

# Internet Addiction

When addiction is consumed  
through the Internet



**Juan Moisés de la Serna**

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By

Juan Moisés de la Serna

Translated by Garcia Menendez Maria Gloria

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[www.juanmoisesdelaserna.es](http://www.juanmoisesdelaserna.es)

# Preamble

Technology is more and more present in our lives, which is a clear advance, but also a danger, especially among the youngest people, since they can fall into what is called Internet Addiction.

This has become a reality today, a health problem that did not exist only a decade ago, and which is taking on new victims and more and more young people every day.

Although the long-term consequences are still unknown, the fact that some studies indicate that 30% of young people who use the Internet on a daily basis are at risk of developing a behavioural addiction means that one in three of them is at risk of developing a behavioural addiction.

While some countries are beginning to take steps to prevent it, in others they have not yet realized the gravity of the situation, hence the need to disseminate the results of the latest research in this area to give visibility to a social problem that requires both preventive and curative measures.

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Dedicated to my parents

# THANKS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people who have contributed to this text, especially Mr. Cam Adair, co-author of the Manual on Addiction of Video Games for Parents.

###Internet Addiction: When addiction is consumed through the Internet###

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Translated by Garcia Menendez Maria Gloria

# Chapter 1. Definition of Internet Addiction

The extensive and intensive use of new technologies, especially among young people, has brought about a new reality, that of Internet addiction.

Although this phenomenon has been reported for some years now, Internet addiction has become a **common** mental health problem.

Addictions, especially behavioural ones, do not seem to distinguish between gender or age, and can occur at any time in life, although it is during adolescence that some of them seem to become more evident.

Perhaps because there is a certain level of social permissiveness in young people to explore new behaviours, including risky ones, which are not allowed at any other age.

Some defend this position by indicating that it is a way of discovering the world, but above all oneself, with its possibilities and limitations.

Just like experiencing healthy behaviours, it is also when the first addictive practices appear, either substance or behavioural, such as Internet addiction.

But if there is a particularly sensitive group among young people who are particularly sensitive to Internet addiction, it

is university students, on whom a great deal of research is being carried out, although it is not clear whether it is because Internet Addiction has a greater impact on them, or because it is a particularly accessible group for research, in what some have called campus research, but what health problems does the Internet entail?

This is precisely what is being investigated through research conducted jointly by the Department of Community Medicine, HiTech School of Medicine and the Department of Statistics, Utkal University (India), the results of which have been published in the International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research.

The study included 100 randomly selected students between the ages of 17 and 23, 95% of whom were women.

All of them were given a test to assess their level of Internet addiction through the I.A.T. (Internet Addiction Test) and another to evaluate the implications in the student's emotional world through the P.A.N.A.S. (Positive and Negative Affect Schedule).

Data was also collected on the time they spend on the Internet, the purpose of their use, the places they visit and the number of hours they spend surfing the Internet.

The results show that 74% of Internet use is for personal purposes, while only 26% is for subjects related to their studies.

With 76% of students aged between 2 and 4 years as users of the network, 93% showing non-intensive use of the networks,

less than two hours a day.

With respect to the places they visit, 23% do so on social networks, while the remaining 76% use it to explore the Internet in search of information related to their studies.

Although this is a broad sample, it focuses exclusively on one type of technology career, so the results cannot be extended to other students in less technology-related careers.

Likewise, and despite reporting that both men and women were included in the groups of participants, the data are not analyzed separately, so with this study it is not possible to know the incidence of Internet addiction in relation to gender.

Despite having been evaluated, the results do not indicate the degree of students who are addicted to the Internet, nor do they explain the significant positive effects on mood that have been found in the use of the Internet.

But if one thing should be noted is that the young people in the study spend too much time on personal issues that are almost exclusively focused on social networks, compared to those they use for their studies, where the use of the Internet is more widespread.

This should also serve to reflect on the educational model, which is distant from the way in which young people interact in the network, and should be incorporated new strategies to exploit the possibilities of social networks.

Nowadays it is difficult to think that a young does not has knowledge or an account in Facebook, Twitter or Tuenti among

others, because they were born in the era of social networks, considering themselves to be digital natives, that is, those who were born after the eighties and who had little access to new technologies.

Those who are older, those who were born before the 80s, have to make an effort to keep themselves informed and trained about social networks, and this is what is called digital immigrants, that is, people who were born without these possibilities and who now have to enter this world, sometimes confused and others disconcerting, but in any case useful and necessary.

As previously it was requested for some jobs to have a driver's license and a minimum level of education, it is now necessary for candidates to have adequate skills in the use of computers and social networks.

As a result of these new tools, new jobs have arisen that were inconceivable a few years ago, such as Community Manager, responsible for virtual forums and communities, or the more technical ones in charge of promoting websites, such as SEO consultants. And S.E.M., which seek to achieve greater visibility in the networks of a given brand or company.

Young people have been incorporating the tools offered by this new technology into their lives, both academic and leisure, so that there are now many universities that partially or totally teach online, being able to connect from any fixed or mobile device, such as tablets, iPads, or smartphones.

The teachers have a double function: to organize and record the classes to be taught and to provide virtual tutoring to resolve any doubts that may have arisen from them.

This has enabled to open the doors of universities to students from all over the world, with the only requirement that they have the necessary language skills to follow the classes, and of course, a device with an Internet connection.

For this reason, the only thing that could not be resolved was when the exams were taken, which are required to be in person, either at the university itself or at a private school in the student's country. So that the student who takes the test has an adequate knowledge of the test's subject.

One way of guaranteeing the level of training achieved by the student, since otherwise, with the non-attendance exams, it is possible that someone else may answer it, without the student being the student.

In my particular case, after several years of teaching face-to-face in different universities, I had to take a training course in order to continue my teaching work, but this time through the Internet, for which I had to adapt the technological tools that I used to use to the new demands, including the familiarization of training platforms such as Moodle, or the employment of videoconferencing programs to teach online, which allowed me to give classes in Spain, both on the Peninsula and on the Islands, while they were followed from Latin America.

But there are risks of the Internet that emerge when youth

leisure becomes almost exclusive in the intensive use of this technology, losing social contact and sometimes, with reality itself.

Many studies are being carried out in this respect, because of this new modality, where new cases of cyber addicts are detected every day, that is, people who are unable to disconnect from the network, facilitating social isolation, and the lack of mental and personal hygiene, also associated with inadequate food, but can we predict the future addiction to the Internet?

This is what we have tried to answer with a research carried out jointly by the Institute of Medicine, Kaohsiung Medical University and the Hsiao-Kang Municipal Hospital (Taiwan), the results of which have been published in the scientific journal J.A.M.A. Pediatrics.

Two thousand two hundred and ninety-three young people took part in the study and were followed for two years, being evaluated at 6, 12 and 24 months.

All of them were tested for addiction using the standardized C.I.A.S. scale. (Chen Internet Addiction Scale); levels of depression using the Chinese version of the C.E.S.D. scale (Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression); attention deficit hyperactivity disorder as assessed by the A.D.H.D.S. scale. (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Self-rated Scale); social phobia using the F.N.E. scale. (Fear of Negative Evaluation); and the hostility of the participants through the B.D.H.I.C.-S.F. (Buss-Durkee Hostility Inventory-Chinese

Version-Short Form).

The results report that those young men who had high levels of aggression showed higher levels of addiction after the age of 2, becoming the best predictor of this psychopathology.

In contrast, the adolescents who took part in the study showed that the best prognostic of future addiction is related to suffering from attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

In both boys and girls, previous levels of social phobia and depression were not relevant for predicting future technology addiction.

The study also provides revealing information in that, in just two years, more than 10% of the participants were affected by Internet addiction and being insignificant the difference in the number of cases between male and female addicts.

It is necessary to make studies in order to be able to create specific programs to prevent it, with special emphasis on education, as a decisive factor of self-regulation in the handling of new technologies, that is, with a correct education, it would be expected that the young will be able to use technology properly and not overuse it.

Although the phenomenon of Internet Addiction is recent, it has been evolving quickly, so the first addicts to video games or the Internet, spent hours and hours without leaving their rooms, unable to disconnect from role-playing games or any other video game to score more points and increase the ranking, as if that

was the most important thing of all.

From these first cases, the term *hikikomori* syndrome appeared, originally identified in Japan during the 1980s and 1990s.

Young people who suffered from it, turned their backs on society and refused to interact with others, except through computers, which sometimes resulted in poor nutrition and even the abandonment of personal hygiene.

An example of this has been observed to a greater or lesser extent all over the world, where the computer screen becomes the *reality* of the young, where nothing beyond the four walls of his room exists.

Nowadays, thanks to mobile devices such as tablets, iPads or Smartphones, you no longer need to stay at home to be connected to the Internet.

In addition, the emergence of social networks has increased the possibilities of communication, beyond video games or chat a few years ago, which has resulted in an increase in the number of cases of Internet addiction, but what is the percentage of addicts to Facebook?

This is precisely what the Department of Information System and the Department of Fundamentals of Education and Social Sciences, Faculty of Education, Malaysian University of Technology (Malaysia), together with the Department of Computer and Information Technology, Islamic Azad University (Iran), have tried to answer, the results of which have been

published in the International Journal of Information and Education Technology.

The study included 441 university students, with an estimated average age of 24, of whom 49% were women.

All were tested using the standardized scale to determine the level of addiction to Facebook called B.F.A.S. (Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale); the level of control locus was also assessed using the L.O.C. (Locus of Control); and the one of personal selfishness through the Ego Strength Scale.

The results report that young people showed very high levels of addiction to Facebook, reaching 47% of them, which means that almost half of the Facebook users were addicted to this social network.

These data are maintained despite the origin (Malay or non-Malay), the religion they practised (Muslim, Christian, Buddhist) and even the gender of the participants.

One of the limitations of the study is that the selection of the participants was made among those who habitually used social networks, that is, the results reflect that among the habitual users we can find these high levels of addiction, but it doesn't say anything about those young people who don't use social networks so often.

It should be considered that the study was only carried out with university students, and the results could not be extended to the rest of the population, or even to young people, since they may be influenced by such outstanding variables as the

socioeconomic level or the culture of Facebook users, aspects that are not analyzed in this study.

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