



## Examining the Prevalence and Impacts of Online Addiction among Youth due to Digital Dependency: A Study in Dhaka Metropolitan City

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### **Abstract**

In the rapidly evolving digital landscape of the 21st century, the internet has become an integral part of daily life, especially for the youth. While this technological advancement has brought about numerous benefits, it has also given rise to a concerning issue: online addiction. The proliferation of smartphones and affordable internet access has dramatically increased the time youth spend online. 100% of youth in Dhaka city are involved in online activities by using electronic devices like smart phone, computer, smart TV. Majority of the youth used online platform not for productive purpose. 77.77% respondent are addicted to Facebook as social media and check notification on mean 3 minutes during free time. No one is out of gaming experience in their youth age. 35 respondents out of 90 consist 38.88% high level involvement in online game where 47% in medium level and 15% are low level gamer. About OTT platforms, Netflix stood out as the dominant choice with 42 individuals, accounting for 46.46%. Amazon Prime was the second most popular platform, chosen by 30 respondents or 33.33% of the sample. 100% that means total 90 respondents' responses that they watch videos, including YouTube and TikTok for 3-4 hours in a day. Based on the provided data, it can be established that the youth in Dhaka city are experiencing online addiction. The universal use of electronic devices, extensive engagement with social media and online gaming, substantial daily time spent online, preference for nighttime usage, and the reported negative impacts collectively support this study hypothesis. This study illuminates the urgent need for targeted interventions in addressing internet addiction. This research provides vital insights into prevalence rates, behavioral patterns, and the socio-psychological ramifications of excessive internet usage, offering a roadmap for tailored solutions to safeguard youth wellbeing in the digital age.

**Keywords:** *Prevalence; Impacts; Online, Addiction; Youth Etc; Digital Dependency*

## Introduction

### 1. Study Background, Objectives and Rationality

In the rapidly evolving digital landscape of the 21st century, the internet has become an integral part of daily life, especially for the youth. While this technological advancement has brought about numerous benefits, it has also given rise to a concerning issue: online addiction. Digital dependency, characterized by an excessive and compulsive use of the internet, has emerged as a significant problem among young individuals. This phenomenon is particularly evident in developing countries like Bangladesh, where the proliferation of smartphones and affordable internet access has dramatically increased the time youth spend online. Nowadays the word online addiction or virtual addiction becomes a buzzword because it has become a worrying issue for us. Online addiction encompasses various activities, including social media engagement, online gaming, and continuous web browsing. The constant connectivity offered by the internet can lead to behaviors that disrupt daily routines, academic performance, and social interactions. Adolescents and young adults are especially vulnerable due to their developmental stage, which involves identity formation and a high susceptibility to peer influence.

In Bangladesh, the prevalence of online addiction among youth has sparked growing concern among parents, educators, and healthcare professionals. The impact of this addiction extends beyond mere distraction; it affects mental health, leading to issues such as anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances. Additionally, the excessive use of digital devices can impair physical health, contributing to problems like eye strain and sedentary lifestyle-related ailments.

Understanding the prevalence and impacts of online addiction is crucial for developing effective interventions and policies to address this issue. This study aims to explore the extent of digital dependency among Bangladeshi youth and examine its various consequences on their social, mental, physical, and cultural well-being. Through this research, we seek to provide insights that can inform strategies to mitigate the negative effects of online addiction and promote healthier digital habits among young individuals in Bangladesh.

### 2. Methodology

The present study has employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Quantitatively, a sample survey was conducted targeting purposively selected students from grades 9, 10 (SSC), and 11, 12 (HSC), totaling 90 participants. Qualitatively, case study method has been utilized, examining 10 cases. Data from both primary and secondary sources has been used in this study. Data collection involved face-to-face interviews and observations guided by pre-tested interview guidelines. Thematic analysis was conducted using SPSS data analysis application. The study adhered to research principles and ethical values throughout its execution.

Table 01: Summarized Methodology of this Study

Approaches	Methods	Sample Size	Data Collection Techniques	Data Collection Tools	Data Sources	Analysis Application
Quantitative	Sample Survey	90	Face to face interview and observation	Structural Interview Schedule	Both Primary and Secondary	SPSS and MS Excel Worksheet
Qualitative	Case Study	10	Face to face interview and observation	Interview Guideline (Open-ended)		Thematic Analysis
<b>Study Location:</b> Dhaka Metropolitan City of Bangladesh						
<b>Sampling Techniques:</b> Purposive						
<b>Population:</b> All youth who are involved in online activities in Dhaka City						

### 3. Literature Review

**Begum et. al. (2019)** found that boys in Bangladesh are given tab or computer in early age where girls are not, that's why male adolescents have more addiction than female adolescents. Boys generally play violent games excessively cause their greater aggressiveness. **Kim et. al. (2008)** stated that video game has an adverse effect on mental development of youth. **Rahman (2018)** focused on social media and networking sites on which adolescents are addicted mostly in her study. It has found that adolescents use some prominent social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, Likeee which leads to addiction at various degree among them. **Huda et. al. (2021)** found that 40% of total population play popular action shooters game like player unknown battle ground (PUBG), Fortnite, call of duty. 27% plays strategical games like DOTA, online ludo, clash of clans. On the other hand, 63% of the population plays 2-3 hours daily on average which gives a hint that majority of the gamers are intermediate gamers. **Mondal et. al. (2020)** presented in hid article that more than 50%early adolescent students spend at least 3 hours on smartphone in a day for purpose of social media like YouTube, Facebook whereas 80.9%late adolescent students spend time on playing online game on smartphone. **Hassan et. al. (2020)** found that internet addiction was significantly associated with living setup, time spent daily on the internet, a detached family relationship, physical activity, and smoking habit. **Sayed et. al. (2021)** showed that 54.3% respondents from total population are severely addicted to online mobile games who were influenced by friends and or watching game related video from YouTube.

### 4. Study Findings and Discussion

The present study has followed thematic analysis model. Theme for this study has been selected on the basis of study objective and interview guidelines. The following part has presented the study findings and its discussion. Data triangulation approach also has been used in this part.

#### 4.1 Socio-Demographic Information

In this study the respondent demographics are composed of 55.5% respondents are male and 45.5% respondents are female. This indicates that a larger proportion of the study participants are male. This gender distribution could have implications for the study's findings, as it may reflect different patterns of online addiction and digital dependency between male and female youth. From the literature review of this study, we can see that previously research has focused on equal respondents of male and female but our research focuses on a high percentage of male respondents. The reason and logic behind that male are found more addicted than female youth in Bangladesh. The following table shows the gender distribution of this study.

This study collected 35% data from grade 09 and 10 operationally called SSC level youth and 65% from level 11 and 12 operationally called HSC level youth. As this research has been conducted in Dhaka City, it is predominated by nuclear family and household size is 2.8. Among the total respondents 87 belong to nuclear family that is around 96.66% percent and only 3 respondents belong to joint family that is about 3.34%.

#### 4.2 Prevalence of Online Addiction

##### Patterns of Device Usage

In the study the following patterns of device usage were observed among respondents. In this question multiple answer was accepted during data collection:

**Mobile Phones:** A significant majority of 78 respondents (86.66%) primarily use mobile phones for various online activities. This indicates that mobile phones are the most common device for internet access among the youth in the study.

**Personal Computers or Laptops:** 20 respondents (22.22%) prefer using personal computers or laptops. This suggests that while some youth still favor these devices, they are less prevalent compared to mobile phones.

**Tablets or iPads:** 12 respondents (13.33%) use tablets or iPads, showing a moderate preference for these devices.

**Other Electronic Devices:** 5 respondents (5.55%) reported using other electronic devices for online activities, indicating a minor segment of the population utilizing alternative technologies.

This distribution highlights the dominance of mobile phone usage among the youth in Bangladesh, which may influence their patterns of online behavior and potentially their susceptibility to online addiction. The following chart has shown this information.

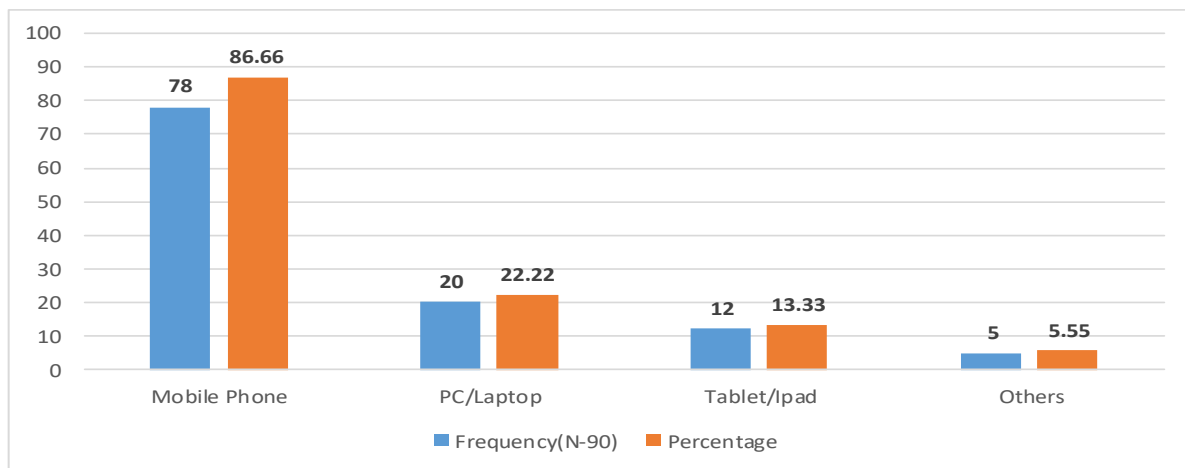


Chart 01: Patterns of Device Usage by Youth

## Familial Consent for Device Usage

In the study the data regarding familial consent for device usage reveals the following:

**Permission from Families:** 80 out of 90 respondents (88.88%) reported having permission from their families to use electronic devices. This high percentage indicates that the majority of the youth have familial approval to use such devices, suggesting a supportive or permissive attitude towards technology use within families.

**Lack of Familial Consent:** Conversely, only 10 respondents (11.12%) indicated that they did not have familial consent to use electronic devices. This minority represents a small group of youth who either use devices without their family's permission or have restrictions placed on their device usage by their families.

This information highlights that most youth in the study have their families' support or approval in their use of electronic devices, which could influence their level of access and potentially their risk of developing online addiction.

## Money Support

In the study responses to the question about who provides the money for purchasing mobile/computer devices and covering internet costs reveal the following:

**Self-funded:** 30% of respondents (youth students) manage the cost themselves by saving their money. This indicates a significant portion of the youth are financially independent or take responsibility for their own technology-related expenses.

**Father-funded:** 60% of respondents stated that their father bears the cost. This shows that the majority of the youth rely on their fathers for financial support for their devices and internet access.

**Mother-funded:** 7% of respondents indicated that their mother covers these costs. This represents a smaller yet notable group who depend on their mothers for financial support.

**Sibling-funded:** 1% of respondents said their brother and another 1% said their sister provide the money for these expenses. This suggests a minimal reliance on siblings for financial support in this context.

### Social Media Involvements

The study examined the social media engagement of 90 respondents, shedding light on their preferences. Facebook emerged as the most popular platform, with 70 respondents, representing 77.77% of participants. YouTube closely followed, with 67 respondents (74.44%). Instagram attracted 47 respondents (52.22%), while TikTok engaged 42 (46.66%). Snapchat had 15 participants (16.66%), and an additional 15 respondents (16.66%) were involved in other platforms. This data underscores the prevalence of Facebook and YouTube, with a notable presence on Instagram and TikTok, while Snapchat and other platforms had fewer participants. The following table shows this data.

Table 02: Involvement of social media by the Respondents

Social media	Frequency (N=90)	Percentage
Facebook	70	77.77
YouTube	67	74.44
Instagram	47	52.22
TikTok	42	46.66
Snapchat	15	16.66
Others	15	16.66
• Multipole responses		

Ayan Ahmed a case of this study has been using an electronic device which is smartphone for 2 years. During Covid-19 his father gave it to him and permitted to use it for online classes. The main purposes of using it to attend online classes. But at present he uses this smartphone for gaming, watching video, hearing music and to use social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, Imo, Instagram, twitter etc. Ayan Ahmed said,

*“At the starting time of using smartphone I used it only for attending online classes because of spreading Covid-19 in the whole world, but with changing of time I use smartphone for gaming, using social media, watching movies in OTT platforms, hearing music regular along with that using social media related apps”.*

### Involvement in Online Games

The types of games played by youth in Bangladesh, the data from 90 respondents revealed diverse gaming preferences. No one is out of gaming experience in their youth age. 35 respondents out of

90 consist 38.88% high level involvement in online game where 47% in medium level and 15% are low level gamer. The most popular games include Free Fire, favored by 57 respondents (63.3%), followed by PUBG played by 48 individuals (53.3%). Additionally, Clash of Clans was enjoyed by 25 respondents (27.8%), Online Cricket by 30 (33.3%), Online Soccer by 20 (22.2%), and Sniper 3D by 12 (13.3%). A smaller group of respondents, 5 in total (5.6%), expressed an interest in other types of games. This diverse range of gaming choices reflects the adolescents' varied gaming interests.

## Preferences in OTT Platforms by Youth

From the 90 respondents surveyed about their preferences in OTT platforms, Netflix stood out as the dominant choice with 42 individuals, accounting for 46.46%. Amazon Prime was the second most popular platform, chosen by 30 respondents or 33.33% of the sample. On the other hand, local platforms showed a moderate following; Toffee had 18 users (20%), while Bongo was preferred by 12 individuals, making up 13.33% of the respondents. Bioscope appealed to 11 of those surveyed, representing 12.23%. Additionally, other OTT platforms not specifically listed garnered the attention of 15 respondents, indicating a 16.7% preference rate, at last, 10 respondents do not experience any OTT movie, play or web series. That means total 89% youth in Dhaka city watch various contents on OTT platform and 11% did not experience it. The data reveals a strong inclination towards global platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime, while also highlighting the presence of regional platforms in the OTT space.

About this issue Ayan Ahmed (15) said,

*"I like to watch Hollywood Movies. So, I use Netflix app and bought subscription annually to watch movies conveniently. Moreover, I have installed Toffee app in my mobile through which I can see cricket live telecast".*

## Electronic Device Usage Patterns

In the study the usage patterns of electronic devices among the youth of Dhaka city are detailed as follows:

67% of respondents use electronic devices for studying. This high percentage indicates that a significant portion of youth utilize technology for educational purposes, reflecting the importance of digital resources in their academic lives. 70% engage in gaming. This suggests that gaming is a highly popular activity, potentially contributing to online addiction among the youth. 96% use social media. The near-universal use of social media highlights its pervasive role in the daily lives of the youth, possibly impacting their social interactions and mental health.

100% that means total 90 respondents' responses that they watch videos, including YouTube and TikTok. This indicates that video content consumption is a universal activity among the youth, emphasizing the significant influence of visual media. 75% respondents listen to songs and watch movies or plays. This shows that a majority of the youth also use their devices for entertainment purposes beyond social media and gaming.

23% from total population create content for Facebook. This indicates a smaller but notable segment of youth are active content creators on social media. 27% create content for TikTok. Similar to Facebook, a significant portion of the youth are involved in content creation on TikTok, suggesting a trend towards engaging actively rather than passively consuming media.

The data demonstrates that the youth of Dhaka city heavily rely on electronic devices for a variety of activities, with an overwhelming majority engaging in social media and video consumption. Educational use is also prominent, but the high levels of gaming and entertainment use suggest a balanced, if not skewed, focus on leisure activities. The involvement in content creation on platforms like



Facebook and TikTok indicates a trend towards active participation in digital spaces, which could contribute to a deeper digital dependency and potential for online addiction. Overall, these usage patterns highlight the multifaceted ways in which digital dependency manifests among the youth, impacting various aspects of their lives.

### Medium of Internet Data Usage

94% of respondents use WiFi for internet connectivity and 56% of respondents use mobile data for internet connectivity. Among the respondents, 65% use both WiFi and mobile data, particularly during periods of outside movement. The overwhelming majority of respondents rely on WiFi for internet connectivity, indicating its widespread availability and accessibility in urban areas like Dhaka city. However, a significant portion also utilizes mobile data, suggesting that internet access is not solely restricted to fixed locations but extends to mobile environments as well. The usage of both WiFi and mobile data, especially during periods of outside movement, highlights the importance of seamless connectivity for the youth, enabling them to stay connected and engaged regardless of their location. This reliance on multiple connectivity methods underscores the integral role of the internet in their daily lives, potentially contributing to higher levels of online engagement and digital dependency.

### Factors Promoting to Online Addiction

There are several factors which promote online addiction. This study narrowed it down to unlimited internet access, negligence of parents, lack of self-control, peer pressure and loneliness. The most common factor to promote online addiction is unlimited internet access. 65 adolescents along with 72.22% think that unlimited internet access the main factor promoting online addiction. Adolescent is the age of finding it difficult to captivate self-control. For this very reason, 73 adolescents along with 81.11% think that lack of self-control is another prime factor to promote online addiction. Chart-02 showed the data related to this aspect.

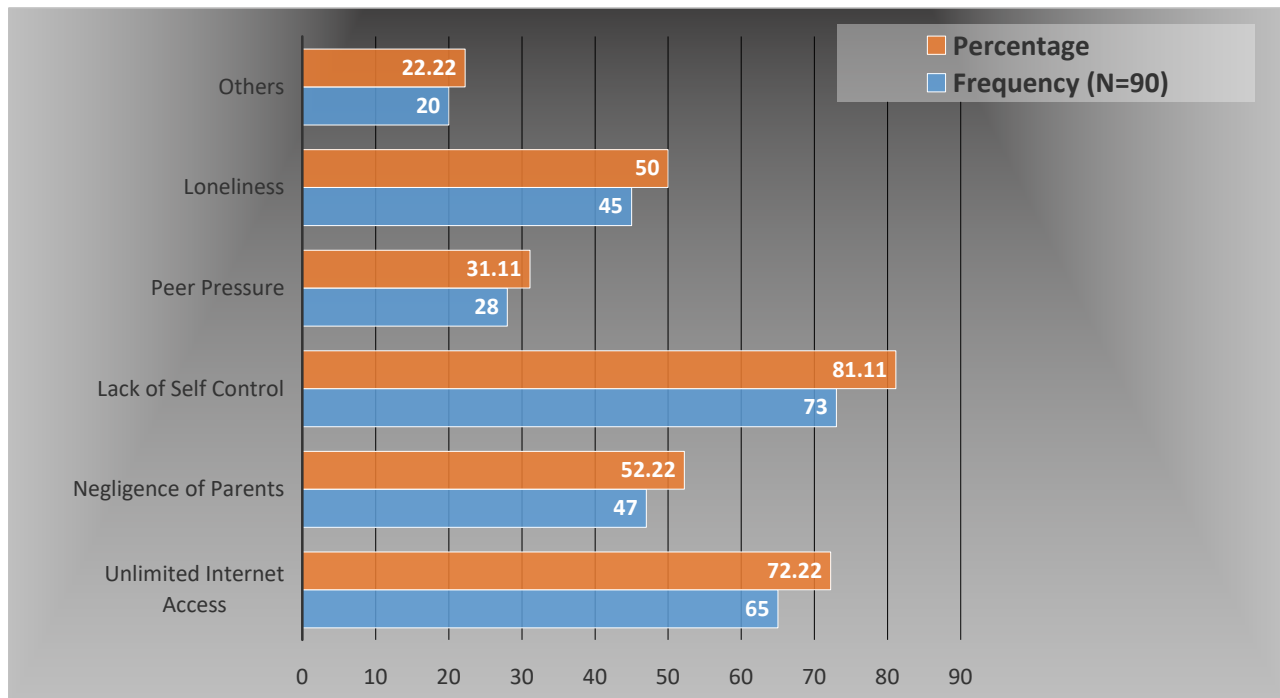


Chart 02: Factors Promoting to Online Addiction

### 4.3 Impact of Online Addiction

#### Spending Time in Online

This study observed that 45 adolescents with 50% are engaged with online activities for around 3-5 hours which is not expected for an average student criterion. 3-5 hours of a student's life cannot waste on online activities. After that 30 adolescents with 33.33 percentage spend their time on activities for around 1-3 hours which is moderate in effective measure. And lastly, 15 adolescents with 16.66% have admitted that they spend their 5-7 hours of daily life in online activities which is way too much for a regular adolescent student. The following table shows the data about this issue.

Table 03: Duration of Spending Time in Online

Time (In Hour)	Frequency	Percentage
1-3	30	33.33
3-5	45	50
5-7	15	16.66
Above 7	0	0

#### Preferable Time of a Day

Mostly students remain tangled with institutional schedule throughout the whole day. For this very reason, in this study we found that most students (85 students with 94.44%) prefer to use online related device at night (shown in Chart- 02). After that 21 students with 23.33% of our total students prefer to use device at afternoon. 12 students with 13.33% students prefer to use device at noon. This amount is the lowest one among all the sections because at noon they happen to be at school/college mostly. Lastly 21 students with 23.33% prefer to use online device in morning. It's clearly evident that most of the students prefer to use the device at night as they have enough free time at that moment.

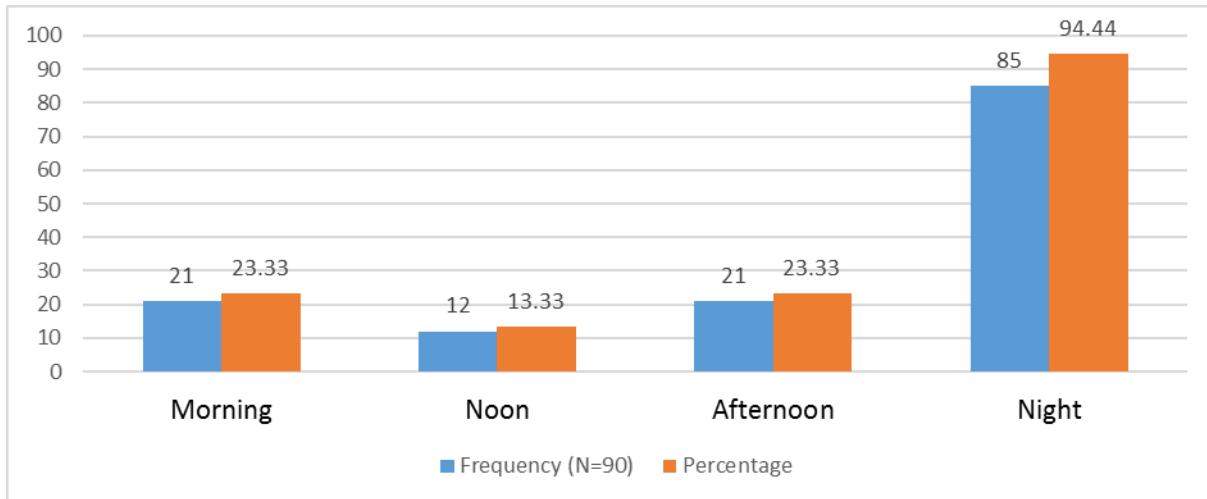


Chart 03- Preferable Time for Online Activities

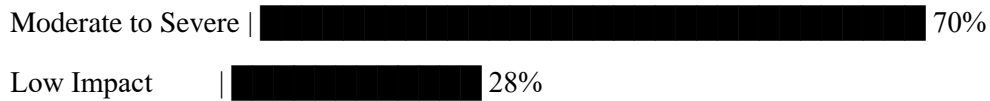
Abrar Taskin (16) is a student of Udayan Higher Secondary School, a case of this study said,

“I prefer night after 10 for internet browsing, net speed of this time is high. I generally watch Facebook real and TikTok video for 2-3 hours. It is my regular routine. I do not think it is addiction, it gives me entertainment.”



### Academic Impact

The data on the usage of internet and electronic devices among youth in Bangladesh reveals a significant pattern of digital dependency. This study found that shows that a substantial majority (75%) of the youth frequently engage with the internet and electronic devices, with 60% using them always and 15% often. Only a small minority rarely or never use these devices. However, the study identifies a critical issue: after 30-45 minutes of use for academic purposes, many youths tend to switch to addictive activities such as watching TikTok or browsing Instagram. This shift is indicative of an underlying problem of digital addiction, which poses several negative impacts on their study habits and overall academic performance. This study also observed that over 70% of students (42% + 30%) are experiencing moderate to severe negative impacts on their academic results due to digital dependency. On 28% students, this impact is low. This suggests that digital addiction is a widespread problem among the youth in Bangladesh, necessitating urgent attention and intervention.



Note: Bars represent the percentage of students affected.

Chart 04: Negative Impact of Digital Dependency on Academic Results

### Psycho-social Impacts

This study examines that over half (55.55%) of the respondents suffer from insomnia, indicating that excessive use of digital devices disrupts sleep patterns, leading to insufficient and poor-quality sleep. A significant portion (27.77%) of respondent's experience irritation, suggesting that constant online engagement can lead to heightened stress levels and irritability. Around one-sixth (16%) of the respondent's report anxiety, highlighting that online addiction contributes to increased anxiety levels, possibly due to social media pressure and constant connectivity. The data shows that online addiction leads to social isolation for some students (15.55%), as they become more engaged with their devices and less involved in face-to-face interactions. Additional psychological effects are reported by 17.77% of the respondents, indicating a variety of other mental health issues arising from online addiction. The high percentage of insomnia and notable instances of irritation, anxiety, and social isolation underscore the need for measures to address and mitigate online addiction among the youth in Bangladesh. These findings call for increased awareness, educational interventions, and support systems to help students manage their digital usage and maintain a healthy balance in their lives.

The social impacts of online addiction among youth are profound and multifaceted. This study examines that youth in Dhaka city are socially isolation (44.4%). Among 90 respondents, total 35% have weakened interpersonal relationships, lack in communication skills. This study also found that youth are neglecting of academic and extracurricular activities for online addiction.

This study observed that online addiction among youth in Bangladesh has significant social and psychological repercussions. With 46.6% (42 Respondents) of respondents experiencing cyberbullying and here 38 are female respondents and 61.11% feeling guilty about watching pornography and among them 45 respondents are male youth. These issues can lead to emotional distress, social withdrawal, trust issues, secrecy, and internal conflicts.

Sahriar Shuvo (18) is a grade 12 students of Dhaka City College said,

“My smartphone made my virtual world wonderful. I am very comfortable in chatting over messenger or WhatsApp rather face to face interaction. I do not feel lonely because I spend most of time in

virtual relationship. One major problem I realize that depression come in mind when full night I spend on online.”

### Physical Effects

The present study found that online addiction has widespread and severe physical impacts on youth in Bangladesh. The most prevalent issues include sleep disturbances (72%) and headaches/migraines (76%), followed by eye strain (53%) and metabolic problems (44.44%). Musculoskeletal issues, including back pain, and poor eating habits are also significant concerns. These findings underscore the urgent need for interventions to address the health consequences of excessive digital device use among young individuals. The Following table shows the data regarding physical effects on youth of online addiction.

Table 04: Physical Impacts of Online Addiction

Physical Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Eye Strain and Vision Problems	48	53%
Musculoskeletal Issues	15	17%
Back Pain	12	12%
Sleep Disturbances	65	72%
Metabolic Problems	40	44.44%
Headaches and Migraines	68	76%
Poor Eating Habits	36	40%
• Multipole Responses		

The study identifies negative impacts on social, mental, and physical health, as well as academic performance, attributed to online addiction. These adverse effects corroborate the notion that excessive online engagement is detrimental to overall well-being of youth in Dhaka city of Bangladesh.

Mounota Mostofa (18) is student of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College said about the physical effect on online addiction,

*“I am very much aware about online but when I start watching YouTube, I cannot resist myself finishing blog. It makes my existing Migraines problem high. I also feel that I cannot see anything clear for 15 minute anything after watching video. It effecting on my eyesight.”*

### 5. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study indicating widespread online addiction among youth in Dhaka city, here are some policy recommendations aimed at addressing this issue and promoting healthier digital habits:

#### Digital Literacy and Education Programs

Implement comprehensive digital literacy programs in schools and communities to educate youth about the potential risks of excessive online engagement and teach them how to use digital devices responsibly and productively.

## **Regulation of Online Content**

Develop and enforce regulations to ensure that online platforms provide age-appropriate and culturally sensitive content, particularly concerning social media, gaming, and Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms.

## **Parental and Educational Guidance**

Provide guidance and support to parents and educators on monitoring and managing youth's online activities, including setting limits on screen time and promoting offline activities.

## **Appointment of Social Workers and Psychologist**

Educational institutions or where youth are involved, need to appoint t of Social Workers and Psychologist for proper guidance or monitoring the youth. Government can make a policy to appoint 1 social worker for 100 students in every school and college.

## **Syllabus on Online Addiction**

Creating a syllabus on online addiction awareness is an excellent way to educate students about the potential risks and consequences of excessive internet use. Every private and public educational institutions with the guidance of education ministry can develop one or more courses regaining this aspect.

## **Promotion of Healthy Offline Activities**

Encourage participation in offline activities such as sports, arts, and community service to provide alternatives to excessive screen time and foster social interactions in real-life settings.

## **Mental Health Support Services**

Increase access to mental health support services, including counseling and therapy, to address the negative psychological impacts of online addiction and provide coping strategies for affected individuals.

## **Promotion of Positive Online Communities**

Support initiatives that promote positive online communities and safe digital spaces where youth can engage in constructive activities and connect with peers in a supportive environment.

## **Implementation of Screen Time Guidelines**

Develop and disseminate guidelines on recommended daily screen time limits for different age groups, with a focus on balancing online activities with other aspects of life such as sleep, physical activity, and face-to-face interactions.

## **Research and Monitoring**

Invest in ongoing research and monitoring of online behavior trends among youth to better understand the evolving challenges and inform evidence-based policies and interventions.

## **Collaboration with Tech Industry**

Collaborate with technology companies to develop tools and features that promote healthy digital habits, such as built-in screen time management features and content filters.

## Community Engagement and Awareness Campaigns

Launch community engagement initiatives and awareness campaigns to raise awareness about the risks of online addiction and empower youth, parents, educators, and policymakers to take proactive steps to address the issue.

By implementing these policy recommendations, policymakers can work towards mitigating the negative impacts of online addiction and creating a safer and healthier digital environment for youth in Dhaka city.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

Based on the provided data, it can be established that the youth in Dhaka city are experiencing online addiction. The universal use of electronic devices, extensive engagement with social media and online gaming, substantial daily time spent online, preference for nighttime usage, and the reported negative impacts collectively support this study hypothesis. Considering these factors, it is reasonable to conclude that a substantial portion of youth in Dhaka city exhibit signs of online addiction. However, it's important to note that further research and clinical assessments would be necessary to confirm this diagnosis definitively and to develop targeted interventions to address the issue effectively.

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