



## Letter to the Editor

## Does internet dating mediate sexual addiction: A case study



There is an increasing use of internet-dating applications for sexual purposes as well as using it as a platform for getting sexual partners. It is seen as a safe modality for explorations of sexual feelings and sexual activity (Griffiths, 2012). Zlot et al. (2018) found that the users of Internet-dating applications showed higher scores on tests of sex addiction than non-users. Sex addiction on the internet includes accessing, watching, using chat to stimulate and experience virtual or offline satisfaction of sexual urges (Weinstein et al., 2015). The sexual addiction is not recognized as a psychiatric disorder by the fifth edition of DSM. It uses the term hypersexuality as a symptom (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), but not as a separate mental disorder. The online platform is becoming tool for compensatory socialization among users. The higher social phobia scores were associated with stronger facebook usage patterns with the inability to reduce facebook use; - urges to increasing use, negative reactions to restricting its use, urges to increase its use, as a method of collecting information on people; and using it to forget one's problems. (Honnekeri et al., 2017). The individuals also use internet excessively to overcome their loneliness and interpersonal problems. The facebook and twitter were the commonly used activity for the same. (Simcharoen et al., 2018).

Internet-dating applications are popular among young people (Smith & Duggan, 2013). 74% of Indian men looked on internet dating applications for female partners against 26% of Indian females. (Business Insider, 2018). The prevalence of sexual addiction varies between 3% and 16.8% in different studies, whereas in majority of studies among adults, it is estimated to be between 3% and 6% (Karila et al., 2014). 45% of Americans use applications on the cell phone and 7% of them use them for dating purposes. The case approached the specialty center for management of self-report complaints of sex addiction. It is one of its kind of case in Indian context to document the role of online dating in sexual addiction.

Mr X, 40 years old, unmarried presented with complaints of spending 8–10 h per day on dating sites for the last 2 years. The main purpose of exploring dating sites was to develop familiarity with female users and to cajole/persuade them for physical intimacy. He started appreciating the novelty of browsing dating sites as well as developing physical intimacy with opposite sex. Most of the time, he was involved in unprotected relationships. Though, he did not develop medical issues secondary to his multiple relationships. He started antiretroviral therapy (ART) to avoid any medical complications. He had history of consultation with mental health professional for his inability to manage his desire for physical intimacy. The maximum period of abstinence was one day from dating sites or a day without sex. He made an attempt to attend a sex anonymous group to address the problem. Personal history revealed presence of adjustment issues within the family context and premorbidly he was extrovert. He started missing his deadlines at workplace to spend more time on accessing dating sites. It became a predominant activity for managing his free time on each day. Clinically he meet the criteria for addiction in the form presence of preoccupation

with dating sites for physical intimacy, loss of control for the time spent on dating sites as well as continuation of accessing dating sites and sexual activity despite having dysfunctions in psychosocial domains. In addition, he used to feel distressed whenever he could not access dating sites. He had begun contemplating for few days on how to stay without physical intimacy. He was in contemplation stage of motivation for change when he visited the specialty centre. There was no history of other substance use as well as psychiatric problems.

The presence of psychological issues and novelty associated with having relationships predisposed the user to use online dating sites for sexual purposes. It led to addictive indulgence in sexual activity. It has been corroborated with the presentation in other studies. Individuals with sex addiction indulge in variety of sexual behaviors including excessive use of pornography, chat rooms, and cybersex on the Internet (Weinstein et al., 2015). Problematic internet use and internet addiction also got positive association with watching pornography among resident medical doctors. (Grover et al., 2019). There is clinical evidence that individuals with sexual addiction similar to substance-dependent individuals indulge in these behaviors for sensation seeking and in pursuit of thrill, novelty or excitement (Perry et al., 2007), take sexual risks (Bancroft and Vukadinovic, 2004) and seek sexual excitement (Kalichman and Rompa, 1995; Zuckerman, 1979). Sexual impulsivity has also been present as a comorbid condition to sex addiction (Hoyle et al., 2000)

This case study attempts to add to our existing knowledge on implication of use of dating sites on sexual addiction, predispositions as well as co-morbid psychological issues. It also has implication for exploring the effect of internet dating on high risk behaviors, safer sexual behaviors, understanding signs of excessive sexual indulgence; internet based screening and intervention for medical and psychological problems.

## Conflicts of interest

None.

## Authorship of the paper

Authors made a significant contribution to the conception, design, execution, or interpretation of the reported study.

## Originality and plagiarism

It was author original work and other authors work has been appropriately cited or quoted.

## Data access and retention

I am willing to provide the raw data in connection with a paper for

editorial review in case asked for.

### Multiple, redundant or concurrent publication

It has not been submitted else where for publication

### Fundamental errors in published works

I would report to editor in case of any error

### Reporting standards

It was followed

### Hazards and human or animal subjects

Not applicable

### Use of patient images or case details

Institute ethics committee approval and informed consent was documented.

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