Pathological Internet use, cyberbullying and mobile phone use in adolescence: a school-based study in Greece

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## Sample

In this cross-sectional study, 8053 students of 30 middle and 21 high schools (aged from 12 to 18 years old) – in the area of 13 primary health care centers, from eight different prefectures of the 3rd Health Authority of Macedonia – were invited to participate.

# Abstract

Abstract

Purpose
This study investigated the prevalence of Internet addiction (IA) and cyberbullying and examined profiles of adolescents with increased risk to develop pathological behaviors.

Methods
In this cross-sectional, school-based study, 8053 students of 30 middle and 21 high schools (12–18 years old) were invited to participate, based on a multistage stratified random sampling technique. The Internet aiddiction test (IAT) was used along with information on socio-demographics, Internet activities and cyberbullying experience.

Results
Five thousand five hundred and ninety students participated (response rate 69.4%). Pathological Internet use (IAT ≥50) was found in 526 (10.1%), while 403 (7.3%) experienced cyberbullying as victims and 367 (6.6%) as perpetrators during the last year. In multivariable models, the odds of IA increased with online hours on mobile phones and Internet use during weekends, Internet café visits, chatrooms usage and engagement in cyberbullying. Cyberbullying victims were more likely to be older, female, Facebook and chatrooms users, while perpetrators were more likely to be male, older Internet users and fans of pornographic sites. A perpetrator was significantly more likely to have also been a victim [odds ratio (OR) = 5.51, confidence interval (CI): 3.92–7.74]. Hours of daily Internet use on a mobile phone was independently associated with IA and cyberbullying (OR) 1.41, 95% CI 1.30, 1.53 and OR 1.11, 95% CI 1.01, 1.21, respectively.

Conclusions
Cyberbullying is associated with IA and the hours spent online on a mobile phone affected both conditions. The increasing Internet access through mobile phones or other devices should be accompanied by the appropriate education of both parents and adolescents on safe Internet use.

# Outcome

"Our findings indicate that the hours of Internet surfing from a mobile phone, hours spent online during a weekend day, visits in Internet cafes, use of chatrooms and being a victim or perpetrator of cyberbullying were the parameters associated with an increased probability to present pathological Internet use." (Tsimtsiou et al. 2017: 7)

"In terms of cyberbullying profiles, the hours of Internet surfing from a mobile phone and IAT score were associated with both victims and perpetrators profiles. Furthermore, victims were more likely to be older, female, Facebook and chatrooms users, while perpetrators were more likely to be male, Internet uses for a longer time and also users of pornographic sites. A perpetrator was significantly more likely to have also been a cyberbullying victim during the same period of 12 months’ time." (Tsimtsiou et al. 2017: 7)

"Although the prevalence of severe IA found in this study was lower than previously reported in Greece and other European countries [3], [8], [9], the rates of mild and moderate IA were significantly higher, almost doubled within a few years [3]. The fact that four out of ten adolescents present mild to moderate IA and are possibly in danger to become more severely addicted in the near future, should be taken into serious consideration." (Tsimtsiou et al. 2017: 7)

"Our findings provide evidence that higher Internet use during weekend days might be an independent indicator of pathological Internet use, as compared to the time spent online during the schooldays. Additionally, the time spent online using a mobile phone was also associated with higher probability to develop pathological Internet use, providing evidence on the newly introduced “Smartphone addiction” [20]." (Tsimtsiou et al. 2017: 7)

"Interestingly, gaming online and Facebook use were not included as independent variables in the multivariable models of pathological Internet use, although they have been previously described as addictive online activities [2], [3], [15]" (Tsimtsiou et al. 2017: 7)