



## **Estimate the Tendency of Cyberchondria Among Adults in Trivandrum District**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Objectives of the study were to estimate the prevalence of cyberchondria among adults aged 18-35 years and to assess the factors influencing cyberchondria among adults aged 18-35. By simple random sampling method 385 samples were selected and data was collected using Cyberchondria Tendency Scale developed by Dr. Zeynep Tatli. The research design adopted for this study was cross sectional research design. Data analysis was done by using SPSS software. The prevalence with confidence intervals was calculated based on cut off scores. The study revealed that due to the growth in the use of mobile phone and social media there is a high increase in the researching of health-related issues. The well-educated people are always researching symptoms. Many people use to research symptom rather than consulting the doctor. This will lead to health-related anxiety

### **Introduction**

The term "cyberchondria" derived from the terms 'cyber' and 'hypochondria'. a person who obsessively searches the internet for details on certain genuine or invented medical issues. Although symptoms of health worry are positively correlated with cyberchondria, it is still unknown whether this condition places a special burden on society. Cyberchondria is the term for health-related anxiety that is brought on or made worse by looking up medical information online. The phrase was first used in a British publication in the early 2000s as a play on the word hypochondria, which is an illness anxiety disease. Cyberchondria is characterized by excessive concern for one's health. However, because internet connection is so pervasive, more people are thought to be affected by cyberchondria. In the past, people with health concerns had to go to doctors' offices or libraries for information. With just a few mouse clicks these days, it is easy to access a great amount of information from online.

A study conducted by Afkar Aulia, Carla Raymond Alexas Marchira, Irwan Supriyanto & Budi Pratiti in 2019 shows that CSS total score of 75.5 best corresponded with BAI score of 16, and had 0.522 sensitivity and 0.623 specificity to screen for subjects with high anxiety (n=123, AUC= 0.551, 95% CI= 0.439-0.663, p= 0.347). Based on the cutoff, they found that 61 students were likely to have cyberchondria (37.65%). Cyberchondria is a term used to describe the anxiety-inducing effects of online searches for medical information. Considering the origin of the term (i.e., as the counterpart of hypochondriac in the digital age), cyberchondria refers to an abnormal behavioral pattern and emotional state.

In other words, cyberchondria is more than just a modern-day habit of searching the Internet for health-related information. Cyberchondria has been defined in a number of ways, but they all feature excessive or recurrent internet searches for health-related information and worry about one's health. Each person will experience the association between online searches for health-related information and health worry in a different way. The fundamental motivation behind some cases, possibly even the majority, of online searches for health-related information is an increased level of anxiety about one's health. however, these searches only cause more distress and make health anxiety worse. In others who develop elevated levels of health anxiety after online health-related searches, there is no history of heightened health anxiety or hypochondrias and their motivation for performing searches may be different. It's vital to highlight that with cyberchondria, online health-related searches result in higher levels of health anxiety relative to the levels of health anxiety before to commencing these searches, regardless of whether happens first (health anxiety or online health-related searches).

Cyberchondria denotes excessive and repeated Online health-related searches associated with an increase the large volumes of medical information on the Web, some of which is erroneous, may mislead users with health concerning health anxiety The information obtained from healthcare-related searches can affect peoples' decisions about when to engage a physician for assistance with diagnosis or therapy, how to treat an acute illness or cope with a chronic condition, as well as their overall approach to maintaining their health or the health of someone in their care. Beyond thinking about illness, information obtained from the Internet can affect how individuals consider and make choices regarding their health and wellbeing, including the attention they seek from healthcare providers and actions related to diet, exercise, and proactive, preventative health measures. According to studies, there is a growing trend among people who are concerned about their health to frequently search online.

**Statement of the problem**

A Study to Estimate the Tendency of Cyberchondria Among Adults in Trivandrum District.

**Objectives**

- To estimate the prevalence of cyberchondria among adults aged 18-35 years
- To assess the factors influencing cyberchondria among adults aged 18-35 years

**Materials and methods**

Research design: cross sectional research design.

Setting of the study: The study was conducted in Thiruvananthapuram corporation in Thiruvananthapuram district.

Study population: Adult of both sexes aged 18-35 years residing at Thiruvananthapuram Corporation will be selected for the study.

Sample size: 385.

**Data collection procedure**

Data was collected after getting the consent from the participants. The researcher had explained the purpose of the study to the participants and they were given reassurance that confidentiality will be maintained.

**Tool**

After an exclusive review of literature, the cyberchondria tendency scale developed by Tatli.Z, Tatli.O, and Kokoc.M was used. The questionnaire had a section with demographic variables and section A, with the tendency scale having 30 questions the minimum score is 0 and maximum is 120, on which 30-60 is low tendency to cyberchondria, 60-90 is the, moderate cyberchondria tendencies and 90-120 indicates higher level of cyberchondria.

**Results**

While considering the age group out of the 385 sample 64.7% of the age group 27-29 years and 61% of age group 30-35 years have high tendency to cyberchondria. While considering the gender 45.7% of males and 43% females have high tendency to cyberchondria. 43% of the samples with higher secondary education is having high tendency to cyberchondria. 61.9% of not working people and 67% of the peoples working on contract basis have high tendency to cyberchondria.

**Table 1 – prevalence of cyberchondria among adults.**

Level of cyberchondria	frequency	Percentage distribution
Low level (30-60)	85	22%
Moderate level (61-90)	69	18%
High level(91-120)	231	60%

The frequency and percentage distribution of tendency of cyberchondria among adults. It is evident that 22% have low level tendency of cyberchondria. 18% have moderate tendency and 60% have high tendency to cyberchondria.

**Summary**

The use of mobile phone and the use of the internet for clarifying doubts regarding health-related problems the anxiety regarding health-related issues are increasing day by day. Thus, the term cyberchondria came to the field; the main reason for the problem in these days was the attack of Covid and which lead to less accessibility of health care facilities.

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## Conclusion

The study revealed that there is a great impact of internet and social media among the adults. The usage of internet and mobile phones has increased the level of health anxiety among the adults that is the prevalence of cyberchondria is increasing day by day.

Majority of the adults have the tendency for cyberchondria. Even if they are well educated, they are not using the proper method for the treatment of diseases. Mainly it is due to the increasing cost for health care facilities and time consumption most people are using other alternative way. It's better to create awareness among the youngsters and also reduce the cost for the treatment. The health care facilities should be at a height that is easily accessible to all sorts of people.

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## Limitations

- The study was limited to adults among the age group of 18-35 years
- The study was limited to Thiruvananthapuram Corporation.
- The study sample was limited to 385

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## Recommendations

- A similar study can be conducted to large sample size
- Educational programs can be conducted to the youth.
- Can make the accessibility to the health care professional much easier

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