

## Chapter 12

# The Influence of Internet Addiction on the Mental Health of Young People

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The author points out that the intensive use of the internet and its “charm” in recent years have led to the emergence of a phenomenon known as “internet addiction.” The internet itself is a harmless tool, but improper use of the network can increase the risk of addiction, mental health, and social relations disorders. Most people think that addiction is related only to the use of chemical compounds such as alcohol, nicotine, cocaine, and heroin, but experts believe that anything that stimulates a human being and makes them feel energetic can be addictive. Addiction treatment is not limited to drug therapy. Whenever a habit becomes compulsive, such as gambling, drugs, alcohol, or even playing computer games, chatting, surfing the web, it can also be considered addictive. Behavioral addictions should not be neglected due to lack of “material.” What makes people addicted is a pleasant experience in performing that behavior, just as addicts feel when they use chemical drugs.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Internet is undoubtedly leading to a new industrial revolution, with the entry of thousands of new users from all over the world. Today, it represents a communicative, social and economic revolution. This is actually the culmination of the digital industrial revolution, and each type of new revolution consequently leads to a new problem. The unique features of the Internet, such as 24-hour availability, easy operation, low cost, anonymity of users, etc., are welcomed by many “consumers” around the world. In addition, these characteristics, which are, on the one hand, the possibilities of the Internet, on the other hand, are considered its disadvantages. One of the problems that the Internet has led to is virtual addiction or dependence on a large global network, which has a very harmful psychological impact on Internet users.

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## **BACKGROUND**

Most people think that addiction is only related to the use of chemical substances, such as alcohol, nicotine, cocaine and heroin; but psychologists believe that anything that stimulates a human being and makes them feel energetic can be addictive. Thus, addiction is not limited to drugs and narcotics. Whenever a habit becomes compulsive, such as gambling, drugs, alcohol or even playing computer games, chatting, surfing the web, it can also be considered addictive. Behavioral addictions should not be neglected due to lack of “material” (Arashloo, 2006). What makes people addicted to certain behaviors is the pleasant experience of doing such activities as addicts feel when they consume chemical drugs. Depending on the Internet, people become addicted not to matter, but to computer work or the feeling that is achieved while working on the Internet.

Serious and quasi-tests can be found in the numerous literature that indicate the intensity of Internet addiction. “Social interactions, ways of learning, entertainment and privacy are just some of the domains that have been transformed through the Internet. A new ‘world’ has been created, a new space that a large number of people visit every day, at least for a short time. Adolescents stay in this cyberspace significantly more often and for longer than any other age group.” (Kostić-Opsenica & Panić, 2017). If at least five positive answers are given in the answers to the questions, they can be recognized as Internet-dependent:

- Do you feel preoccupied with the internet?
- Do you feel the need to use the internet longer and longer to achieve pleasure?
- Have you repeatedly tried to control, reduce or stop using the Internet?
- Do you feel restless, moody, depressed, or irritated when you try to reduce or stop using the Internet?
- Do you stay online longer than originally planned?
- Have you jeopardized or risked losing social relationships, jobs, education, or career opportunities because of the Internet?
- Have you lied to family members, therapists or others to disguise your online involvement?
- Do you use the Internet as a way to escape problems or alleviate dysphonic moods (eg feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety and depression)? (Patrick & Joyce, 2008)

## **Resistance to the Influence of the Internet**

Addiction can be defined as a pattern of Internet use that causes functional disorders and unpleasant inner feelings during a certain period. There are also certain criteria or symptoms of behavior that can contribute to recognizing addiction. Tolerance has changed to a greater or lesser extent. At certain times, the threshold of tolerance may be higher in relation to behavior in everyday life. As addiction progresses, antisocial behavior dominates and is an obvious symptom of withdrawal. The Internet is accessed much more often and for longer than intended, so a significant amount of time is spent on activities related to the use of the Internet. Important social, professional or recreational activities have been discarded or reduced due to the use of the Internet. It is a paradoxical case, as with other addiction diseases, that the “consumption” of the Internet continues, even though the user is aware of the shortcomings and negative consequences. Internet addiction disorder is a type of behavioral disorder used as a confrontational mechanism and many authors recommend the term “pathological Internet use”. This presupposes not only addictive behavior, but also a set of cognitive and behavioral factors in the context of the Internet

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