

# Impact of Internet on Quality of Life during COVID-19 Pandemic among Scholars of Kashmir Valley: A Sample Survey

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## ABSTRACT

The print and electronic media in the current COVID-19 pandemic played important role by covering the news on COVID-19 pandemic and diverse steps taken by the government to combat with COVID-19 crisis. Education has been carried out worldwide during the COVID-19 via online which has been a challenge for faculty and students especially in conflict zone like Kashmir valley. The main aim of writing this paper was to assess the internet impact on Quality of life during the COVID-19 pandemic among the scholars of Kashmir. In this survey, a well-designed questionnaire was used to collect the information on 400 scholars from Kashmir valley via offline and online mode. The data collected was analysed using standard statistical tools with the help of statistical software SPSS (version 20). The scholars in majority reported that they are finding it convenient to attend online classes in present circumstances but frequent internet blocking, poor internet speed in Kashmir was the main hurdle in e-learning. The study revealed that majority of the scholars boys as well as girls reported that during COVID-19 pandemic media impacted slightly (boys=37.5%, girls=41.5%) on quality of their life. Further, 14.5% boys and 12.5% girl respondents were not able to decide about the impact of media during COVID-19 crisis on quality of life. Further, Hours spend on internet for COVID news and anxiety and nervous were positively and significantly correlated ( $P<0.01$ ), Hours spend on internet for COVID news and worry were positively and significantly

correlated ( $P<0.01$ ) and Hours spend on internet for COVID news and Quality of life were positively and significantly correlated ( $P<0.01$ ). The findings of our study also indicate that regardless of gender, residence, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on internet use and psychological well-being of scholars. It was suggested that scholars should not rely much on internet to manage distress and anxiety in the current COVID-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** Internet, Scholars, Kashmir, Quality of Life, Psychological, Social, Environmental, COVID-19 pandemic

## INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) formerly referred as “2019 novel coronavirus” is an infectious disease that has added new member to the human coronavirus family which causes respiratory illness with symptoms like difficulty in breathing, cough, fever. The appearance of novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (referred to as the COVID-19 virus) was in sea food market in Wuhan China (Chen et al, 2020). The period within which the symptoms of COVID-19 would appear is 2-14 days. The latest studies reported that COVID-19 is spread by direct touch with respiratory droplets (WHO, (COVID-19) Situation Report – 66). It was found that breathing droplets as a function of becoming heavy may be collected on various surfaces and

the individual if come into contact with these surfaces may become affected (Liu et al., 2020). There is a little proof of COVID-19 virus replication in drinking water or waste (WHO, 2011 and Water and Sanitation (Water Research Australia, 5 March 2020)). The COVID-19 virus has been declared as pandemic and every possible step should be taken to decrease the graph of this deadly virus. The first and significant thing is to consider the alternatives where direct contact with virus can be reduced. Worldwide COVID-19 pandemic threatens the regular life of every individual and when people are threatened by insecurity and, the fear of sickness increases, worry and stress develops as a reaction. It was found that COVID-19 lockdown resulted in reduced outside games, exercise and people of different age were encourages by WHO to have home-related exercises to increase physical and mental health of the people (WHO, 2020). In the literature we come across various studies related to COVID-19 spread and impact of COVID-19 on psychological and social life (e.g., Bilal et al., 2020). Currently the *coronavirus COVID-19* is affecting 218 countries and territories around the *world* and 2 international conveyances. The total number of global coronavirus cases has topped 101 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 2.18 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University latest update on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 104,601,795 and 2,269,164, respectively. The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 27,041,249 and 458,691 respectively. India comes in second place in terms of cases at 10,789,753 while the country's death toll soared to 154,713. The other countries with more than a million confirmed cases are Brazil (9,296,945), the UK (3,871,825), Russia (3,901,204), France (3,224,798), Spain (2,881,793), Italy (2,583,790), Turkey (2,492,977), Germany

(2,243,031), Colombia (2,114,597), Argentina (1,943,548), Mexico (1,874,092), Poland (1,527,016), South Africa (1,458,958), Iran (1,438,286), Ukraine (1,227,164), Peru (1,149,764) and Indonesia (1,111,671). Brazil currently accounts for the second highest number of fatalities at 226,666. The countries with a death toll above 20,000 are Mexico (159,533), the UK (109,335), Italy (89,820), France (77,238), Russia (74,684), Spain (59,805), Iran (58,189), Germany (59,595), Colombia (54,576), Argentina (48,426), South Africa (44,946), Peru (41,354), Poland (37,897), Indonesia (30,770), Turkey (26,237), Ukraine (23,089) and Belgium (21,173).

Education is necessary for the holistic development of the individual and for the upliftment of society. It is an ongoing process which makes a person civilized and cultured. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a lot of crisis in the field of education worldwide. It has hampered the uninterrupted continuity of the education system as millions of students are sitting at home due to COVID-19 pandemic. In the crisis internet, television, radio, print media has an eminent role to play (Gunther, 1998). It has been reported that adolescents were using social media and internet to deal with stress before COVID-19 spread (Henning and Voderer, 2001; Kirkaburun & Griffiths, 2018; Király et al., 2020) and it has been found that COVID-19 spread has increased the use of social media and internet use among adolescents (Wiederhold, 2020). In another study (Wong et al., 2020; Tian, Qin, Cao, & Gao, 2020), it was found that internet/social media addiction was linked with sleep deprivation and emotional problems.

The role of internet cannot be denied in today's era of Science and Technology, but is the access to internet fair in every country? Well not. When COVID19 pandemic hit the world, a wave of fear and trauma spread everywhere. People got confined to the places they were in. The only source of information remained TV, radio and Internet. There was a worldwide

lockdown due to this pandemic. Almost whole of the world had access to fast internet speed to keep people confined to home, to keep them updated with latest news, to talk to relatives and friends and the important one to not make education suffer due to pandemic. Alas! Communication blackouts in the region of Jammu and Kashmir still continued. Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed the world's longest internet blockade of nearly 17 months. Telecommunication companies charge the bills of 4G internet while providing the services of 2G internet. This has added to the anger and chaos among the people. According to a media report, Jammu and Kashmir is the only place where internet services have been suspended 226 times from the year 2012. In the year 2020, internet services in Jammu and Kashmir have been suspended 46 times. Due to this communication blockade researchers and students have been left to cripple in universities across the mountainous state. Many researchers, in a state of desperation, travelled to other parts of India to access the internet. Those who could afford stayed and resumed working on their projects, charging them more personal financial costs. Researchers were not able to complete literature review for their dissertations. Research scholars neither able to respond to queries from reviewers, nor were they able to submit papers to journals (Firdosi, 2020). Such situation increased the chaos and confusion in the region. A vacuum of information was created which resulted in a lot of fake news and misinformation in the region of Jammu and Kashmir (Changoiwala, 2020). While China has made internet hospitals to curb COVID 19 pandemic, Kashmir is still lingering far behind with 2G internet in the era of 4G. Internet hospitals play a significant role amid pandemic. The internet hospitals compared to physical hospitals have the advantages of being highly efficient at lower costs and contactless treatment (Sun et al., 2020). The doctors of Jammu and Kashmir were still struggling to download up-to-date

medical journals and videos which taught the use of hazmet suits. Due to lack of high speed internet, it is very difficult to remain updated and it affects diagnosis of the disease, prescribing medicine and treating patients (Changoiwala,2020). Internet is the first choice of scholars for the information about particular topic. Library centre (OCLC) revealed that majority of people use search engine instead of library resources for pursuit of information. Research students face problems in finding relevant information sources and that they needed to at least achieve a competent level of expertise in order to effectively locate information. The world is constantly evolving due to the progress in the realm of science and technology. Internet being the largest worldwide network among networks, has regressed as the most potential instrument for an instant access to information and by virtue of this quality; the Internet has become the biggest global digital information library which provides any kind of information within few minutes (Bilal et al., 2016). Research scholars need very quick access to the reliable information regardless of coming from developed or developing nation of the world. Today no segment of life is without internet application and this is certainly true for the education and research institutions (Kaur, n.d., 2019). The lack of reliable and high speed internet among the research scholars can widen the so called achievement gap. Kashmiri student has been left behind due to lack or slow internet speed. This has lead to the weak academic performance. Many developed countries like China are using innovative technologies like AI, 5G and big data. Researchers from all areas of world are finding that their work thrives in an internet worked environment. A survey was carried out by (Kaur, n.d., 2019) to find the extent of internet using a questionnaire specially structured for scholars. The results of data revealed that 93.18% male scholars and 91.18% female research scholars surfed internet significantly for their research purposes. It has been reported that in the

course of a public health crisis media directly influence the solitary life in a positive and negative manner (Alalawi and Al-Jenaibi, 2016). The studies (Snow, 2008; Leask, Hooker and King, 2010) reported that print and electronic media provide scientifically details about health and medicine as per the sources available. A number of studies outlined unjustifiable rumors or staggering media coverage has the proficiency to construct misapprehension, misinformation concerning threat approximate in the minds of the extensive public with regards to the likelihood (Fishman and Casarett, 2006) in a public health crisis. Media by circulation wrong information can create psychological problems in public and in a study (Dibb, 2019), it was found that there is a positive association between one of the most important mass media i.e., social media with physical health, well being, and Quality of life. Equality and non-discrimination is a fundamental right of every global citizen. Government should abstain from directly or indirectly discriminating against individuals. Government should also ensure easy access and right to information (Rights in the Time of COVID-19, 2020). For research to reliable, it must be based on absolute reliable information. Internet access is crucial for the research scholars. The lack of computer lab has enormous effects on research scholars but lack of internet has far more diverse effects on research scholars (Toyo, 2006). In any pandemic media plays a foremost role by providing the diverse feature of information on a mass level and those may impact on individual's physical, social, psychological, and environmental domains of quality of life. It has been reported that isolation and contact restriction enforce a significant change to children and adolescents daily routine and psychological well-being (Fegert et al., 2020). In the light of the literature, cited above, present study was designed with the purpose to determine the association of internet with psychological, physical, social, and environmental domains of quality of life

during COVID-19 pandemic among scholars of Kashmir valley.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

In the present study, a well-designed validated questionnaire was used to collect the information from a sample of 400 scholars via offline and online mode selected randomly through Google Classroom, Social media (Facebook and WhatsApp) from different higher educational institutions of Kashmir valley, of J&K region. The respondents under study were explained the purpose of the study to get their consent. The questionnaire was designed to assess the impact of internet on quality of life during COVID-19 Pandemic among scholars of Kashmir valley. The sample size for current study was computed using (Cochran, 1977)

$$n = \frac{Z_{\alpha}^2 P(1-P)}{d^2}$$

Here in our study on the basis of earlier studies, we take  $p=0.5$ ,  $Z_{\alpha}=1.96$  and  $d=0.05$ . That gives the sample size  $n \sim 384$  and we decided to take  $n = 400$ . The data collected from our online survey was tabulated and analyzed and interpreted statistically. The statistical software SPSS (version 21) was used for analysis purpose.

### Research Hypothesis

**Hypothesis 1:** There will be no significant difference in opinion between boys and girls scholars under study. In order to test the hypothesis 1, we use Mann-Whitney U test (with usual notations) given by the formula

$$W = N_1 N_2 + \frac{N_x(N_x+1)}{2} - T_x$$

where  $N_1$  is the number of subjects in group 1;  $N_2$  is the number of subjects in group 2.  $T_x$  is the larger of the two rank totals and  $N_x$  is the number of subjects in this group.

**Hypothesis 2:** There will be non significant difference in the opinion related impact of

COVID-19 on quality of life, between boys and girls scholars.

$$X^2 = \sum_{i=1}^2 \frac{(o_i - e_i)^2}{e_i}$$

To test the hypothesis 2, we use chi square test (with usual notations) given as

where  $X^2 \sim \chi_1^2$ ,  $o_i$  and  $e_i$  are observed and expected frequencies. We reject null hypothesis, if p-value is less than desired level of significance.

**Hypothesis 3:** There will be non significant correlation between Hours spend on internet for COVID-19 news and anxiety and nervousness. To test hypothesis 3, Spearman's Rank correlation will be used, given (with usual notations) as

$$R = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d_i^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

where  $d_i$  stands for difference between the ranks of the  $i$ th individual among the two characters and  $n$  stands for the number of paired observations.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sample represented 200 (50%) boys and 200 (50%) girl respondents between the age group of 20-29 years. The data presented in Table 1 shows the

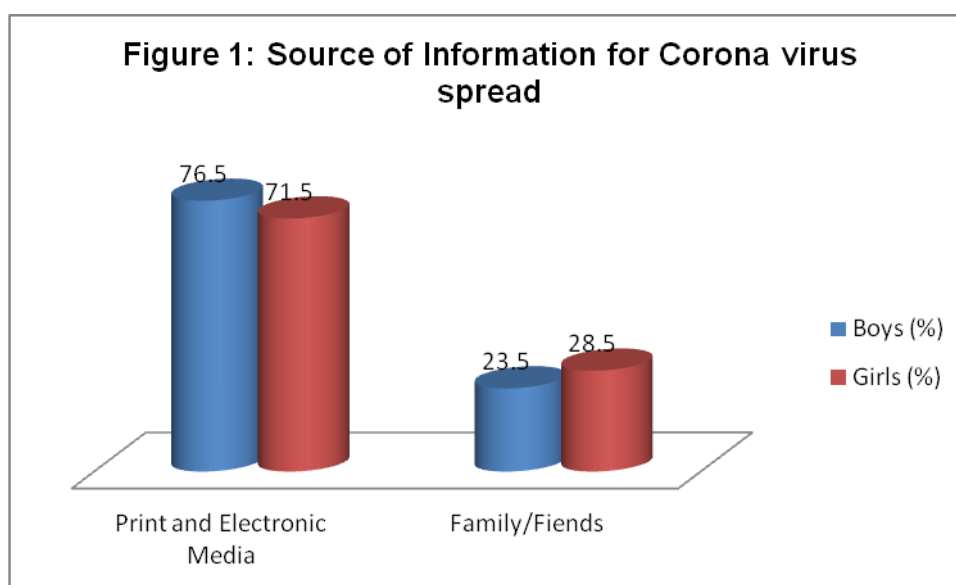
distribution of study population as per the characteristics Residence, Age, Family status, Family type and Education status. It is observed that majority of the respondents were pursuing Masters degree, from middle class families, nuclear type family and majority of respondents were from science stream.

**Table 1: Characteristics of the population under study**

S.No.	Characteristics		Respondent from Kashmir	
			Count	%
1.	Residence	Urban	246	61.5
		Rural	154	38.5
2.	Stream	Science	264	66.0
		Arts	136	34.0
3.	Family Status	Low	23	5.75
		Middle	264	66.0
		High	13	3.25
4.	Family Type	Joint	73	18.25
		Nuclear	327	81.75
5.	Family Size	2-4	70	17.5
		5-6	194	48.5
		>7	102	25.5
5.	Education Status (in process)	Post Graduation	314	78.5
		Doctorial Degree	86	21.5

Source: Field and online survey, 2020-21

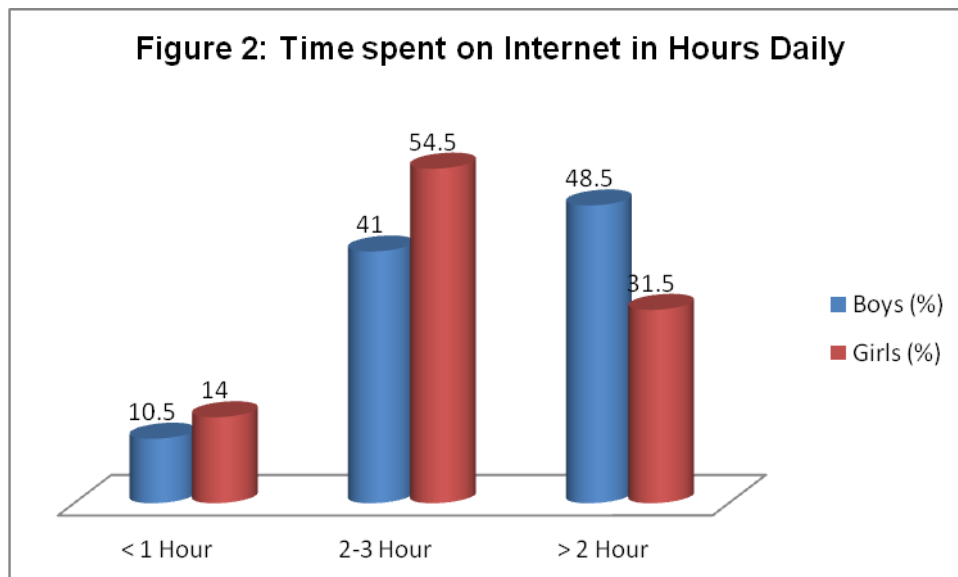
The data shown in Figure 1, revealed that majority of the respondents boys (76.5%) and girls (71.5%) under study reported that their source of information for corona spread were print and electronic media, followed by family/friends (boys= 23.5% and girls= 28.5%).



Source: Field and online survey, 2020-21

The data shown in Figure 2, revealed that majority of the respondents boys (54.5%) and girls (41.0%) under study reported that they spend 2-3hours daily on internet, 48.5% boys and 31.5% girls

reported that they spend more than 2 hours daily on internet and 10.5% boys and 14% girls reported that they spend less than an hour on internet.



Source: Field and online survey, 2020-21

Table 2: Results on Psychological and Social Domain (n=400)

S.No.	Statements	Gender	Mean ± S.E.	W	P-value
1.	How often have you been feeling nervous and anxious after watching the news on COVID-19 pandemic?	Boys	2.720±0.050	40182.0	>0.05
		Girls	2.710±0.062		
2.	How often are you feeling afraid as if something awful might happen after watching the news on COVID-19 pandemic ?	Boys	2.680±0.091	35740.0	<0.01
		Girls	2.140±0.091		
3.	How often you felt down, depressed, or hopeless after watching the news on COVID-19 pandemic ?	Boys	2.270±0.062	41290.0	>0.05
		Girls	2.4100±0.0744		
4.	How often you are not able to concentrate on daily routine work and job life after watching the news on COVID-19 pandemic ?	Boys	2.270±0.082	45898.0	<0.01
		Girls	2.945±0.088		
5.	How often have you been not able to stop yourself from worrying about deteriorating conditions occurring worldwide due to COVID-19 pandemic?	Boys	3.420±0.036	36696.0	<0.01
		Girls	3.060±0.068		
6.	How much have you been affected emotionally due to physical distancing during COVID-19 pandemic period?	Boys	3.010±0.084	42697.0	<0.05
		Girls	3.265±0.097		

Source: Field and online survey, 2020-21

P>0.05= Non-significant, P<0.05 and P<0.01= Significant at 5% and 1% at l.o.s.

The data presented in Table 1, reveals that in response to statement 1, i.e., How often been feeling nervous and anxious

after watching the news on COVID-19 pandemic, Mean±S.E. score for boys was 2.720±0.050 and for girls was

2.710±0.062, in response to statement 2, i.e., How often are you feeling afraid as if something awful might happen after watching the news on COVID-19 pandemic, Mean±S.E. score for boys was 2.680±0.091 and for girls was 2.140±0.0191, in response to statement 3, i.e., How often you felt down, depressed, or hopeless after watching the news on COVID-19 pandemic, Mean±S.E. score for boys was 2.270±0.063 and for girls was 2.140±0.017, in response to statement 4, i.e., How often you are not able to concentrate on daily routine work and job life after watching the news on COVID-19 pandemic, Mean±S.E. score for boys was 2.270±0.082 and for girls was 2.945±0.088, in response to statement 5, i.e., How often have you been not able to

stop yourself from worrying about deteriorating conditions occurring worldwide due to COVID-19 pandemic, Mean±S. E. score for boys was 3.420±0.036 and for girls was 3.060±0.068, in response to statement 6, i.e., How much have you been affected emotionally due to physical distancing during COVID-19 pandemic period, Mean±S.E. score for boys was 3.010±0.084 and for girls was 3.265±0.097. The scholars in general reported that there was increase in the use of social media and internet to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic irrespective of gender or residence. The results of our study are in agreement with the earlier studies conducted across the globe (Ellis, Dumas, & Forbes, 2020).

**Table 3: Results on Physical and Environmental domain (n=400)**

S.No.	Statements	Gender	Mean ± S.E.	W	P-value
1.	How satisfied are you with your work capacity?	Boys	2.880±0.110	42542.0	<0.05
		Girls	3.250±0.112		
2.	How satisfied are you with the quality of sleep during the COVID-19 pandemic period?	Boys	2.270±0.090	41904.0	>0.05
		Girls	2.880±0.130		
3.	How satisfied are you with energy for everyday life?	Boys	1.710±0.062	42804.0	<0.01
		Girls	2.440±0.128		
4.	How satisfied are you with the conditions of your living place?	Boys	2.270±0.111	43042.0	<0.01
		Girls	2.650±0.122		
5.	How satisfied are you with your access to health services?	Boys	2.280±0.073	39466.0	>0.05
		Girls	2.400±0.109		

Source: Field and online survey, 2020-21

P>0.05= Non-significant, P<0.05 and P<0.01= Significant at 5% and 1% at l.o.s.

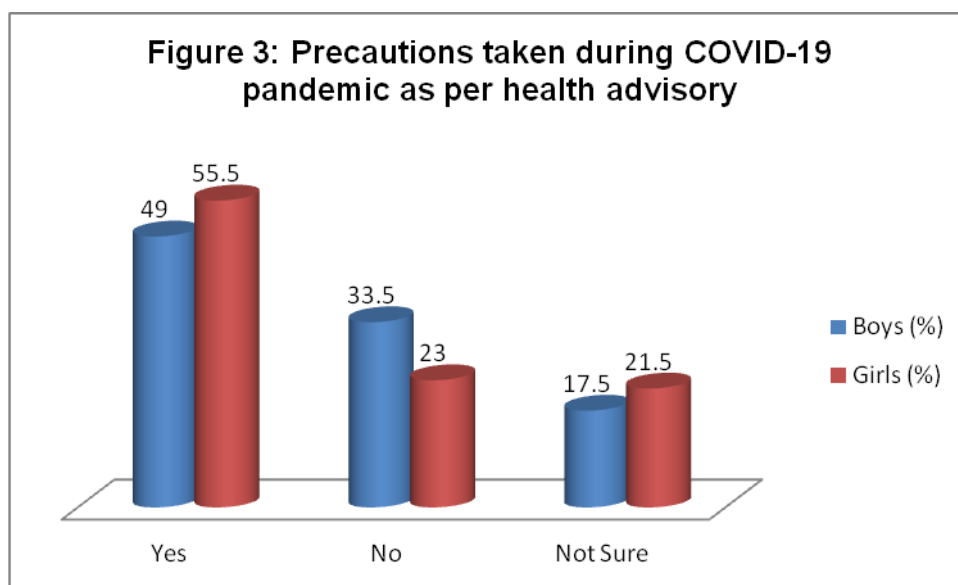
The data presented in Table 3, reveals that in response to statement 1, i.e., How satisfied are you with your work capacity, Mean±S.E. score for boys was 2.880±0.110 and for girls was 3.250±0.112, in response to statement 2, i.e., How satisfied are you with the quality of sleep during the COVID-19 pandemic period, Mean±S.E. score for boys was 2.270±0.090 and for girls was 2.880±0.130, in response to statement 3, i.e., How satisfied are you with energy for everyday life, Mean±S.E. score for boys was 1.710±0.062 and for girls was 2.440±0.128, in response to statement 4, i.e., How satisfied are you with the conditions of your

living place?, Mean±S.E. score for boys was 2.270±0.111 and for girls was 2.650±0.122, in response to statement 5, i.e., How satisfied are you with your access to health services, Mean±S.E. score for boys was 2.280±0.073 and for girls was 2.400±0.109. In Kashmir the low-speed 2G internet stops scholars from accessing current information, public health guidelines, and research on the coronavirus, as well as accurate updates on transmission in the area. The results of our study are in agreement with the earlier study which reported that media had an impact on the quality of life of people of all age groups and mass media is responsible for creating

an image on education, health, business, social relationships, and many more among the society (Alalawi and Al-Jenaibi, 2016). In the literature, we come across a number of studies that reported a negative impact of media exposure on mental health during COVID-19 pandemic worldwide (Hamidein, Hatami and Rezapour, 2020; Kumar et al., 2020; Gao et al., 2020; Chao et al., 2020). The respondents under study reported that publishing of news by mass

media without filter creates stress especially fake news during COVID-19 pandemic. The results are in agreement with the earlier study (Kumar et al., 2020)

The data shown in Figure 3, revealed that majority of the respondents boys (49.0%) and girls (55.5%) under study reported that they were taking precautions as per health advisory during COVID-19 pandemic.



Source: Field and online survey, 2020-21

The data presented in Table 4, revealed that majority of the respondents boys as well as girls reported that during COVID-19 pandemic media impacted slightly (boys=37.5%, girls=41.5%) on quality of their life. Further, 14.5% boys and 12.5% girl respondents were not able to decide about the impact of media during COVID-19 crisis on quality of life. In Kashmir in the absence of reliable internet connectivity, information about closures, shutdowns, and COVID-19 pandemic

related restrictions has been conveyed via print newspapers, radio, and limited SMS or messaging capabilities. Campaigns designed for social media or video communications are simply inaccessible to download. The lack of available, rapid, and reliable information creates a space for misinformation. Statistically, non-significant difference was observed between boys and girls in response to statement related impact internet during COVID-19 crisis on quality of life ( $P>0.05$ ).

Table 4: Impact of Internet in COVID-19 crisis on Quality of Life among scholars of Kashmir

Gender	Response				
	Severely affected (%)	Moderately affected (%)	Slightly affected (%)	Same as before COVID-19 (%)	Can't say (%)
Boys	21(10.5)	45(22.5)	75(37.5)	34(17.0)	25(12.5)
Girls	29(14.5)	31(15.5)	83(41.5)	28(14.0)	29(14.5)

Chisquare=5.141,  $P>0.05$

Source: Field and online survey, 2020-21

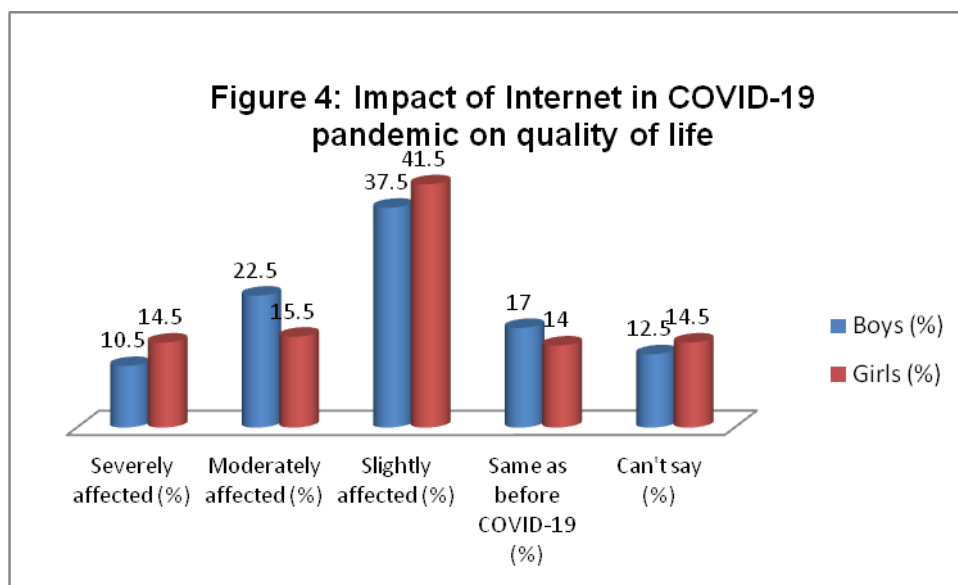
The data shown in Figure 4, revealed that majority of the respondents boys as

well as girls revealed COVID-19 pandemic impacted slightly (boys=37.5%,



girls=41.5%) on quality of their life. Further, 14.5% boys and 12.5% girl

respondents were not able to decide about the impact of COVID-19 on quality of life.



Source: Field and online survey, 2020-21

The data presented in Table 5, revealed that Hours spend on internet for COVID news and anxiety and nervousness are positively and significantly correlated ( $P < 0.01$ ), Hours spend on internet for COVID news and worry are positively and

significantly correlated ( $P < 0.01$ ) and Hours spend on internet for COVID news and Quality of life are positively and significantly correlated ( $P < 0.01$ ). The results of our study are in agreement with the previous studies.

Table 5: Correlation of spending hours on Internet by participants with nervousness and anxiety, worrying, and quality of life during the COVID 19 pandemic

S.No.	Parameter	Correlation	P-value
1.	Hours spend on internet for COVID news and anxiety & nervous	0.58	<0.01
2.	Hours spend on internet for COVID news and worry	0.43	<0.01
3.	Hours spend on internet for COVID news and Quality of life	0.53	<0.01

Source: Field and online survey, 2020-21

#### 4. CONCLUSION

COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted life as a whole. The current study revealed that scholars generally have increased the use of internet during COVID-19 pandemic. The study also reported that compulsive internet use during COVID-19 resulted among scholars in depression, loneliness, escapism, poor sleep quality and anxiety. The findings of our study indicate that regardless of gender, subject, residence, the COVID-19 outbreak has had a significant effect on scholars internet use and psychosocial well-being. The study, further revealed that time spent on internet/media for news on COVID-19 pandemic and online studies daily has a direct impact on Quality of life of the scholars in Kashmir

valley. In the domains of the Quality of life, the psychological domain is highly affected due to COVID-19 pandemic. Statistically, non-significant difference was observed between boys and girls in response to statement related impact of internet during COVID-19 crisis on quality of life ( $P > 0.05$ ). Access to timely and accurate information is necessary to provide the public with the understanding needed to support collective health efforts to reduce spread of COVID-19 diseases. However, state-sanctioned internet restrictions are preventing scholars from accessing crucial health information. India's top court reported that indefinite internet shutdown (low speed) is illegal (Govt. of J&K, April 03, 2020). It was suggested to that everyone should follow

WHO and health advisory guidelines, reduce the time spend on internet for watching COVID-19 pandemic news and online studies to limit their effects on Quality of life.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thank the respondents and all those people who gave their feedback related to this research work.

## Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this research paper.

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How to cite this article: Bhat BA, Tanveer S, Hamid L et.al. Impact of internet on quality of life during COVID-19 pandemic among scholars of Kashmir Valley: a sample survey. *International Journal of Science & Healthcare Research*. 2021; 6(1): 177-187.

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