

A STUDY OF INTERNET USAGE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF DELHI***Shalki and Dr. Rashmi Choudhuri**

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Abstract

The goal of the current study was to examine the usage of internet and the relationship between three major purposes of internet usage that are entertainment, communication, and education among secondary school students of Delhi. Understanding how students use the internet for various purposes has grown crucial as digital technology becomes more and more integrated into daily life. The research involved a group of 300 students, equally divided between 150 boys and 150 girls, and the data were examined. The results indicated that there is no notable difference in internet usage between girls and boys. Additionally, there is no significant disparity between the genders in using the internet for communication and educational purposes. However, when it came to utilising the internet for entertainment, there was a noticeable gender difference. All three purposes of internet usage are positively and significantly correlated with each other. The correlation between entertainment and communication was $r = 0.437$, indicating a moderate positive relationship. The correlation between entertainment and education was $r = 0.220$, showing a low positive correlation. A moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.459$) was observed between communication and education. These results suggest that students' internet usage is multifunctional and interrelated, encompassing leisure, social interaction, and academic learning. The study implies the need for balanced internet use to maximise educational benefits.

Keywords: Internet usage, entertainment, communication, education, secondary school students.

INTRODUCTION

The internet has become an important aspect of human life in the twenty-first century, altering the way we learn, interact, and entertain ourselves. Amongst internet users, schoolchildren are the most active users, as they have grown up as native internet users amidst a fast-developing technological environment. The internet provides them with tremendous learning opportunities, interacting, and leisure activities, hence qualifying as an instrument of learning as well as a chance for getting distracted. Education is one of the main reasons why students utilise the internet. The internet facilitates independent learning through materials such as e-books, online manuals, virtual lessons, and learning videos. This leads to greater academic success and greater digital literacy. The internet has made information readily available than imagined (Alt & Roth, 2018). The internet offers immense educational potential by enabling independent learning through digital resources such as e-books, online tutorials, and educational videos, enhancing academic performance and digital literacy (Singh, 2023). Another fundamental element is communication. It represents another essential purpose of internet use. Platforms like WhatsApp, email, and social media foster collaboration, teamwork, and interaction among students, educators, and global learner communities, thus bridging traditional classroom boundaries (Azzaakiyyah, 2023). However, these benefits come with challenges, such as over-reliance on online communication can lead to reduced face-to-face interaction and heightened exposure to online risks such as cyberbullying and misinformation (Verduyn, Schulte-Strathaus, Kross, & Hülshager, 2021). The entertainment purpose of internet use includes online gaming, streaming music and videos, and social media browsing. While these activities offer relaxation and creativity, overindulgence can cause distraction from studies, poor time management, and

even addictive behaviour. In today's educational ecosystem, understanding how students balance these three purposes, educational, communicative, and entertainment use, is essential. With increasing accessibility to smartphones and affordable data, internet usage among school students in India has grown exponentially (Gikas & Grant, 2013). In order to create balanced digital strategies and interventions that encourage responsible and productive internet use, educators, parents, and policy makers must have a thorough understanding of these usage patterns.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to a cross-sectional study by Bhawe et al. (2023) in North Delhi, India, 86.2% of 377 schoolchildren aged 11 to 16 utilised the Internet, mostly for social networking (24.62%), gaming (37.23%), and surfing (30.77%), with little use for academic purposes. Even though the majority had Facebook accounts, only 69% of them used privacy settings, and only 62.76% of them knew what cyberbullying was. This suggests that people are not digitally literate and engage in harmful online conduct. Similarly, Hazarika et al. (2024), Indian teenagers regularly utilised the Internet for social media and enjoyment, logging on for extended periods of time and exhibiting early warning indicators of problematic use. Aslanidou and Menexes (2008) discovered that the primary reasons Greek teenagers accessed the Internet were for communication and entertainment, with education coming in second. The study also noted socioeconomic disparities, where urban and affluent youth had greater access. Tsitsika et al. (2008) further emphasised that time spent online, parental control, and peer influence significantly predicted problematic Internet use. Gender differences in Internet usage have been widely observed across contexts. In India, Chandel and Lakhani (2018) found that boys spend more time on gaming and entertainment, while girls tend toward communication and social media. Devi and Devi (2023) observed comparable

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results among higher secondary students in Manipur, noting that males were more involved in recreational web surfing, while females tended to use the Internet for educational purposes. Similarly, Kaur and Kaur (2019) identified notable gender differences among university students in Punjab. Internationally, Dufour et al. (2016) found that girls used social networking more than boys, although boys were more likely to experience internet-related issues and addictive behaviours. Mari et al. (2023) confirmed that gender plays a crucial role in internet addiction vulnerability, mediated by emotional and behavioural factors. Studies by Lin and Yu (2008) in Taiwan and Hu et al. (2012) in China also reinforced these gendered usage patterns.

The relation between academic achievement and Internet use has been the subject of numerous studies. While excessive, uncontrolled Internet use resulted in distractions, Mir and Paray (2018) discovered that moderate, intentional use improved academic results. Siraj et al. (2015) and Al-Menayes (2015) noted similar trends among Malaysian and Middle Eastern students, respectively. Conversely, Singh and Patil (2020) highlighted physical health issues (eye strain, sleep disturbances) linked to prolonged screen time, reinforcing the need for balanced usage. From a behavioural and theoretical perspective, Fusilier and Durlabhji (2005) explained how Indian students use the Internet using the “Technology Acceptance Model and Theory of Planned Behaviour”, demonstrating how social norms and perceived utility affect online involvement. Ozkisi and Topaloglu (2015) observed that university students’ Internet use was driven by academic and entertainment motives, with varying awareness of digital applications. Recent interventions, such as that by Javed et al. (2020) in Kerala, demonstrate that educational programs significantly improve students’ understanding of safe and responsible Internet use, suggesting that school-based digital literacy initiatives can mitigate risks of addiction and unsafe practices. According to research, schoolchildren use the Internet more for amusement and socialization, with education coming in second. Gender differences, socioeconomic background, parental supervision, and awareness levels critically influence patterns of use. Moreover, a limited understanding of cyber safety and online privacy contributes to vulnerabilities such as addiction, cyberbullying, and exposure to inappropriate content. The findings underscore the pressing need for structured digital literacy programs, parental involvement, and educational interventions to promote safe, balanced, and meaningful Internet use.

Need and Significance of the Study

With the rapid expansion of digital infrastructure in India, internet access among school students has become ubiquitous. Students increasingly rely on digital tools for learning, connecting, and leisure. While these changes offer great potential for academic enrichment and global exposure, they also bring with them new problems, such as addiction, distraction, and an imbalance between the various uses.

Understanding the usage of internet for different purposes among students is crucial for:

- Educators, to design balanced curricula integrating digital resources effectively.
- Parents, to monitor and guide responsible digital habits.
- Policymakers, to develop school-based digital literacy and awareness programs.

The findings will also help identify whether entertainment and communication usage outweigh educational benefits, which may affect academic performance and well-being. Hence, this study contributes to developing evidence-based guidelines for healthy digital behaviour among adolescents.

Research Gap

Research indicates that Internet usage among teenagers is a widespread occurrence. Studies conducted in different parts of the world, including India (Bhave et al., 2023; Chandel & Lakhani, 2018; Devi & Devi, 2023; Hazarika et al., 2024) and internationally (Aslanidou & Menexes, 2008; Dufour et al., 2016; Tsitsika et al., 2014), consistently show high levels of online activity. However, a common trend emerges: while students are active online, their usage is predominantly focused on entertainment, gaming, and communication, with limited academic utilisation. Furthermore, gender-based differences have been consistently noted, with males leaning toward recreational and gaming activities and females showing greater involvement in communication and social networking.

Despite these insights, significant gaps remain:

- Research focusing on secondary school students is limited, as most existing studies target either university students or specific geographic regions.
- Many studies explore patterns of use but fail to examine the interrelation of educational, communication, and entertainment purposes.
- There is limited focus on cyber safety awareness, parental supervision, and their relationship with Internet usage habits among Indian school-going adolescents.
- Although research has highlighted gender differences, few studies integrate this with purpose-wise Internet use and behavioural outcomes in the Indian school context.

Although several studies have explored internet addiction and general usage among adolescents, few have examined usage patterns specifically across three core purposes — educational, communication, and entertainment among Indian secondary school students. Moreover, limited attention has been given to comparative usage patterns and their combined impact on students’ academic and personal lives. Therefore, the present study aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive assessment of purpose-specific internet usage among school students, thereby offering deeper insights into their digital behaviours and their implications for educational planning.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the level of internet usage of secondary school students in Delhi.
2. To compare internet usage across genders among secondary school students in Delhi.
3. To compare the purpose-wise usage of the internet across genders among secondary school students in Delhi.
4. To find out the relationship between different purposes of internet usage among secondary school students in Delhi.

Null Hypotheses of the study

1. **H₀₁**: There is no significant difference between boys and girls in internet usage.
2. **H₀₂**: There is no significant difference between boys and girls in internet usage for educational purposes of secondary school students in Delhi.

3. **H₀₃**: There is no significant difference between boys and girls in internet usage for communication purposes of secondary school students in Delhi.
4. **H₀₄**: There is no significant difference between boys and girls in internet usage for entertainment purposes of secondary school students in Delhi.
5. **H₀₅**: There is no significant correlation between educational, communication, and entertainment purposes of internet usage of secondary school students in Delhi.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study uses a descriptive survey design and is quantitative in nature. Its goal is to describe the usage of the internet for different purposes among secondary school students in Delhi

Sample and Sampling technique of the study

Students in class IX of Delhi's government secondary schools are included in the study. Using a stratified random sampling technique, 300 students, 150 boys and 150 girls, were chosen as a sample.

Research Tool

A self-constructed rating scale titled "*Internet Usage Scale for Secondary School Students*" was used, spread over three purposes:

1. Educational Purpose – For example: using the internet for homework, online classes, and academic videos.
2. Communication Purpose – For example: chatting with friends, communicating with teachers, participating in online discussions.
3. Entertainment Purpose – For example: gaming, watching movies, and social media browsing.

There are a total of 27 items on the rating scale. Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert scale:

3 = Always, 2 = Sometimes, 1 = Never

Experts in psychology and education verified the tool, and Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = 0.77$), which indicates strong internal consistency, was used to establish reliability.

Norms for the tool

Norms are calculated by using z-scores. The norms of scoring for items related to Internet usage, which consisted of 27 items, are given below.

Table 1. Norms of scoring of items related to internet usage

Category	Scores
Low Usage	Below 49 (49 included)
Average Usage	50-63 (50 included)
High Usage	Above 64 (64 included)

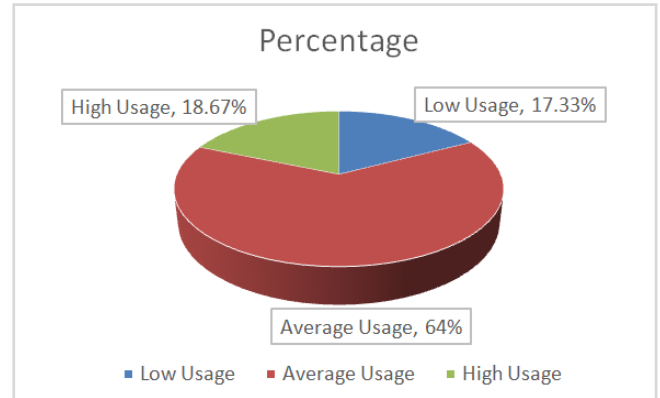
Analysis and Interpretation of collected data

Objective 1: To study the level of internet usage among secondary school students in Delhi.

Table 2. Level of internet usage among secondary school students in Delhi

Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Low Usage	52	17.3%
Average Usage	192	64%
High Usage	56	18.67%

Pie Chart: Showing the level of internet usage among secondary school students



Interpretation: The data presented in Table 2 shows the level of internet usage among school students, categorised into low, average, and high usage levels. Out of the total 300 respondents, 17.3% fall under the low usage category, 64% under the average usage category, and 18.67% under the high usage category. The majority of the students, therefore, belong to the average usage group, indicating that most students use the internet moderately for various purposes such as education, communication, and entertainment.

Objective 2: To compare the internet usage across genders among secondary school students in Delhi.

Table 3. Comparison of the internet usage across genders

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Remark
Boy	150	57.18	7.68	298	1.09	0.27	Not Significant
Girl	150	56.26	6.80				

Interpretation: The internet usage of boys and girls was compared using an independent-samples t-test. Boys ($M = 57.18$, $SD = 7.68$) and Girls ($M = 56.26$, $SD = 6.80$) did not substantially differ in their mean scores, according to the data ($t(298) = 1.09$, $p = 0.27$). There is no statistically significant difference between boys and girls because the p-value is higher than 0.05. The null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that internet usage is comparable for boys and girls.

Objective 3: To compare the purpose-wise usage of the internet across genders among secondary school students in Delhi.

Table 4.1: Comparison of internet usage for education across genders

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Remark
Boy	150	21.14	3.92	298	-1.69	0.09	Not Significant
Girls	150	21.85	3.36				

Interpretation: Table 4.1 indicates the comparison of internet usage for educational purposes among boys and girls. Boys score 21.14 on average with a standard deviation of 3.92, while girls score 21.85 on average with a standard deviation of 3.36.

The result is statistically not significant because the p-value that was obtained is more than 0.05. This suggests the null hypothesis is not rejected. The degree to which both groups utilise the internet for educational purposes is comparable.

Table 4.2. Comparison of Internet Usage for Communication Purposes among genders

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Remark
Boy	150	15.70	2.60	298	-0.25	0.79	Not Significant
Girl	150	15.78	2.74				

Interpretation: An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare internet usage for communication purposes between boys and girls. The findings showed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of boys ($M = 15.70$, $SD = 2.60$) and girls ($M = 15.78$, $SD = 2.74$), with $t(298) = -0.25$, $p = 0.79$. The difference between boys and girls is not statistically significant because the p-value is higher than 0.05. Therefore, we do not reject the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference in how boys and girls use the internet for communication.

Table 4.3. Comparison of Internet Usage for Entertainment Purposes among genders

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Remark
Boy	150	20.34	3.39	298	4.76	0.00	Significant
Girl	150	18.62	2.81				

Interpretation: The table compares the amount of time boys and girls spend on the internet for entertainment purposes. Whereas the average score for girls is 18.62 with a standard deviation of 2.81, the average score for boys is 20.34 with a standard deviation of 4.39. The result is statistically significant, as the obtained p-value is less than 0.05. This suggests that the amount of time that boys and girls spend on the internet for entertainment varies significantly. Given their higher mean score, boys are more likely to use internet for entertainment than girls.

Objective 4: To find out the relationship between different purposes of internet usage among secondary school students in Delhi.

Table 4.4. Result (Correlation Table Summary)

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)	Relationship	Remark
Entertainment ↔ Communication	0.437**	0.000	Moderate Positive	Significant
Entertainment ↔ Education	0.220**	0.000	Low Positive	Significant
Communication ↔ Education	0.459**	0.000	Moderate Positive	Significant

($p < 0.01$ indicates significance at the 1% level)

Interpretation

The researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to calculate Pearson's r, or Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, to determine the association between education, communication and entertainment purposes. The correlation matrix shows that all three purposes of internet usage Entertainment, Communication, and Education are positively and significantly correlated with one another.

- The correlation between Entertainment and Communication is $r = 0.437$, which indicates a moderate positive correlation. This means that as internet usage for entertainment increases, usage for communication also tends to increase.
- The correlation between Entertainment and Education is $r = 0.220$, showing a low positive correlation, meaning students who use the internet more for entertainment also show a slight tendency to use it for educational purposes.
- The correlation between Communication and Education is $r = 0.459$, which indicates a moderate positive correlation, suggesting that students who use internet more for communication also use it for educational activities.

At the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$), all of the relations are statistically significant, providing compelling evidence that these associations are not the result of chance.

Conclusion

The lower percentage of students in the low usage category indicates that only a small portion of students have limited exposure to or dependency on the internet, which may be due to factors like limited access to devices, restricted time, or parental guidance, according to analysis of internet usage levels among boys and girls in Delhi's secondary schools (Korkmaz et al., 2022). On the other hand, the high usage group represents a minority who may be more dependent on the internet for prolonged hours, possibly for gaming, social media, or continuous online engagement (Kumar & Mondal, 2018). To compare the internet usage between the genders of secondary school students in Delhi. The findings show that there are no notable differences in the Internet usage of boys and girls in Delhi. While the mean score for boys is marginally higher than that of girls, the difference is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. So, the usage of the internet among boys and girls is the same. To evaluate how Delhi secondary school students use the internet for different purposes. The use of the internet for educational reasons is not significantly influenced by gender, it concludes. Students of both sexes utilise the internet equally for tasks like online education, homework completion, study resources, and taking part in scholarly debates. As a result, both genders use the internet at similar levels for education.

Similarly, there is no difference between both the genders using internet for communication purpose. As a result, gender has no discernible impact on pupils' Internet usage levels. This suggests that when it comes to how boys and girls utilise the internet for communication, there are no appreciable differences. The degree to which both groups use the internet for interpersonal communication is comparable. In conclusion, it can be concluded that students' use of the internet for communication-related purposes is not significantly influenced by their gender. For communication purposes like messaging, social networking, and chatting, both boys and girls use the internet equally. On the other hand, the result reveals that there is difference between genders in using internet for entertainment purpose. Boys engage more in entertainment activities such as online gaming, streaming videos, music, movies, and social media entertainment, compared to girls. The significant difference suggests that boys are more inclined toward using the internet for leisure and recreational activities, possibly due to a greater interest in gaming, sports, and visual content. Girls, although active internet users, may focus more

on communication and educational purposes rather than entertainment (Chandel & Lakhani, 2018). The higher mean of boys (20.34) compared to girls (18.62) clearly reflects this variation in usage patterns. It is concluded that boys significantly differ from girls in their internet usage for entertainment purposes. Boys make greater use of the internet for recreational and leisure activities, while girls engage comparatively less in entertainment-oriented online content. This suggests that gender influences entertainment-based internet usage, with boys being more active in this domain. Additionally, to determine the connection between the various reasons Delhi secondary school students use the internet. All three aspects of internet use, entertainment, communication, and education, have a strong positive correlation, it may be concluded. Students who use the internet for one reason may also use it for other reasons. This demonstrates how the internet may support a variety of demands for students, such as social connection, pleasure, and intellectual pursuits.

DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals that average internet usage is the most common among school students, reflecting a balanced and moderate approach towards digital engagement. This trend is a positive indicator of healthy internet habits, as most students are integrating internet use into their daily activities without showing signs of overuse or complete avoidance. The non-significant difference in Internet Usage between boys and girls may be attributed to the widespread availability and accessibility of digital devices and the internet for both genders (Thanuskodi, 2013). In recent years, schools, families, and society have provided equal opportunities for digital engagement to both boys and girls for educational, communication, and entertainment purposes (Owens et al., 2023). The findings of the study reveal that there is no significant difference between boys and girls in their internet usage for educational purposes. This suggests that both boys and girls have similar levels of engagement in using digital resources for learning. With the growing emphasis on digital education, online platforms, and e-learning tools, access to educational content has become gender-neutral (Spathopoulou et al., 2026). In the current educational environment, both boys and girls rely on the internet for academic support, online tutorials, educational videos, and virtual classrooms (Apuke & Lyendo, 2018). The similar mean scores indicate that both genders are equally motivated and capable of utilising the internet for academic improvement. The findings indicate that similar usage of internet for communication is there for both genders. The prevalence of smartphones and social media platforms, which promote online engagement irrespective of gender, may explain this similarity. The minimal difference in mean scores implies that both groups are equally inclined to use online messaging apps, email, and social media for maintaining social connections and academic communication (Aslanidou & Menexes, 2008). The result aligns with current digital trends, where communication apps (such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and email platforms) are used extensively by all students, making gender-based differences less prominent. This outcome suggests that schools and educators should consider both genders equally when designing digital communication and awareness programs, as their habits and preferences are comparable. Overall, the study highlights that internet communication behaviour among students is gender-neutral, reflecting the democratisation of digital access and equal participation in online social interaction.

The present study indicates a significant difference between boys and girls in internet usage for entertainment purposes, with boys scoring higher. This finding reflects the common pattern where boys tend to spend more time on online gaming, sports content, streaming platforms, and entertainment videos. In contrast, girls may prefer other online activities such as communication or academics (Devi & Devi, 2023). This difference may be attributed to psychological preferences, leisure choices, and social influences, which shape how each gender uses the internet. With increased access to digital devices, entertainment content has become easily accessible, and boys seem to engage with such content more frequently (Dufour et al., 2016). The results of this study emphasise that the primary reasons for using the internet entertainment, communication, and education are interconnected. The positive correlations indicate that students do not limit their internet use to a single purpose; rather, they integrate multiple functions in their daily usage patterns. The moderate correlation between communication and entertainment ($r = 0.437$) suggests that many communication tools (e.g., social media, messaging apps) are also sources of entertainment. Similarly, the moderate correlation between communication and education ($r = 0.459$) indicates that communication platforms are often used for academic collaboration, online group discussions, and sharing study resources. The low correlation between entertainment and education ($r = 0.220$) reflects that while these are distinct areas, some overlap exist, students might use educational YouTube channels, gamified learning platforms, or educational entertainment content. Overall, the results emphasise that internet usage among students is multidimensional and interconnected, reflecting the evolving digital ecosystem that simultaneously supports learning, interaction, and leisure.

Suggestions

Schools should include comprehensive digital literacy modules that teach online ethics, cyber safety, and the productive use of technology for academic purposes. Healthy digital habits should be promoted at home by educating parents about the dangers of the Internet and motivating them to keep an eye on their kids' usage. Institutions should organise awareness drives emphasising the importance of time management, screen breaks, and the mental and physical effects of excessive use. Initiatives should be designed to address gender-based Internet behaviour, motivating boys to utilise the Internet for learning and guiding girls toward safe, confident digital participation. It implies that teachers should receive training on digital pedagogy and student mentoring, enabling them to guide learners in using online resources effectively. Policymakers should establish frameworks that promote online safety education, prevent digital addiction, and ensure age-appropriate Internet use among students.

Limitations

- The study was conducted on a sample of 300 school students only, which may not be sufficient to generalise the findings to all school students of Delhi in different regions or educational boards.
- The data was collected from a specific locality or region. Therefore, the results may not represent students from other geographical areas with different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

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