Screening of Problematic Internet Use in adolescents from Galicia (Spain): Current data and related variables

Patricia Gómez (patricia.gomez@usc.es)
Sandra Golpe, Teresa Berza, Yolanda Iglesias, Manuel Isorna, Carmen Barreiro, Jesus Varela and Antonio Rial
UNIVERSITY OF SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA (SPAIN)

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

The use of Internet by adolescents has been assessing the interest of an increasing number of researchers for nearly two decades. In Spain, 92.0% of 10-15-year-old children are Internet users (National Statistics Institute, 2018) while in Europe, 97.5% of 16-19-year-olds used Internet in the last 3 months (Eurostat, 2015). Despite the many benefits that technological evolution has brought, there are also many risks and hazards that might result from a misuse of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In particular, the expanding use of the Internet has contributed to the occurrence of certain risk practices (cyberbullying, sexting or grooming). Likewise there are abundant studies that have warned about the excessive amount of use adolescents spend online and the consequences of this excessive use. Many authors have even referred to a possible Internet Addiction (IA) or Problematic Internet Use (PIU), giving the high degree of interference that some adolescents might experience. However, prevalence rates of PIU or IA in adolescents remain unclear because of the lack of agreement on the defining criteria and the large number of different tests and instruments developed to measure it. In Spain, 19.3% of secondary-school students are found to be Problematic Internet Users (Gómez, Rial, Braza, Varela, & Barreiro, 2014), while prevalence of Problematic Internet use among European adolescents is 4.4%, and 13.5% are identified as maladaptive users (Dasker et al. 2012). In the meantime, a review of studies on adolescents and university students in the USA sets out a range of prevalence from 0% to 26.5% (Moreno, Jellicenkins, Cox, Young, & Christakis, 2011). An effective response to this problem in terms of prevention involves having a comprehensive knowledge about it in both descriptive and explanatory terms. In this context, the main objective of the present study was to conduct a general screening of problematic Internet use in Galician adolescents (North-West region from Spain), providing updated prevalence data and information about the Internet, social networking and smartphone usage habits, as well as about different risk practices (sexting, cyberbullying...). Finally, beyond the demographic differences, it has attempted to identify possible related variables with problematic Internet use, such as the role of parents or the motivations for using.

METHOD

An online self-administered ad hoc questionnaire

RESULTS

RISK PRACTICES

MOTIVATIONAL PROFILE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The use of Internet among Galician adolescents is an absolutely generalized phenomenon, since 97.8% regularly use Internet and 71.2% are daily online. Something similar might be said about social networking, mobile phone use and instant messaging applications. Most of the adolescents are registered in a Social Network and more than half are part of four or more. Likewise 9 out of 10 have mobile phone and 80.2% are Whatsapp users.

Although the motivations for using the Internet are many and varied, instant messaging applications, use social networking, and downloading stand out among the rest.

Regarding problematic Internet use, the results obtained indicate that 16.1% of those youngesters surveyed have a positive test result in the PIU-Sa (Rial et al., 2015). Although there is not a clear profile of problematic users, some trends are notable.

- There are significant differences between the gender groups with girls being the highest risk group.
- There are significant differences between the gender groups with girls being the highest risk group.
- There are significant differences between the gender groups with girls being the highest risk group.
- There are significant differences between the gender groups with girls being the highest risk group.

The use of Internet among Galician adolescents is an absolutely generalized phenomenon, since 97.8% regularly use Internet and 71.2% are daily online. Something similar might be said about social networking, mobile phone use and instant messaging applications. Most of the adolescents are registered in a Social Network and more than half are part of four or more. Likewise 9 out of 10 have mobile phone and 80.2% are Whatsapp users.

Although the motivations for using the Internet are many and varied, instant messaging applications, use social networking, and downloading stand out among the rest.

Regarding problematic Internet use, the results obtained indicate that 16.1% of those youngesters surveyed have a positive test result in the PIU-Sa (Rial et al., 2015). Although there is not a clear profile of problematic users, some trends are notable.

- There are significant differences between the gender groups with girls being the highest risk group.
- There are significant differences between the gender groups with girls being the highest risk group.
- There are significant differences between the gender groups with girls being the highest risk group.
- There are significant differences between the gender groups with girls being the highest risk group.