

Chapter 15

The Concept of Addiction and Its Causes

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ABSTRACT

Addiction can be briefly defined as the inability to stop using or control a substance or behavior. This concept can be used for many substances such as cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, as well as behavioral addictions such as eating, gaming, sex, gambling, computer and smartphone usage, television watching, internet and social media usage, digital game shopping, etc. Among these addictions, we can collectively consider computer, smartphone, television, internet, social media, and digital game addictions as “technological addictions.” The concept of technology addiction entered our lives after the 2000s, when the internet and technological tools became widespread. In this chapter, the concept of addiction and the causes of addiction are defined in general, followed by the concept of behavioral addiction and its causes. And finally, the concept of technology addiction and its causes are explained with the support of the literature. In addition, the equivalents of these definitions in the relevant diagnostic guidelines and ICD diagnosis codes are mentioned.

INTRODUCTION

In our century, addiction is a serious public health problem that causes excessive mortality, morbidity and economic losses (Bickel et al., 2017). While society has not yet been able to find a complete solution to its struggle with substance addiction, the increasing use of technology in all areas of life by individuals of all age groups brings to mind the question of whether “internet addiction is the new epidemic of this century”. (Christakis, 2010).

Restrictive measures such as curfews imposed to prevent the spread of disease during pandemia have made it necessary for individuals to do almost all their personal and social activities from home. This has led to an increase in the amount of time individuals spend online (smartphones, computers, gaming devices). It is now observed that parents turn their children’s use of technology into a means of

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rewarding them, protecting them from the dangers of the outside, distracting them when they are left alone at home, curbing active children; they tolerate and even encourage the use of technology so that they do not make noise or do household chores comfortably (Mitchell, 2021; Yıldız and Kanak, 2021) .

In addition, it can be said that individuals are more inclined to behaviors that carry the risk of technology addiction such as surfing the internet, watching TV series, movies and videos, playing games and using social media in order to reduce the anxiety they experience in their changing social lives (Körpe & Küçük, 2021).

Accurately defining the concepts and sub-headings related to addiction, whether substance or behavioral, will be important in terms of developing algorithms for research on the causes of addiction and its treatment.

THE CONCEPT OF ADDICTION

What is Addiction?

Addiction is briefly defined as the inability to stop or control the use of a substance or behavior. More broadly, addiction is a treatable, chronic medical condition that involves complex interactions between genes, the environment and the individual's life experiences, characterized by continued substance use or compulsive actions despite knowledge of harmful consequences (Rastegar & Fingerhood, 2020). For a long time, addiction was only used to refer to the uncontrollable habit of smoking, drinking alcohol or using other drugs.

More recently, the concept of addiction has expanded to include behaviors such as gambling, as well as ordinary and necessary activities such as exercise, eating, gaming, sex, computers, smartphones, television, internet, social media, digital gaming, shopping, etc. Among these addictions, computer, smartphone, television, internet, social media and digital game addictions can be collectively considered as "technological addictions". Technology addiction can be defined as increasingly frequent and obsessive technology-related behaviors despite the negative consequences of technology on the user (Sherer & Levounis, 2022).

Symptoms of Addiction

Signs and symptoms of addiction can vary from one type of addiction to another, but some common addiction symptoms usually include Inability to stop using, changes in emotional state, changes in appetite and sleep, continuing to use despite negative consequences, denying addiction, engaging in risky behaviors, substance-seeking behavior, legal and financial problems, losing interest in other things that used to be pleasurable, putting the substance or behavior ahead of other areas of life, including family, work and other responsibilities, concealment, using increasing amounts; taking more of the substance than intended, and withdrawal symptoms.

Within these defining characteristics of addiction, there are two aspects common to all addictions:

1. Addictive behavior is dysfunctional.
2. Addictive behavior is continuous/permanent.

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