Problematic internet use and mental health among British children and adolescents

# Details

## Year

2019

## DOI

10.1016/j.addbeh.2018.09.007

## Issued

2019

## Language

English

## Volume

90

## Start Page

## End Page

## Authors

El Asam A.;Samara M.;Terry P.

## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Addictive Behaviors

## Publisher

Elsevier BV

## Topics

## Sample

1,814 children and adolescents (aged 10–16 years) from UK schools

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

# Abstract

Despite concerns about the effects of internet use, little is known about how problematic internet use impacts on
British children and adolescents. By adapting the Problematic Internet Use Questionnaire (PIUQ, Demetrovics,
Szeredi, Rózsa, 2008), this study seeks its validation while studying its association with psychopathological
and health problems. A sample of 1,814 children and adolescents (aged 10–16 years old) from UK schools
completed questionnaires about PIU, behavioural problems, depression, anxiety and health problems.
Confirmatory Factor Analysis identified three independent factors: Neglect, Obsession and Control Disorder.
Using path analysis, PIU was significantly predicted by conduct problems, hyperactivity, impact on daily life
activities, depression and poorer physical health. Males were more likely than females to score higher on PIU. The study shows for the first time that the adapted PIU questionnaire constitutes a valid tool for the assessment of problematic internet use among children/adolescents. The results also suggest an urgent need for the development of intervention strategies.

# Outcome

“Excessive internet use is associated with neglect of daily routine (offline) activities and indicators of Obsession, in which children report negative psychological impacts resulting from internet use... using the internet excessively can affect young users in terms of their social interactions with others. (El Asam et al, 2019: 432) Problematic internet use (preference for online relationships, use of the internet for mood regulation, deficient self-regulation, and the manifestation of negative outcomes) is also associated with depression, poorer physical health, hyperactivity and has significant negative effects on schoolwork and leisure. “The more prosocial the participant the more likely they were to score high on the Control Disorder factor. Higher Control Disorder scores reflect awareness of a need to limit time online without being able to do so satisfactorily. The finding that prosocial behaviour in the normal range predicted borderline-clinical-level of Control Disorder may relate to participants' concerns over their ability to shift from limited engagement in prosocial behaviour to greater involvement… anxious children may try to increase their internet use as a protective strategy to avoid anxiety (El Asam et al, 2019: 433-34).