was observed.

With regard to the internet usage and dependency, it is reported that the males showed a higher rate of internet usage and dependency as compared to the females. Also the high internet users were more dependent on the internet compared to the moderate and low internet users. The private college students used the internet more than the government college students. It is also observed that the students who were from high income group (Rs. 30,000/ per month and above) had high usage and dependency of internet when compared to other groups.

**Effect of internet usage on the psychosocial factors among the selected college students.**

The social interaction among college students was not dependent on the gender, different levels of internet use (high, moderate and low usage of internet) or the family’s monthly income. The well being among the selected college students suggested that male college students had better well being than the female college
students. But the well being was not dependent on the level of internet use, type of college nor the family’s monthly income.

It is also observed that the male college students felt lonelier when compared to the female college students. The students who are low and moderate internet users felt lonelier as compared to the high internet users. It is interesting to note that the private college students felt lonelier when they did not have internet access than the government college students but loneliness was not dependent on the family’s monthly income.

Communication in the males with respect to internet use was more than the females. It is evident that the higher internet users communicated more than the low and moderate internet users. It is inferred that private college students scored high in their communication than the government college students. Also the communication of the students from the high income families was greater than the other income groups.

Internet dependency positively contributed to loneliness of the college students. Therefore it is inferred that higher the internet dependency, the loneliness experienced by the college students is high. But it is interesting to note that loneliness is not dependent on Internet use, Internet usage, Social interaction, well being and communication.

The results also show that internet dependency positively contributes to internet usage of the college students. The higher the family’s monthly income, Education of father, internet dependency, loneliness and communication, the internet usage experienced by the college students is high. These values elucidated that higher the internet usage, higher is the internet dependency, higher loneliness, and higher communication among the college students.

The type of college, gender, education of mother, well being and social interaction contribute negatively to the internet usage of the college students.
Therefore higher the internet usage, lower the well being and social interaction among the college students.

**Effect of the intervention program on internet usage and psychosocial factors of the selected college students**

The intervention program conducted on the selected college students reported that after the intervention, the experimental group had showed a tremendous reduction in the internet usage and dependency compared to the control group, which on the contrary showed an increase in the usage and dependency.

Results regarding the social interaction among the college students depicted that the social interaction in the experimental group showed a gradual decrease during the course of intervention from the pretest, post test to follow up. It was also inferred that the experimental group did not show any effect in the social interaction at the pretest and post test. But the follow up showed a significant effect. It is therefore concluded that the experimental group after the intervention showed a reduction in social interaction compared to the control group which showed an increase in social interaction.

Regarding the well being of the college students, the effect of intervention showed that the well being had gradually increased in the experimental group during the course of intervention from pre test, post test and follow up. It is surprising to note that among the control group there was a gradual decrease in well being during the period of the study.

The intervention program also had an effect on the loneliness at the post test and follow up among the college students of experimental group. The loneliness had gradually reduced after the intervention from pre test, post test to follow up. But it is also noted that among the control group there was a gradual increase in loneliness during the period of study. It is surprising to note that the loneliness was less among the experimental group compared to the control group.
Results show that communication had gradually increased during the course of intervention from the pre, post to follow up in the experimental group, but in the control group there was a gradual decrease in the communication during the period of study.

It is also concluded that the experimental group after the intervention has showed a tremendous reduction in the internet usage and dependency, social interaction and loneliness and an increase in the well being and communication compared to the control group. The overall results proved that the intervention program that was conducted on the selected college students was proved to be effective

CONCLUSION

It is widely known that the average amount of time spent on the Internet is rapidly increasing, and that the starting age of Internet users is steadily decreasing (Kraut et al, 1998, Nie & Erbring, 2000). As time moves forward, the Internet is becoming a larger factor in the lives of people at progressively younger ages. Thus, parents, psychologists, educators, technology creators and lawmakers must become aware of the potential risks and rewards of this phenomenon (Cooper, 2003).

It can be concluded from the present investigation that intervention program had a great beneficial effect on the psychosocial wellbeing of the college students. The high internet users which underwent intervention in the form of lecture cum demonstration and relaxation activities exhibited a significant reduction in the internet usage and dependency, social interaction, and loneliness and an increase in the well being and communication compared to the control group.

Recommendations for further research
1) A comparison on the internet usage and dependency with internet addiction can be studied.
2) Personality traits of the internet addicts may be traced out.
3) Prevalence of internet addiction in different states may be surveyed.
4) Effects of internet usage on the general knowledge awareness and career options may be assessed.

5) A comparison between the internet usages among students in the developed and developing countries may be carried out.

6) Physical handicap may be taken as a variable for internet usage.