

Internet and mobile phone addiction

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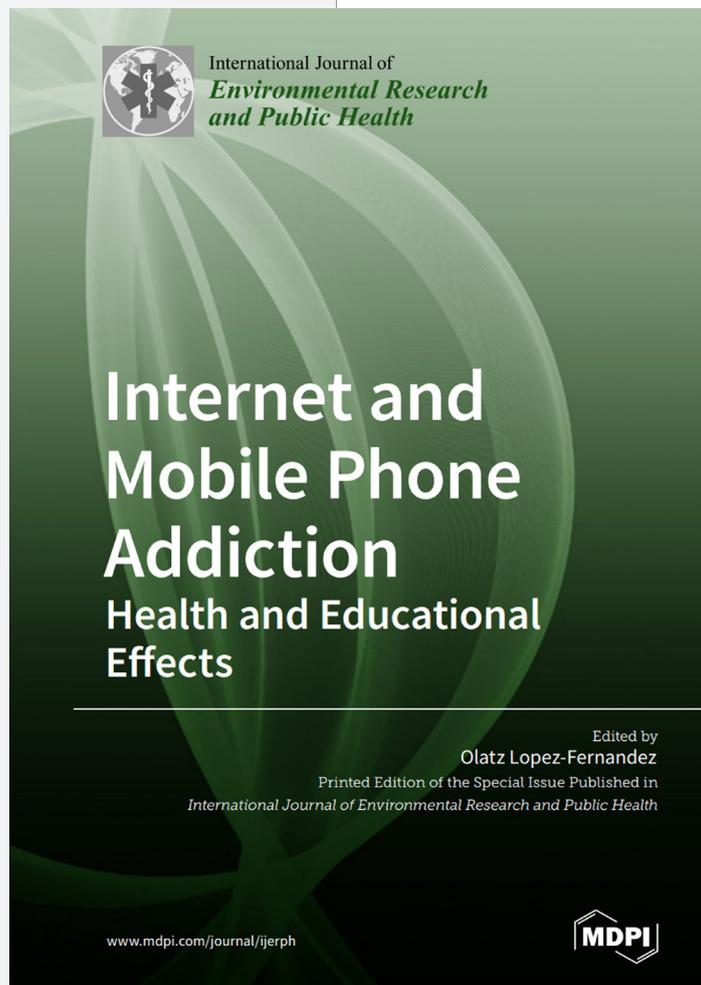
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“The International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health” published, between 2017 and 2018, a series of articles about current issues of great relevance, such as *Commuting, Life-Satisfaction and Internet Addiction, Problematic Smartphone Use: Investigating Contemporary Experiences Using a Convergent Design or A Phenotype Classification of Internet Use Disorder in a Large-Scale High-School Study*. Olatz Lopez-Fernandez, Special Issue Editor, gathered such contributions, 20 articles, in a recently published Special Issue entitled: *Internet and Mobile Phone Addiction Health and Educational Effects*.

We are pleased to publish, for divulgation purposes, the Preface to the book and sincerely thank the author for allowing us to reprint it (Note of the Italian Editor).

Preface

Internet use-related addiction problems such as Internet addiction or problematic mobile phone use (including other technological behavioural addictions: cybersex, problem social networking, and gaming disorder) have been defined and conceptualized in multiple ways. However, almost all definitions have similar core elements describing the addictive symptomatology presented by individuals who behave addictively using technologies, which include using the Internet excessively and problematically. In other words, they use fixed or mobile Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and their applications (e.g., video games, social networks, and gambling sites) in a way that constitutes the most critical activity in their daily life. These cause them distress and functional impairment, which is perceived as a loss of control impacting on their health and wellbeing.



These problems are not restricted to the Internet in general and can be applied to a full range of specific online activities that potentially could affect users' health (personal, social, and environmental). Indeed, they constitute a biopsychosocial phenomenon.

To date, most published Internet use-related addiction problems literacy research has focused on assessing, through psychometric and epidemiological studies, the different problems detected since 1996, starting with the concept of 'Internet addiction'. Nevertheless, 'video game addiction' was simultaneously researched and recently, included as a mental disease in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) by the World Health Organization (WHO). Previously, the American Psychiatric Association (APA), in 2013, requested additional research on 'Internet Gaming Disorder' (IGD) as a "Condition for Further Study" in the third appendix of their fifth Diagnostic And Statistical Manual Of Mental Disorders (DSM-5).

Thus, a better understanding has emerged of the extent to which these addictive problems related to the use of fixed or mobile ICTs are mediated by personal, technological, and environmental demands, which have emerged during the 21st century. It may be argued this phenomenon, at present, could be considered a contemporary problem, classed as a psychopathological disease in the case of Gaming and Gaming Disorders by the WHO. Indeed, the complexity of the phenomena under the umbrella term of 'Internet addiction' is considerable, and requires a critical understanding of its scientific and clinical evidence.

The context in which Internet use-related addiction problems literacy has been developed and been applied is international, beginning in the mid-nineties in the Anglo-Saxon countries. This expansion has led to much greater attention being given to ways of reducing the individual demands and complexity of individuals who suffer one or more of these health problems which are emerging worldwide. A range of tools and treatments are to help create and develop health programs in organisations from Asia, Europe, and America. These proposed strategies seek to reduce the individual demands on people developing these addictive problems. However, more knowledge and dissemination is needed to know how to prevent these potential health issues, and education on them could be a protective factor.

A Special Issue on health and educational effects due to excessive Internet or mobile phone use has been tackled in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (IJERPH) titled: "Internet and Mobile Phone Addiction: Health and Educational Effects", which was developed between 2017 and 2018. The recognition of these Internet use-related addiction problems were also being internationally debated. These problems have finally started to be accredited by Public Health organisations such as the WHO. For detailed information on the Special Issue referred to, you can visit [https://www.mdpi.com/journal/ijerph/special issues/internet addiction](https://www.mdpi.com/journal/ijerph/special%20issues/internet%20addiction).

In summary, the APA and the WHO have been considering the inclusion of other sub-syndromal behavioural addictions (namely, "Disorders Due to Addictive Behaviours" with online and offline settings). The number of these ICTs, such as the Internet and mobile technologies, is expected to rise in the next years according to the International Telecommunication Union, an agency of the United Nations. However, we still do not know the phenomenology, the developing course, and the potential number of people that already have or could develop these potential behavioural addictions through technologies per country.

The risk of these addictive problems has received increasing attention. As a result, disordered addictive behaviors supported by technologies, such as the Internet and mobile phones, have drawn interest internationally from different sectors. Researchers and practitioners in this field have been looking at advances in these potential behavioural addictions concerning care, management, and prevention, including diagnosis, treatment, and co-morbidity. Developing updated knowledge and strategies for reducing risk factors that predispose populations and gaining an understanding of the nature of these problems regarding their public health, social, and educational impact is needed. In conclusion, this Special Issue is dedicated to the subject area of these potential addictive problems for its detection, treatment, and prevention with a cross-cultural approach.

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