

SYMPTOMS OF INTERNET ADDICTION AMONG ADOLESCENTS OF A SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOL IN PREŠOV REGION

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the basic theoretical background and current state of the problem of internet addiction as a new social risk of the hypermodern times. The authors draw attention to the risk potential of the adolescence period, associated in particular with the search for one's own identity and place in society. The presented pilot study is focused on the detection of the condition and occurrence rate of internet addiction manifestations in adolescents of the selected secondary school. The results of the pilot study highlight an increased rate of internet addiction in adolescents. Partial research findings highlight the need for early prevention of internet addiction and point to the inevitable need for school social work in the Slovak republic.

Key words: Internet addiction manifestations. Adolescents. School social work.

INTRODUCTION

Hypermodern times produce not only significant technological progress but also a lot of social risks. The change in the nature of society is transformed into a change in the nature of social risks. Authors (Axford, 2008; Keller, 2010; Sirovátka, Winkler 2010; Beck, 2011; Repková, 2014; Jašková, Sabolová Fabianová, 2018 and others) draw attention to this phenomenon as: new social risks, emerging social risks, old-age social risks, or disqualifying poverty. Gregussová, Tomková and Balážová (2011) state that the internet has become a natural and inseparable part of the life of not only adults but also children and adolescents. The virtual world acts as a new social environment where the young "live" - looking for information, learning, forming their identity, communicating with others, building relationships, taking advantage of opportunities, but also dealing with risks. As the emerging social risk, we can also refer to the internet addiction of young people as a result of a change in social communication, values and way of life for young people.

This paper is devoted to internet addiction in adolescence. After a brief definition of theoretical background, it presents partial results of a pilot research study aimed at

investigating the state and rate of occurrence of internet addiction manifestations in adolescents of a selected secondary school in the *Prešov region*.

1 Theoretical background – current state of the issue

We identify the issue at international level in the strategy *Europe 2020* (European Commission 2010), one of the main objectives of which is to promote digital literacy and to invest effectively in education and training systems at all levels. At the national level, it is effective to follow the *Strategy of the Slovak republic for youth for 2014 - 2020*, which reflects the needs of youth, especially in the areas of education, health, healthy lifestyle and social inclusion. The aim of the strategy is to improve the health of adolescents by enhancing education to protect and promote health, which includes education in particular to prevent the emergence of diseases, social-pathological phenomena such as internet addiction and a healthy lifestyle. Another important document is the *Youth development concept 2016-2020*, which specifies the country's priority objectives for youth work by 2020. The aim of the concept is to respond to the needs of young people and lead them to the

positive development of their personality. We believe that school social work is an indispensable part of all schools with social-pathological problems, including internet addiction. School social work is not yet legally anchored in Slovakia (*Standards for school social work services*, 2012).

2 Research

The pilot research study presents partial research results¹ aimed at investigating the status and incidence of internet addiction manifestations in adolescents of a selected secondary school in the *Prešov region*.

The main objective was to find out the rate of occurrence of internet addiction manifestations among students of the selected secondary school of the *Prešov region*. Within the partial research objective was finding a statistically significant difference in the rate of occurrence of internet addiction manifestations depending on the selected socio-demographic factors of the respondents (gender, year in school, residence).

2.1 Research sample

The basic research sample consisted of 48 students from a selected secondary school of the *Prešov region* ($n = 48$). 62.5% were female ($n_1 = 30$) and 37.5% were male ($n_2 = 18$). The first year of the school was attended by 50% of respondents ($n_1 = 24$) and the same count, 50% of respondents ($n_2 = 24$) attended the fourth year of school. 37.5% of respondents ($n_1 = 18$) reside in the village and 62.5% of respondents ($n_2 = 30$) lived in the city.

2.2 Method and research design

The research was carried out at a selected secondary school in the *Prešov region* in 2018. After a written agreement with the implementation of the research, we chose the available selection of respondents. Questionnaires were distributed to the students of the selected secondary school in print form during a personal meeting. The questionnaire was anonymous. In order to

achieve our goal, we have chosen a quantitative research strategy.

2.3 Research tool

As a data collection tool, we chose the *Chen internet addiction scale*. The questionnaire consisted of 26 items. These items scored on a 5-point scale. Individual scales were the 5 dimensions that covered compulsive syndrome, impaired behavioral control, withdrawal symptoms, tolerance rates, interpersonal relationship problems, and health problems (*Chen's internet addiction scale*, 2003). This questionnaire was used by several authors.

In statistical processing of research results, we chose statistical program the *IBM SPSS statistics* version 20 and used the following statistical procedures: *descriptive statistics, data distribution normality tests, mann-whitney u test, student t-test, averaging, two-t test, compute variable*.

3 Findings and limitations

Based on the results (Table 1), we find that the rate of occurrence of internet addiction manifestations in the respondents reached **2.26**, which in the selected scale (on a scale of 1 to 5, the higher the score, the higher the incidence of internet addiction) is the mean value. This finding was worrying to us, and on the basis of these results, we conclude that a school social worker is indispensable at our school, who can identify internet addiction manifestations and use social competences and tools to address social issues with emphasis on prevention.

Table 1: Rate of incidence of internet dependence (descriptive statistics)

	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Internet addiction speeches	48	1.13	3.88	2.26	0.59

Source: author's own

The Mann-whitney U test (Table 2) did not confirm a statistically significant rela-

¹ The part of the presented results are a part of diploma thesis called Internet addiction among adolescents (Dubíková 2018)

tionship ($p \alpha = 0.15$). In practice, this means that the difference in the incidence of internet dependence among women and men in our research sample is not statistically significant. From Table 2 shows that the average score of internet dependence was higher in female ($\bar{x} = 2.31$) than in male ($\bar{x} = 2.17$).

Table 2: Mann-whitney U test of significance of gender difference in the degree of expression of internet dependence

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>pα</i>
Internet addition speeches	Male	18	2.17	.15
	Female	30	2.31	

Source: author's own

Result Student's t-test ($p \alpha = 0.28$) confirms that there is no statistically significant difference in the incidence of symptoms of internet addiction, depending on the residence of the respondents (Table 3). In practice, this means that students living in cities, as students living in municipalities, also show internet dependence. Based on the comparison of the achieved average score, we state that the respondents living in the city ($\bar{x} = 2.35$) show a higher rate of internet dependence than respondents living in the municipality ($\bar{x} = 2.12$).

Table 3: Student's t-test of significance of the difference in rates of internet addiction in terms of residence

	<i>Residence</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>pα</i>
Internet addition speeches	City	30	2.35	.28
	Village	18	2.12	

Source: author's own

The Mann-whitney U test did not confirm the significance of the relationship between the rate of internet addiction and year of study (Table 4). In practice, this means that there is no significant difference in the rate of occurrence of internet dependence depending on the year of study that respondents attend. First-year students as well as fourth-year students also showed internet dependence speeches. Based on a comparison of average scores, we find that the rate of occurrence of internet dependence was higher among res-

pondents attending the fourth year ($\bar{x} = 2.47$) than among respondents and who attended the first year ($\bar{x} = 2.05$).

Table 4: Mann-whitney U test the significance of the relationship between the rate of internet addiction and year of study

	<i>Year of study</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>pα</i>
Internet addition speeches	4 th year of study	24	2.47	.07
	1 st year of study	24	2.05	

Source: author's own

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We did not confirm the hypothesis, as in one case there was no statistically significant relationship between the difference in the incidence of internet dependence and independent variables. In practice, this means that men and women, as well as students living in municipalities, are exposed to the risk of internet dependency as students living in cities. A statistically significant difference was not shown either by the year of attendance - which means that first-year students as well as fourth-year students are equally at risk.

For more detailed research, we compared the differences in the level of internet dependence depending on the selected socio-demographic factors of the respondents (gender, place of residence, year) on the basis of the average score of internet dependence in respondents. For female, the average score ($\bar{x} = 2.32$) was higher than for male ($\bar{x} = 2.17$), respondents living in the city showed a higher rate of internet dependence ($\bar{x} = 2.35$) than respondents living in the municipality ($\bar{x} = 2.12$) and respondents who visit 4th year, the average scores ($\bar{x} = 2.47$) were higher than those who attended the first year ($\bar{x} = 2.05$).

Similar results have also been shown in the research by Demetrivics et al. (2008), in which there was also no significant difference in internet usage and gender and, as in our research, female achieved a higher average score than male. This is supported by Beranuy et al (2009), whose multifactorial analysis of variance has

shown that the difference in internet dependency is not gender-dependent. Rol'ková and Hamarová (2017) presented a different result in the difference in the rate of internet dependence and the residence of the respondents, in which we found no statistically significant difference. Using student's t-test found that in trencin region in adolescents and adolescent living in the village were recorded higher rates of symptoms of internet addiction as adolescents coming from the city.

The authors justified this result by the fact that in the village, adolescents have little availability of leisure activities and, compared to the past, greater availability of internet access. Southern taiwan health adolescent project (Cheng, Fang et al., 2009) investigated the significant relationship between internet dependence and age of respondents and found that older respondents had a higher rate of addiction internet as younger respondents. In our research study, there was no significant relationship, but, as mentioned earlier, based on the results of arithmetic means, older respondents and respondents showed a higher rate of internet dependence than younger respondents.

Based on the results of the presented research study, we propose, in the context of solving the issue in the context of social work, mainly prevention. According to Ol'savská (2014), prevention is a system of measures aimed at minimizing or eliminating the risk of occurrence of certain sociopathological, life situations and processes that have a negative impact on people or groups of people under the influence of existing living, educational, working, socio-economic conditions and ways life. We agree with the proposals of Lichner and Šlosár (2013) who recommends focusing on existing and functioning programs dealing with drug addiction prevention and adding them to the prevention of addictions associated with the use of ict. We recommend that schools should create a space for the profession of school social worker and worker, because they are the professionals whose main competencies at school are counseling and counseling, direct communication and working with children and the family and creating preventive programs for internet addic-

tion and others sociopathological problems (Openshaw, 2008, in: Skyba, 2014).

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