



The Role of Internet Addiction in the Stress-Coping Mechanisms of Paramilitary Personnel

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Abstract- Paramilitary personnel frequently encounter high-stress environments that require effective coping strategies to maintain mental health and operational readiness. With the widespread accessibility of the internet, many individuals turn to online activities as a means of coping with stress. However, when internet use becomes excessive and uncontrolled, it can evolve into internet addiction, which may impair rather than support psychological well-being. This review examines the role of internet addiction in the stress-coping mechanisms of paramilitary personnel, exploring the psychological, behavioural, and social consequences of maladaptive internet use. The paper also discusses the implications for mental health and mission readiness, and suggests avenues for intervention and healthier coping strategies.

Keywords- Internet Addiction, Stress-Coping Mechanisms, Paramilitary Personnel, Maladaptive Coping, Social Isolation, Operational Readiness, Sleep Disruption etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

Paramilitary personnel operate in challenging environments characterized by high risks, unpredictable situations, and the necessity for teamwork and operational efficiency. These conditions often result in significant stress, which, if not properly managed, can lead to psychological burnout, anxiety, and other mental health issues. Stress-coping mechanisms are therefore crucial for the well-being of paramilitary personnel.

In recent years, the internet has emerged as a widely used outlet for stress relief, offering quick access to social media, entertainment, gaming, and communication platforms. While moderate internet use can provide a valuable means of relaxation and social connection, excessive use, termed internet addiction, can undermine these benefits. This paper explores how internet addiction interacts with stress-coping mechanisms in paramilitary forces, with a particular focus on the negative consequences for both individual well-being and collective performance.

Internet Addiction and Stress-Coping Mechanisms

Internet Addiction: Definition and Dimensions

Internet addiction is defined as excessive, compulsive, and often uncontrollable internet use, leading to distress and impairment in daily life. It is often associated with maladaptive coping strategies, in which individuals seek refuge in online activities to escape from real-world stressors. The key dimensions of internet addiction include:

Compulsive use: An inability to control the amount of time spent online.



Escapism: Using the internet to avoid stress, negative emotions, or difficult situations.

Neglect of personal responsibilities: Prioritizing online activities over work, family, or social obligations.

For paramilitary personnel, who face unique stressors such as deployment, long working hours, and exposure to traumatic events, the potential for developing internet addiction is heightened. The internet may initially serve as a tool for coping with stress; however, excessive use can impair functioning and lead to social isolation, mental fatigue, and diminished resilience.

Stress and Coping in Paramilitary Settings

Paramilitary personnel often experience a combination of physical and psychological stressors, including high-intensity operations, threats to personal safety, long periods of separation from family, and exposure to violence or trauma. Coping strategies in these contexts can be broadly categorized as:

Active coping: Strategies that involve directly addressing stressors, such as problem-solving, seeking social support, and engaging in physical activity.

Avoidant coping: Strategies that seek to avoid or escape stressors, such as denial, disengagement, or retreating into solitary activities like excessive internet use.

While active coping is generally more adaptive and promotes resilience, avoidant coping strategies can provide temporary relief but often exacerbate long-term stress and anxiety. Internet addiction typically falls into the category of avoidant coping, offering a temporary distraction but ultimately failing to address the underlying sources of stress.

Internet Addiction as a Coping Mechanism in Paramilitary Personnel

Emotional Escape and Stress Relief

For paramilitary personnel, the internet may serve as a means of emotional escape, providing temporary relief from the intense pressure of their work. Online activities, such as gaming, social media browsing, or streaming entertainment, can offer a sense of disengagement from reality, allowing individuals to momentarily avoid stressors. This emotional detachment can be particularly appealing to those struggling with the psychological effects of trauma or prolonged periods of isolation.

However, while this coping mechanism may provide short-term relief, it does not address the underlying stressors. In fact, excessive reliance on the internet for stress relief can become self-reinforcing, leading to compulsive use and neglect of healthier coping strategies such as social support, exercise, and professional counselling.

Impact on Mental Health

Numerous studies have linked internet addiction to negative psychological outcomes, including increased levels of anxiety, depression, and stress. For paramilitary personnel, whose mental health is already at risk due to the demands of their occupation, internet addiction can exacerbate these challenges. Over-reliance on the internet can result in social isolation, disrupted sleep patterns, and impaired emotional regulation, all of which can diminish resilience and increase vulnerability to mental health disorders.



Moreover, internet addiction may prevent paramilitary personnel from seeking help when needed. The internet often provides a convenient but ultimately ineffective means of self-soothing, discouraging individuals from reaching out to peers, counsellors, or mental health professionals who could offer more effective support.

II. SOCIAL ISOLATION AND RELATIONSHIP STRAIN

One of the most significant consequences of internet addiction is the social isolation it can cause. While the internet can facilitate communication, excessive online engagement can reduce the time and energy spent on real-world relationships. For paramilitary personnel, whose connections with family, friends, and colleagues are critical for emotional support, this can be particularly damaging. Excessive internet use can lead to emotional disengagement from loved ones, diminished quality of communication, and increased relationship conflicts. Additionally, within paramilitary units, internet addiction can weaken the social bonds that are essential for teamwork and morale. As individuals withdraw from group interactions in favour of solitary online activities, the sense of camaraderie and mutual reliance that is crucial for operational success may erode.

Operational Implications of Internet Addiction

Impaired Team Performance

The collaborative nature of paramilitary operations necessitates high levels of communication, trust, and teamwork. Internet addiction, by fostering disengagement and social withdrawal, can undermine these key factors. Individuals who are preoccupied with their online activities may become less responsive to team dynamics, less communicative, and less emotionally available to support their peers. Over time, this can impair overall team performance, as trust and cohesion break down. In high-pressure situations where quick decision-making and mutual reliance are essential, the impact of internet addiction on team functioning can be severe. Poor communication, lack of focus, and weakened social bonds can jeopardize mission success and the safety of personnel.

Disrupted Sleep and Cognitive Impairment

Internet addiction is closely associated with disrupted sleep patterns, particularly when individuals engage in late-night internet use. Sleep is a critical component of both physical and psychological recovery, and sleep deprivation can significantly impair cognitive function, emotional regulation, and decision-making abilities.

For paramilitary personnel, who often operate in high-stakes environments that require full cognitive engagement and quick reflexes, the impact of sleep disruption can be dangerous. Chronic sleep deprivation, compounded by internet addiction, can lead to decreased operational effectiveness, reduced situational awareness, and increased risk of errors.

III. CONCLUSION

Internet addiction poses a significant challenge to the stress-coping mechanisms of paramilitary personnel. While the internet can serve as a temporary escape from the pressures of paramilitary life, excessive and uncontrolled use can lead to maladaptive coping, resulting in social isolation, mental health deterioration, and impaired operational performance. Addressing internet addiction in paramilitary settings requires a multifaceted approach, including the promotion of healthier coping strategies, awareness programs, and access to mental health support.

To mitigate the risks associated with internet addiction, it is essential to encourage paramilitary personnel to engage in active coping strategies, such as seeking social support, participating in



physical activities, and utilizing professional counselling services. By addressing internet addiction and promoting healthier coping mechanisms, paramilitary forces can improve both individual well-being and overall mission readiness.

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