

Internet, Social Media, and Gaming Addictions

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RELATED WORK

Internet, social media, and gaming addictions are researched as they affect and impact many types of people in different ways. People tend to interact with the internet differently depending on their age group, gender, behavioral habits, or even neurochemical factors [1]. Regular social media service (SNS) and video games use has increased substantially over the last few years [1,2,6,10]. In recent years, this significant increased use (estimated between 1.7 and 10% of the general population) has led the World Health Organization (WHO) to include gaming disorders in the list of mental health conditions in 2018 [10]. According to WHO, internet gaming disorder is characterized by a “severely reduced control over gaming, results in an increased gaming time and leading to negative consequences in many aspects of the individual life: personal, family, social, occupational, and other relevant areas of functioning” [10]. Additionally, Internet Gaming Addiction (IGA) has been listed as an emerging disorder worthy of further investigation in the latest version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders V (DSM-V) [9]. Research shows that online game playing elicits and neurological response connected to pleasant feelings, which results in addictive behavior [2]. Important statements to note in the DSM-V: “loss of enthusiasm for past leisure activities” and “continuing the use in spite facing problems” [2]. While most people that participate in gaming may consider it a pleasurable pastime activity, the research suggests that online gaming in excess, in extreme cases, may lead to symptoms commonly experienced by substance addicts such as mood modifications, craving, tolerance, and withdrawal [4, 8]. After a nationwide study conducted and analyzed in Germany about online gaming addiction in children and adolescents, it appears that the symptoms of the gaming addiction in the children/adolescents are comparable with the official symptoms for substance dependence [5]. The only distinguishing feature is the lack of the ingestion of a psychoactive substance [4,5].

Recent research examines the relationship between leisure boredom and technology addiction specifically among teens and young adults. A widespread belief is the main reason for addictive behavior is lack of self-control [2]. Addicts thought they played online games during free time or to relax, but in reality, it was because they were lonely. In particular, loneliness and self-control were significant predictors of social media or video game addiction [2]. More specifically, game addiction was related to gratifications, self-esteem, leisure boredom and loneliness and self-control is negatively correlated to online video game addiction [2].

More about self-esteem, additional studies examine the relations of social media addictions to mental health and self-esteem [3]. It is proven that a prolonged use of SNS, specifically Facebook, is associated with mental health problems such as stress, anxiety, and depression [3]. In a study conducted with college students, this also had a very negative effect on their academic performance. The link between social media use and depression, especially in young adults, is not a new idea. Many studies have been conducted and there is a clear connection between increased social media use and an increase depression. In a specific study from 2010, results indicated that, after 9 months of exposure to the Internet, moderate and severe problematic users were about 2.5 times more likely to develop depressive symptoms and were labeled clinically significant in comparison to the normal users [9].

Excessive online video gaming and social media use is also suspected to induce sleep difficulties [7,9]. There are studies that show SNS addicts have more difficulty sleeping compared to non-SNS addicts, as they stay on games and social media even when it is better for them to get sleep instead [7]. Additionally, studies involving massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), such as World of Warcraft and other game types have been conducted comparing players who habitually play the during the day and night and researched their sleep quality [9]. Results showed that these MMORPGs might be

associated with sleep problems, poorer quality of sleep, and shorter sleep duration [9].

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