

Internet and Mobile Phone Addiction



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INTRODUCTION

The Internet is a largely social, interactive and information-driven medium that makes it easy for us to engage in social and academic activities, including business and entertainment. Over the last decade, mobile phones have actually turned into so-called “smartphones,” and they now support a wide variety of services related to the Internet, multimedia, business, gaming, photography, etc.

These networks have had a great impact on young people. On the one hand, the Internet has provided many benefits to users (Echeburúa & de Corral, 2010). On the other, some people have become obsessed with it and are unable to control their use. In some cases, people have lost control of their Internet and Mobile Phone usage to the degree that their behavior has jeopardized their jobs and relationships.

This problematic Internet and Mobile Phone use (PIU) can affect users’ physical, mental and psychological health (Bener & Bhugra, 2013). Some researchers have confirmed that excessive Internet use, which is considered a behavioral addiction, can generate symptoms associated with dependence in a similar way as substance abuse. According to Beranuy, Carbonell, and Griffiths (2013), problematic Internet and Mobile phone users can suffer mood modification, loss of control, relapse, craving, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict,

among others (Kuss, Griffiths, & Binder, 2013). As a consequence, particular kinds of behavior may arise in relation with overuse (Puerta-Cortés, Carbonell, & Chamarro, 2014).

In general the problematic use of the Internet and mobile phones can be defined as an inability to regulate one’s use which eventually involves negative consequences in daily life (Billieux, 2012) including on health and on social and financial aspects of life.

OVERVIEW

The field of knowledge related to Internet and Mobile Phone addiction began to emerge when in 1995 Goldberg criticized the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) with reference to Internet addiction. One year later, Young (1996) expressed her worries about the emergence of a new disorder related to the maladaptive usage of information and communication technologies.

Over the following years interest in this topic has grown and gained the attention of many researchers worldwide. Despite the fact that Internet and Mobile Phone addiction is a concern in all countries, the issue has been a more major consideration in certain places. This is true in some Asian countries, especially China, Korea, Taiwan and

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Japan, which seem to have a significantly higher proportion of sufferers from this maladaptive Internet and Mobile Phone use. This large number of people with problems arising from what is now considered a behavioral disorder has prompted these countries to seek out treatments and create specific rehabilitation programs.

What we do know is that the appearance of new technologies that allow the user to be connected at all times has made one of the most significant impacts on modern society in recent years, affecting the daily life of many people around the world. The regular use of these tools can lead to a lack of control in users, or in other words to abuse, and ultimately to addictive behavior. Although not all studies have focused on the problems related to new technologies, and have also dealt with their benefits, the major scientific interest, especially in the psychological field, is concerned with their possible negative effects.

As we have stated, modern technology allows users to have access to the Internet through the Mobile Phone. The blend of the two technologies suggests that we cannot conceive Internet addiction as a separate entity from that of mobile phone addiction, but rather should study them together. Another issue to be considered is that many researchers claim that the cause of maladaptive behavior and addiction is not the technology itself, but the content and applications than can be accessed via the Internet.

CURRENT SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE IN INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ADDICTION

Nowadays, Internet and Mobile Phone addiction is an issue with increasing significance for the scientific community. In this section we will present an overview of current research on Internet and mobile phone addiction. The number of studies concerning this topic has grown significantly.

In Europe, Griffiths and his International Gaming Research Unit have taken a place among the

world's leading scholars on gaming addiction and gambling and become a reference all over the world for those who study Internet related issues, having published numerous books and articles. In Spain, Echeburúa was one of the earliest scholars to be concerned with the psychological aspects related to Internet use. Now, several research groups focused on maladaptive behaviors exist in Spain with the aim of understanding the psychological dimension of addictions. For instance, Carbonell and his group have carried out several important studies on addictions to substances and new technologies like the Internet and Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs).

In America, Young (e.g. Young, 1998) is one of the most influential global experts on Internet addiction disorder and online behavior. The founder of the Center for Internet Addiction in 1995, she is considered a pioneer on this subject.

Leo Sang-Min Whang and Geunyoung Chang (see Whang, Lee, & Chang, 2003), represent some of the most important researchers in the prolific Asian sector. Their interests remain in human behavior changes through socio-cultural circumstances. With the arrival of these new technologies, these Korean researchers started studying cyber psychology and youth culture.

Relationship between Internet and Mobile Phone Addiction

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have become an essential part of our lives. The increase in new technologies and virtual communication involving personal computers, tablets and mobile phones is causing changes in individuals' daily habits and behavior (King et al., 2013). Consequently, profound changes have been and continue to be produced in our society.

The most recent revolutionary change in the field of information and communication technology has been the advent of multipurpose mobile phones (Chóliz, 2010), so-called smartphones, which allow users to access the Internet, Internet applications and social networking sites (SNSs)

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