

INTERNET ADDICTION AND GAMING DISORDER AND THIER PSYCHIATRIC CORRELATES IN A SAMPLE OF ADOLESCENT PATIENTS

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Introduction

The internet has become an integral part of adolescents’ lives; they are recognized as the primary users of digital technology both at home and within educational settings. Adolescence is a critical developmental stage, during this phase adolescents are acquiring critical thinking skills, developing personal boundaries, and asserting a growing need for autonomy. These render them susceptible to the overuse of digital technologies. Although the internet is a valuable educational and communicative resource, its misuse poses risks to adolescent mental health, especially in the absence of protective social structures. Internet Addiction (IA) has emerged as a pressing public health issue, often termed in the literature as problematic internet use, or pathological internet use. Similarly, Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD), a subtype of behavioral addiction. The management of IA and IGD remains a clinical challenge. Early detection particularly among adolescents is essential to prevent long-term psychological impairment and to address potential psychiatric comorbidities.

Aim of the Work

The aim of this study is to estimate the prevalence of internet addiction and internet gaming disorder among adolescent patients attending psychiatric outpatient clinic and to identify the correlation between internet addiction and various psychiatric comorbidities and associated risk factors.

Patients and Methods

This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted on 150 adolescent patients attending the child psychiatry clinic at El Hadara University Hospital, Alexandria University. A complete history, including demographic information and psychiatric problems was obtained from all participants followed by, a psychiatric interview using the Kiddie schedule for affective disorders and schizophrenia-present and lifespan version (K-SADS-PL) 2013. Finally, psychometric assessments were performed utilizing Young's Internet Addiction Test and the Internet Gaming Scale- Short Form.

Results

Table 1: Association between internet addiction and different psychiatric disorders among studied groups.

	Internet addiction (n=110)	No internet addiction (n=40)	X ²	P value
Mood disorders				
Yes	45	9	4.314	0.037*
No	65	31		
Anxiety disorders				
Yes	48	8	7.005	0.008*
No	62	32		
OCD disorder				
Yes	5	5	2.983	0.084 N.S.
No	105	35		
Tic disorder				
Yes	7	5	1.501	0.221 N.S.
No	103	35		
Behavioral disorders				
Yes	53	10	6.471	0.011*
No	57	30		
Substance use disorders				
Yes	0	1	2.769	0.096 N.S.
No	110	39		
Psychotic disorders				
Yes	0	1	2.769	0.096 N.S.
No	110	39		

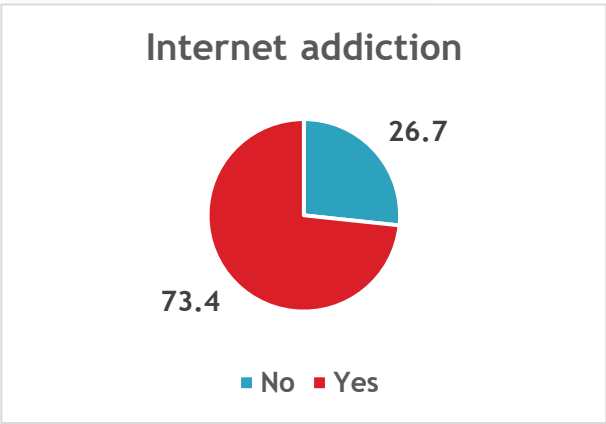


Figure 1: Internet addiction among the studied group

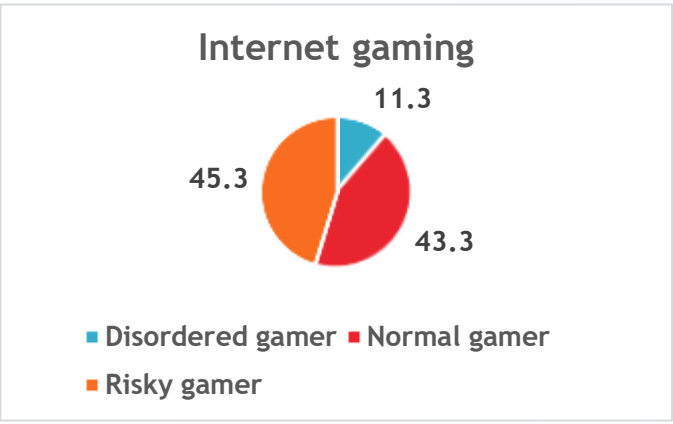


Figure 2: Distribution of internet gaming pattern among studied group.

Table 2: Multivariate logistic regression analysis of factors associating to internet addiction.

	IA (n=110)	No IA (n=40)	P value	Odds ratio	CI (95%)
Initial internet use before age of 6 years					
Yes	46	5	<0.001*	5.03	1.83-13.8
No	64	35			
Parental awareness about internet hazards					
Yes	57	37	<0.001*	0.087	0.02-0.29
No	53	3			
Engagement in regular physical activities					
Yes	40	29	<0.001*	0.241	0.10-0.54
No	70	11			
Mood disorders					
Yes	45	9	0.037*	2.38	1.03-5.48
No	65	31			
Anxiety disorders					
Yes	48	8	0.008*	3.09	1.30-7.32
No	62	32			
Behavioral disorders					
Yes	53	10	0.011*	2.78	1.24-6.25
No	57	30			
Internet gaming disorder					
Yes	70	15	0.004*	2.91	1.37-6.16
No	40	25			

Conclusion

Our findings highlight the critical clinical reality of the high prevalence of internet addiction and gaming disorder among the adolescent psychiatric population, with varying severity levels. Internet addiction was significantly associated with several comorbid psychiatric disorders particularly anxiety, behavioural and mood disorders, suggesting that IA/IGD can both contribute to or result from underlying mental health vulnerabilities. Early internet exposure (before age 6) as a significant risk factor highlights the consequences of unregulated screen use during formative years. Parental awareness and engagement in physical activities were protective factor, emphasizing the importance of familial support systems in mitigating risk.