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The impact of the excessive use of the internet and computer games on the functioning of the body of school-age children and adolescents

SUMMARY

Introduction

The excessive use of the Internet and computer games has a negative impact on the health of children and adolescents at school age. It leads to the addiction of children and adolescents, causing inappropriate health behaviors. It has a negative impact on their lifestyle and inadequate control of the access to the Internet or the selection of computer games by parents, legal guardians.

Objective of the doctoral dissertation

The objective of the dissertation is to analyze selected factors connected with the use of the Internet and computer games, especially the factors affecting the excessive use of the Internet and computer games and their influence on the functioning of the bodies of school-aged children and adolescents as well as their impact on the knowledge of parents and legal guardians about the addiction to the Internet and computer games.

Material and methods

The relevant study was carried out between March 2013 and December 2018. The research was held in junior high schools (from September 2016 to May 2017), primary schools, vocational schools, secondary schools and sports schools in Praga Północ and Praga Południe in Warsaw. The study covered a total number of 1744 people including 1034 school-age children and adolescents as well as 710 parents, legal guardians of these children.

In the conducted research the method of diagnostic survey was used.

Two original research surveys were used as a research tool. Along with scales constructed in it they were applied to assess the impact of the excessive use of the internet and computer games on the functioning of the body of school-age children and adolescents.

The questions that were included in the surveys were aimed at diversifying the surveyed school-age children and adolescents as well as the knowledge of their parents, legal guardians. Therefore, blocks of scaled questions had been prepared which made it possible to assess the intensity of changes.

The obtained research material was subjected to statistical analysis. The IBM SPSS version 20 program was used. In order to verify the research problems Chi-Square dependency tests were used. During the process of percentage results interpretation, cross tables were used which constitute the primary form of presenting data when using the Chi-square Test of Independence, also known as the Pearson Chi-square Test [129]. For cross tables with variables at 2x2 levels measures of Phi effect strength were used, and for cross tables greater than 2x2 Cramer's V measure was used. In order to verify the influence of gender on the examined parameters, an analysis was performed using the Student's T test for independent samples.

Findings

The research has shown that the child's gender, child's age, school profile and the district in which the child lives affect the frequency of addiction to computer games, online games and the Internet.

In the study group older siblings encourage younger siblings to play computer games and to use the Internet as well as to use electronic gambling portals by sharing a computer when they do not use it themselves.

The excessive use of the Internet and computer games has a negative impact on health, causing decreased appetite (38.8%), emotional swings (32.3%), sleeplessness (38.6%), drowsiness (27.3%), hypersensitivity to light (42.9%), depression (29.4%), chase of thoughts (29.4%), irritability (38.8%), problems with proper hygiene (18.4%), fear of losing a computer game (47.4%) or fear of being banned from using the Internet (50.4%)

The addiction to computer games has a negative impact on children's behavior in the family and at school, one-third of the respondents from schools with a non-sports profile missed classes at school due to playing computer games.

Children learning at schools with a non-sports profile (60.4%) are more likely to be addicted to the Internet and computer games than children in schools with sports profiles which proves that children from schools with a sports profile have more activities outside their home, these are trainings, sports competitions and additional physical activities.

The knowledge of children, adolescents, their parents and their legal guardians about the harmful effects of the addiction to the Internet and computer games is satisfactory, but this is not reflected in their behavior.

Conclusions

Wide access to the internet, online games, computer games as well as the lack of control by parents and legal guardians have a significant impact on the increase of behavioral addiction (addiction to the Internet and computer games) of children and adolescents at school age. The state of knowledge of parents and legal guardians of the surveyed children and youth indicates a very low level of information. The research hypotheses which had been suggested before the research were positively verified. It should be emphasized that the younger age of the first reaching for the media achievements and the longer time of using them during the day results in health and emotional problems of young people.

Keywords

Adolescents, addiction, the Internet, computer games, network addiction, cyberculture