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A Review Study of Internet Usage and Its Psycho- Educational Impacts on Privileged and Underprivileged Students

Shalki
Research Scholar
Faculty of Education
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India
E-mail: shalki2793@bhu.ac.in
Prof. (Dr.) Rashmi Choudhuri
Professor
Faculty of Education
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India

Abstract

In the contemporary digital era, the internet has become a cornerstone of educational advancement and social interaction. It has become an indispensable tool in modern education, offering a myriad of resources that enhance learning experiences. However, the digital divide between privileged and underprivileged students presents significant disparities in internet usage and its consequent psycho-educational impacts. The ways in which students engage with the internet vary significantly based on numerous factors, including socio-economic status and area.

Privileged students often have unrestricted access to high-speed internet, enabling them to leverage digital tools for enhanced learning experiences, personalized education, and global networking. Privileged students benefit psychologically from their digital engagement, reporting increased motivation, higher self-esteem, and a sense of accomplishment from their effective use of technology. On the other hand, excessive internet use can have negative psychological consequences like stress, social isolation, and anxiety. On the other hand, disadvantaged students have obstacles that prevent them from fully utilizing online learning materials, such as restricted device access, erratic connectivity, and low digital literacy. The lack of access also fosters feelings of exclusion and low self-esteem, compounding existing inequalities.

This study through review of empirical researches seeks to identify these patterns and understand the implications of internet usage on students' academic performance and overall well-being from different socio-economic backgrounds. The integration of internet technology into education has

revolutionized learning processes, offering vast resources and new pedagogical methods. But not every student gains from these developments in the same way. NEP 2020 also brought attention to the issue of the digital gap, which must be eradicated in order to reap the benefits of online and digital learning, including the availability of reasonably priced computers. It is crucial that issues of fairness are sufficiently addressed when using technology for online and digital learning.

Keywords: Internet Usage, Privileged Students, Underprivileged Students, Academic achievement, Psychological Well-being.

1. Introduction

The internet has revolutionized education, offering a wealth of resources and opportunities for students. However, the uneven distribution of access creates disparities between privileged and underprivileged students. While disadvantaged students encounter numerous obstacles, such as restricted access to gadgets, Internet connectivity, and educational materials, wealthier students typically enjoy frictionless internet access. These disparities have profound psycho-educational impacts, influencing not only academic outcomes but also students' psychological well-being.

Privileged students, typically from higher-income and social status, often have better access to reliable internet and advanced digital devices. This access facilitates a wide range of educational activities, including online learning and interactive educational tools. Privileged students experience enhanced academic performance due to their ability to utilize digital resources extensively. These students participate more actively in online discussions, access diverse educational content, and engage in self-directed learning. Privileged students benefit psychologically from their digital engagement, reporting increased motivation, higher self-esteem, and a sense of accomplishment from their effective use of technology. They also experience enhanced social interactions through online platforms, contributing to better social skills and a stronger sense of community. Conversely, the excessive usage of internet negatively impacts the psychological well-being results into anxiety, sleep deprived.

In contrast, underprivileged students, frequently from low-income, face significant barriers. They often rely on public Wi-Fi, shared devices, or limited mobile data plans, restricting their ability to engage fully in educational opportunities. Underprivileged students face significant challenges, including incomplete assignments, lack of access to online resources, and lower participation in virtual classes. These issues contribute to a widening academic achievement gap exhibiting lower grades and reduced academic opportunities than their privileged counterparts. The psychological effects of internet usage also vary markedly between privileged and underprivileged students. For underprivileged students, the pressure to perform academically while lacking adequate resources can lead to heightened stress and anxiety. This digital exclusion fosters feelings of inadequacy and marginalization, adversely affecting their mental health and overall well-being.

2. The Current Study

The current study is based on reviews of previous studies about the impact of Internet Usage on academic achievement and psychological well-being of privileged and underprivileged students. Also, the study is based on reviews that how socio-economic background and geographical area impacts the usage of internet The goal of this study is to produce results that gives the holistic approach practices to address a wide information of the state of internet usage among privileged and underprivileged students focusing on the issues faced by them. The results of earlier research served as the basis for this investigation. This review-based study aims to summarise the result of prior studies in this field.

2.1 Aim of the Study

The goal of this study is to assess how internet usage affected academic performance and psychological well-being of privileged and underprivileged students. For this, only those studies were included in which internet usage is related to psychological well-being and academic achievement. Students with higher-income and social status, often have better access to reliable internet whereas students frequently from low-income, face significant barriers. Also, the study focuses on the negative as well as positive impact on psychological well-being of students.

2.2 Research Question

Specifically, the study attempted to answer the following questions:

Q1. What is the impact of Internet Usage on academic achievement of privileged and underprivileged students?

Q2. What is the impact of Internet Usage on Psychological well-being of privileged and underprivileged students?

3. Methodology

3.1- Method

Relevant studies were included through a systematic literature review. The studies were included from the timeframe of 2004 to 2024. Firstly, an electronic search of English language databases was conducted. The electronic search was applied in ERIC, SCOPUS, Google Scholar, Shodhganga, Pub Med, Taylor and Francis, Academia and Research gate. The search included keywords related to “Internet Usage and Psychological well-being of students”, “Internet usage and academic achievement of students”, “Internet usage for privileged students” and “Internet usage for underprivileged students”. The selection of journals was based on criteria that its scope and aims deal with internet usage and its Psycho-educational impact on students with different background.

A few procedures were used in order to choose the articles. First, Prior published review studies were searched to identify additional studies in the same field and the title of the study was read and if it was found appropriate, it was saved to the folder. After then, the selected publications were carefully examined and evaluated to ensure that they met the study's general objectives. Furthermore, web search through Google was done using the

similar keywords from the electronic search. To select articles for inclusion it was determined that the articles met eligibility criteria: (1) the studies related to internet usage and its psycho educational impact, (2) the sample included students (3) studies based on privileged and underprivileged background and (3) Both quantitative & quantitative as well as mixed studies are included.

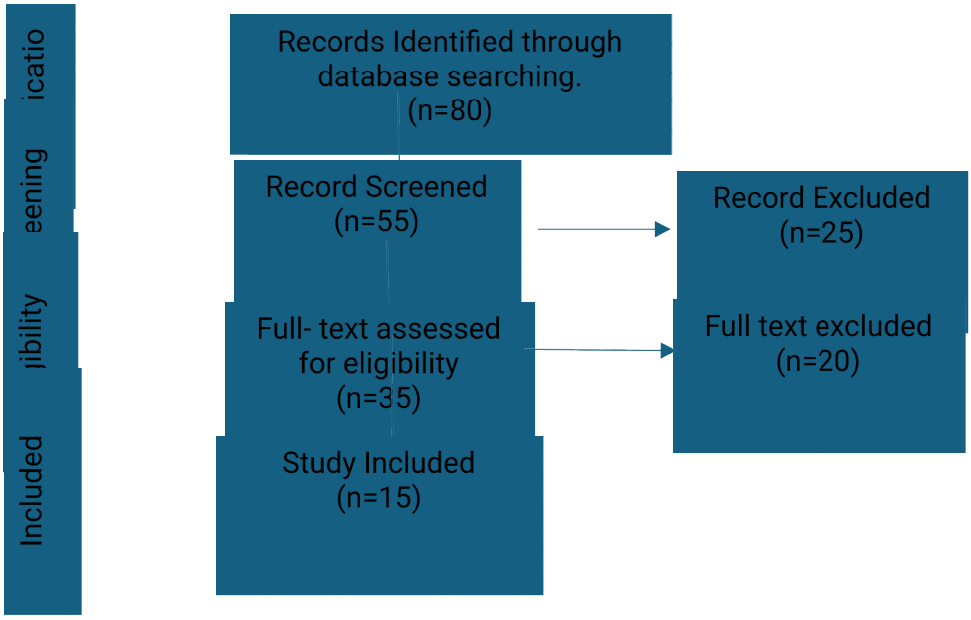

Fig 3.1.1: Flow Diagram- Study selection for review

3.2- Result

All of the existing research was incorporated in order to get the information of internet usage and its impact on academic achievement and psychological well-being of privileged and underprivileged students. The results of the research shows that the privileged students typically have access to high-speed internet and modern devices, enabling them to utilize online resources effectively. In contrast, underprivileged students often struggle with outdated technology or lack access altogether (George, 2024; Otayn, 2022). The results of an exploratory qualitative investigation from a constructivist grounded theory perspective were obtained in the study "Unsung voices of technology in school education." Unstructured interviews were performed with a purposive sample of 14 students, aged 6 to 14, 9 from disadvantaged and 5 from affluent family circumstances. Constructivist grounded theory methodology was used in the study's data analysis. The results show the experiences of privileged and underprivileged children differed with respect to access to internet, affordability of ICT device, quality teachers, parental support, and financial sponsorship (Deepa, Sujatha & Mohan, 2022). Also, in terms of area such as rural and urban impacts the accessibility and availability of internet. Ahmed (2024), in his study “The Digital Divide: Access to Technology in Rural vs. Urban Areas” finds that Rural areas may have less reliable

internet service compared to urban centres, exacerbating disparities in educational opportunities. The study finds that most of the privileged students report having consistent access to high-speed internet and personal digital devices, enabling extensive use of online learning platforms (Njeri & Tyam, 2024).

The inability to participate fully in digital learning can foster feelings of isolation and low self-esteem among these students which affect the well-being of students (Gilbert, McEwan, Bellew, Mills, & Gale, 2009). Furthermore, the impact on children's education and wellbeing of the COVID-19 pandemic that forced school closures has been unparalleled. A noticeable movement towards online learning has been brought about by the COVID-19 epidemic, which has drastically changed the educational scene. The lockdown had serious implications on mental health, resulting in psychological problems including frustration, stress, and depression (Chaturvedi, Vishwakarma & Singh, 2021).

4. Discussion

This review-based study critically examines existing literature on the disparities in internet usage and its psycho-educational impacts on privileged and underprivileged students. In the digital age, internet access has become a crucial factor in educational success and psychological well-being. However, significant gaps in access and usage between socio-economic groups persist, affecting students' academic achievements and psychological well-being. The differences in internet access and usage between rich and disadvantaged pupils have been the focus of earlier research on the "digital divide." Geographical location and socioeconomic background are important factors. This study adds to the body of literature by concentrating on the ways in which these differences impact the academic performance and general well-being of both rich and impoverished pupils. The rise of digital technologies has transformed education, yet significant gaps in access and usage persist between socio-economic groups. The findings reveal stark differences in internet access and usage patterns, with privileged students having more reliable internet access and digital devices compared to their underprivileged students. This disparity affects academic performance, where privileged students benefit from enriched learning experiences, higher engagement, and better academic outcomes. Conversely, underprivileged students struggle with incomplete assignments and limited participation in online learning, leading to lower academic performance. Privileged students benefit from enriched learning experiences, including access to virtual classrooms, online tutoring, and interactive educational tools. This translates into higher academic performance and better engagement with educational content.

The psychological impacts also vary, with privileged students experiencing positive effects such as increased motivation and self-esteem, while underprivileged students face higher levels of stress, anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy due to digital exclusion. The study highlights the need for targeted policy interventions to bridge the digital divide, promote educational equity, and support the psychological well-being of all students.

Researches consistently show a digital divide in internet access between privileged and underprivileged students. Privileged students, often from higher-income families,

typically have access to high-speed internet and personal digital devices. This access facilitates a wide range of educational activities, including online learning, research, and interactive educational tools. In contrast, underprivileged students, frequently from low-income or rural areas, face significant barriers. They often rely on public Wi-Fi, shared devices, or limited mobile data plans, restricting their ability to engage fully in educational opportunities. Less than 15% of Indian rural families (compared to 42% of urban Indian households) have internet access, according to the Key Indicators of Household Social Consumption on Education in India study, which is based on the 2017–18 NSSO.

The literature highlights substantial educational disparities resulting from unequal internet access. Studies indicate that privileged students experience enhanced academic performance due to their ability to utilize digital resources extensively. These students participate more actively in online discussions, access diverse educational content, and engage in self-directed learning. Conversely, underprivileged students struggle with incomplete assignments and reduced participation in virtual classrooms, leading to lower academic outcomes. The lack of access to digital tools and resources significantly hampers their educational progress and widens the achievement gap.

The psychological effects of internet usage also vary markedly between privileged and underprivileged students. Privileged students benefit psychologically from their digital engagement, reporting increased motivation, higher self-esteem, and a sense of accomplishment from their effective use of technology. They also experience enhanced social interactions through online platforms, contributing to better social skills and a stronger sense of community. In contrast, underprivileged students often face negative psychological impacts due to their limited internet access. Studies document higher levels of stress, anxiety, and frustration among these students, primarily due to their inability to complete online assignments or participate fully in virtual learning environments. This digital exclusion fosters feelings of inadequacy and marginalization, adversely affecting their mental health and overall well-being.

The COVID-19 outbreak that led to the closure of schools has had an unprecedented effect on children's education and well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly transformed the landscape of education, with a pronounced shift towards online learning. This study investigates the disparities in internet usage and the psycho-educational impacts on privileged and underprivileged students in the post-pandemic context. The global shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted pre-existing digital inequalities among students. While privileged students could seamlessly transition to virtual classrooms, underprivileged students faced significant barriers due to limited access to digital resources. The impact of these unprecedented times can be different for different age groups. The impact on children from deprived, disadvantaged, or vulnerable sections can be expected to be far more adverse than on children from privileged backgrounds. A recent study by UNICEF (2020) highlights that almost 1.2 billion schoolchildren are affected by the closures of schools as they contend with the realities of remote learning in the midst of the pandemic, and this has raised concerns about a global learning crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed large inequalities in access to technology, such as between rich and poor, rural and

urban, girls and boys, across and within countries. According to a 2020 Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) assessment, COVID-19 had a significant negative impact on the learning of around 240 million students who are currently enrolled in school throughout the Indian states. In a similar vein, according to an NCERT (2020) research, over 27% of students do not have access to smartphones or laptops for online learning.

The pandemic has intensified the digital divide. The study finds that most of the privileged students report having consistent access to high-speed internet and personal digital devices, enabling extensive use of online learning platforms. In contrast, only few of underprivileged students have reliable internet access at home. Many rely on intermittent public Wi-Fi or shared devices, which constrains their ability to participate fully in online education. The disparities in internet access have profound educational consequences. Privileged students benefit from enriched learning experiences, including access to virtual classrooms, online tutoring, and interactive educational tools. This has translated into higher academic performance and better engagement with educational content. Conversely, underprivileged students face significant challenges, including incomplete assignments, lack of access to online resources, and lower participation in virtual classes. These issues contribute to a widening academic achievement gap, with underprivileged students exhibiting lower grades and reduced academic opportunities.

The psychological effects of internet usage during and after the pandemic also vary significantly between the two groups. Privileged students generally report positive psychological outcomes, such as increased motivation, higher self-esteem, and a sense of achievement from effective use of digital tools. Additionally, their ability to maintain social connections through online platforms has fostered a sense of community and belonging. In contrast, underprivileged students often experience negative psychological impacts due to limited internet access. These students report higher levels of stress, anxiety, and frustration, primarily due to their inability to complete online assignments or engage fully in virtual learning. The sense of digital exclusion has led to feelings of inadequacy and marginalization, adversely affecting their mental health and overall well-being

5. Suggestions

One of India's most persistent problems has been the digital gap that divides rural and urban areas. Rural India continues to lag behind due to inadequate connectivity, a lack of online infrastructure, and a lack of digital literacy, whereas city dwellers have unrestricted access to digital amenities and technical breakthroughs. The Indian government identified this gap in 2020 and worked to close it by creating the National Education Policy (NEP), which aims to make online education available to all students nationwide. Since the NEP seeks to use technology to make sure that education reaches the most rural areas of the nation, it is an essential step towards democratising education.

To overcome these disparities various strategies should be included to bridge this gap such as Policy Interventions, Governments and educational institutions play a crucial role in reducing the digital divide. Policies such as subsidized internet services, free

public Wi-Fi zones, and the distribution of affordable devices can significantly enhance access for underprivileged students. For example, India's "Digital India" initiative aims to expand rural broadband connectivity and promote digital literacy. Apart from this Community should take the Initiatives. Community-based programs, such as mobile libraries with internet-enabled devices and after-school tech centres, can provide underprivileged students with much-needed access to digital resources. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also play a vital role in distributing devices and offering digital skills training. Integration of Offline and Online Learning must be done. Blended learning models that combine offline and online methods can ensure inclusivity. For example, schools can provide printed materials alongside digital content, allowing underprivileged students to participate meaningfully in the learning process. Promoting digital literacy among students, parents, and teachers is essential for maximizing the benefits of internet usage. Workshops, webinars, and training sessions can equip underprivileged students with the skills needed to navigate digital platforms effectively.

6. Conclusion

The integration of internet technology into education has transformed learning processes but has also highlighted significant disparities between privileged and underprivileged students. While privileged students enjoy enhanced learning experiences and psychological benefits from their digital engagement, underprivileged students face barriers that impede their academic success and well-being. To bridge this gap, it is imperative that educational institutions and policymakers work collaboratively to address the digital divide through targeted investments in infrastructure, digital literacy programs, and equitable resource allocation. Only then can we ensure that all students have the opportunity to thrive in the digital age.

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