



## Psychological Effect of Internet Addiction during COVID-19

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### ABOUT THE STUDY

The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has significantly impacted people's life all around the world, especially since a global pandemic was declared in March 2020. The most overpowering and difficult tragedy for public health turned out to be the pandemic. Aside from the rising mortality rate, the pandemic produced a chaotic psycho-emotional environment and agonising psychological effects on people of all ages. People's mental health and wellness have suffered as a result of the unique experience of being quarantined, academic and professional career uncertainties, and pandemic anxiety. The general population has been compelled to go through more intense emotional reactions, psychological issues, and behavioural changes.

Global figures show that the prevalence of depression is dramatically increasing during the ongoing pandemic. According to a US study, depression has tripled during the pandemic compared to 2019 levels. The COVID-19 patients were found to have the highest burden (42%) followed by healthcare professionals (25%) and the general public (50.4%) (24%-26.9%). Similar trends were observed in Asian nations like India, Pakistan, Iraq, and China, where the frequency of depression among the general population varied from 20 to 45 percent. During the pandemic, a wide range of causes were found to be connected to depression. Excessive internet use during COVID 19 as a result of the lack of in-person social gatherings and lockdown was one such reason that was emphasised.

It is horrifying to see the trend of despair brought on the internet addiction amid the difficult pandemic period. Furthermore, if it is not taken into account now, this pandemic's long-term complication could have negative consequences. There has been a noticeable rise in the prevalence of depression in Pakistan, according to studies, but no research has been done to link internet addiction to depression. As a result, since there are

currently no data available for our population, this tendency must be detected. To effectively plan and administer early treatments to contain these addictions for present and future epidemics, research must be conducted in Pakistan to identify this pattern of causes, such as internet addiction.

It is widely known that many individuals use the internet as a coping strategy to reduce their internalising behaviours and release daily tensions. Overuse of the internet increases users' sense of autonomy, self-worth, and belongingness, which decreases their interest in the outside world and increases the likelihood that they will stay online. The increased degree of psychological arousal brought on by internet addiction also contributes to a host of physical and mental health issues, including as insomnia, decreased physical activity, appetite loss, a lack of social interactions, increased aggression, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Additionally, due to the rigorous lockdown during the epidemic, the internet served as the main source for news and amusement regarding health.

People with a history of medical conditions like psychiatric or chronic illness are more vulnerable as their pre-existing conditions deteriorate under such tense circumstances. Similarly, worse COVID-19 outcomes and progression among those with underlying chronic diseases may have contributed to elevated levels of anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms. It was expected that those with continuing family conflict would likewise experience greater rates of depression than individuals without such conflict. According to other studies, unresolved family issues may result in arguments and resentment that affect every family member. All family members' psychological well-being, academic success, and work-life balance may be impacted by strained relationships. The prevalence of depression and other psychological conditions has increased in Pakistan's population as a result of the pandemic. This study discovered a strong link between internet addiction and depression throughout the epidemic.

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