Predictors of Severe Problematic Internet Use in Adolescent Students

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1347 students attending 9-12 grade in three settlements in North Eastern Hungary

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# Abstract

Recent literature draws attention to the fact that problematic Internet use is a growing health issue among adolescents worldwide. This study aimed to find the potential demographic, physical and psychopathological risk factors associated with severe problematic Internet use of adolescents. A total of 1,347 adolescents (45.1% males) were recruited from five high schools in three settlements. Students completed an online questionnaire and provided data about socio-demographics, physical activity, physical and psychopathological health, as well as about their Internet use habits (Problematic Internet Use Questionnaire). 1.9% of the respondents appeared to be severe, 20.4% moderate problematic Internet users. The complexity of the problem is manifested in the multifaceted relationships of factors. The multinomial regression analysis identified four significant risk factors for severe problematic internet use, namely depressive symptoms, loneliness, low level of father’s education level and low level of physical activity. The real severe problematic Internet use is not so common in adolescent students, however, together with moderate problematic Internet users, this number has significance. Psychopathological factors such as elevated depressive symptoms and loneliness should be considered when preventive programs are implemented and more attention should be taken on physical activity as an effective tool against addictive behavior.

# Outcome

The study the paper discusses aimed to investigate the factors behind problematic internet use. Only 2% of the sample could be categorized as severe problematic internet users, while another 20% as moderate problematic internet users. Gender differences could not be found, neither age was a determining factor. PIU could have been associated with less physical exercise and with psychological, social and wellbeing factors (loneliness, depressive symptoms, social support, health status etc.).
"In this paper broad range of variables were examined, including socio-demographics, psychological health and physical activity to find the associated factors with PIU in adolescents. The complexity of the problem is manifested in the multifaceted relationships of factors, only four of them (depressive symptoms, loneliness, father’s education level and physical activity) predicted likelihood of severe PIU in a relatively large sample size. Contrary to the claims of other studies, relatively low number of students proved highly problematic internet users, however, together with moderate problematic internet users, this number has significance. Only a few studies indicated the parents’ low education level as a risk factor for PIU, perhaps because it was not in the focus of research. Family environment seems an important factor investigated maladaptive behavior." (Andrea Lukács Predictors of Severe Problematic Internet Use in Adolescent Students, Contemporary Educational Technology, 2021, 13(4), ep315, p: 6-7)