PREVENTING INTERNET ADDICTION IN YOUTH

Khatamova Dilafruz Aminovna
Teacher of the Faculty of Medicine
Navoi State University

Abstract

The number of Internet users is increasing every year – 62.5% of the world population already has access to the "World Wide Web". Most of them are people aged 12 to 24. This age range is the main risk group for the development of Internet addiction (IA).

Keywords: Internet addiction, prevention, youth, students, addictions, internet, cyber-psychology.

INTRODUCTION

Internet addiction (IA) (from English "Internet addiction") is a pathological condition in which an individual develops an obsessive desire to stay online for the maximum amount of time with minimal breaks between sessions, using any available devices (computer, smartphone, tablet, smart TV, game console, etc.). According to the Digital 2022 review report [1], 62.5% of the world's population (4.95 billion people) have access to the Internet. This figure will only increase every year. In May - July 2020, more than 78% of citizens of Uzbekistan used the World Wide Web at least once a month (over twelve years old) [2]. According to the research company Mediascope for 2023, the bulk of Internet users in Uzbekistan were people aged 12 to 24 years. It is this age range that is characterized by a period of intensive psychological maturation and is most vulnerable to the development of intellectual disabilities [4].

Research shows that IA has a direct connection with conditions that impair the quality of life of adolescents. First of all, these are: sleep disturbances, increased intolerance to frustration, development of depressive and anxiety disorders, overweight/obesity, commitment to other addictions [1].

There are a number of reasons for using the Internet that are the same for all age and social groups of the population: communication links, information search, leisure activities. For writing the article, only those aspects that were directly related to the learning process and student life in general were studied.

In modern realities, it is impossible to imagine obtaining high-quality professional education without students using the Internet - it is with its help that information is searched for, partial practical classes and lectures are held (especially during the COVID-19 pandemic), certification, self-education, interpersonal communications

both between students and with teachers are carried out. Also, one should not miss the social part of a student's life - communication with friends and relatives, the process of personality development, spending time off from studies, possible earnings and making new acquaintances. Therefore, a high-quality program for the prevention of IA is required, in particular, among student youth.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

An intra-university online survey "Internet addiction among medical students" was conducted.

The anonymous survey was posted on the Google online survey platform. The link to the survey was distributed via social networks (VKontakte and Telegram).

Data collection took place from May 1 to June 1, 2022. 22 questionnaires with answers that were not fully completed, as well as duplicate questionnaires with the same account, were excluded. As a result, 181 participants became available for the final analysis. By completing the survey, respondents confirmed their voluntary consent to participate in the study. No monetary reward was provided for participation in the survey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The final analysis was based on the results of a survey of 181 people. The respondents were students from the following faculties: general medicine (n = 83, 45.8%), pediatrics (n = 37, 20.4%), dentistry (n = 23, 12.7%), medical and preventive care and medical biochemistry (MPD/MBC) (n = 28, 15.5%), pharmacy (n = 4, 2.2%), secondary vocational education (SVE) (n = 1, 0.6%), and the faculty of clinical psychology, social work, and adaptive physical education (n = 5, 2.8%). 74.6% of respondents were female (n = 135). The majority of respondents in the age structure were 21–22 years old (n = 72, 39.8%). The age and gender composition of respondents and their distribution by faculties corresponds to the general population.

After analyzing individual changes in respondents' commitment to changing the time spent online before and during the pandemic, we obtained the following data: the influence did not change for n = 15 (8.3%), decreased for n = 43 (23.8%), and increased for n = 123 (68.0%). When calculating the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, the test was less than 0.05 and less than 0.01, respectively. Since the significance levels of the p-test took values less than 0.05, the comparison was carried out based on the alternative hypothesis - the empirical distribution densities do not correspond to the normal law. Since the sample distribution was not normal

and the sample size was 181 people, the comparison of indicators was calculated using a nonparametric criterion: the sign criterion, empirically the p value was <0.01, therefore, the number of points scored increased statistically significantly.

Based on the results, we can say that in our sample, the differences in the number of points scored before and during the pandemic were statistically significant. Consequently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, most medical students increased the time they spent online, but the average value of +3.39 points does not allow us to say that this increase had a significant impact on the formation of IZ. Only 16 respondents (8.8%) moved from category 1 to category 2 (n = 12, 6.6%) and to category 3 (n = 4, 2.2%).

Nevertheless, the rate of growth of time spent by students on the Internet, as well as the transition of respondents to category 3, classified as IZ, requires updating existing and developing new measures to prevent this disorder. Internet addiction includes several subtypes [5], therefore, a prevention program should be developed taking into account its varieties, and not IA as a separate phenomenon.

According to the World Health Organization, three levels are distinguished in the structure of prevention - primary, secondary and tertiary. Following this classification, we presented generalized and systematized results concerning potential measures to prevent the development of IA in the student community.

Primary prevention includes a set of measures to prevent the occurrence and impact of risk factors of any phenomenon on the human body.

The main factors predisposing to the occurrence of IA include: early age of independent use of the Internet; male gender; social anxiety; emotional spectrum (impulsivity, aggressiveness) [2].

In today's reality, it is impossible to completely protect a child from the World Wide Web, so certain measures are required to prevent its harmful effects on a growing body, and these measures need to be implemented in two directions - working with children and with their parents.

Parents and teachers also need to conduct educational talks with the child, explaining the hygienic and ethical aspects of using a smartphone, as well as control the time and sites that he uses, thus contributing to [3]:

• the formation of the basics of cybersecurity (awareness of the features of dissemination, transmission and reliability of information, safe behavior on the network), which are implemented through preventive talks (child - parent), as well as at school during "class hours";

• the development of social confidence (self-confidence, awareness of their purpose for being online, the ability to build a virtual dialogue) - communication with peers,

classes in various clubs / sections, joint pastime of children and their parents, a comfortable microclimate in the family, as well as the development of erudition in the younger generation will help [4].

CONCLUSION

Any addiction that a person develops radically changes their worldview. Digital addiction is fraught with serious consequences. A student is not a fully formed personality, who is just beginning to realize himself in society, to independently understand what kind of world he lives in, who surrounds him. Therefore, preventive work is essential. Our survey confirms the high susceptibility of students to the influence of the Internet, allows us to classify them as a risk group for the development of IA and talk about the importance of studying this pathology in general and its subtypes in particular. Internet addiction is a behavioral addiction, characterized for each of its subtypes by its own symptom complex, especially dangerous for the younger generation or asocial individuals.

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