

PATHOLOGICAL INTERNET USE AMONG EUROPEAN ADOLESCENTS: PSYCHOPATHOLOGY AND SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIORS

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Aims: To investigate the association of psychopathology and self-destructive behaviors with maladaptive Internet use (MIU) and pathological Internet use (PIU) among European adolescents.

Design: A cross-sectional analysis.

Setting: The study was performed within the context of an on-going epidemiological study conducted in Europe entitled *Saving and Empowering Young Lives in Europe* (SEYLE). Schools were randomly selected in catchment areas across eleven countries: Austria, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Romania, Slovenia and Spain, with Sweden as the coordinating center.

Participants: The study sample comprised 11,357 school-based adolescents (M/F: 4,856/6,501; Mean Age: 14.9).

Measurements: MIU and PIU was measured by the Young's Diagnostic Questionnaire for Internet Addiction (YDQ). Psychopathology was measured using the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II), Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (Z-SAS) and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ); self-destructive behaviors were assessed by the Deliberate Self-Harm Inventory (DSHI) and Paykel Suicide Scale (PSS).

Findings: MIU and PIU prevalence was 13.4% and 4.2%, respectively; significant gender and country differences were found. A stepwise regression showed that suicidal behavior (RRR=9.8), depression (RRR=5.4), conduct problems (RRR=1.9) and symptoms of ADHD (RRR=1.7) were independently associated with PIU. Anxiety, peer relationship problems and NSSI were not independent factors in the model explaining PIU. Gender and country interactions influenced the association between psychopathology, suicidal behaviors and the YDQ score.

Conclusion: Among adolescents, certain forms of psychopathology and self-destructive behaviors appeared to be highly interrelated with MIU and PIU. These associations are influenced by both gender and country.