Relationships in the family and their impact on the degree of the Internet addiction among school youth

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Abstract

Introduction: Family relationships have a huge influence on the personality of a teenager, his future elections, personal and professional development. If the basic emotional needs of family members are not satisfying, there are no family ties between them and the parents' attitude towards the child are inadequate and it may lead to impaired proper development of a young

person's identity and development of risky behaviors including the Internet addiction, which is particularly dangerous.

Aim: Determining the impact of family relationships on the level of the Internet addiction among school youth.

Material and methods: The study covered 263 junior high school students and high school students. The research was carried out from November to December 2017 in schools in Lublin, Łaszczów and Nabróż. Some of the results were also collected via the Internet. The applied research method was a diagnostic survey, and tools: the Kimberly Young' Internet Addiction Test and the authors' self-designed survey.

Results: The Internet addiction was observed in 11% and the risk of addiction in 7% of the surveyed students. Every fifth student addicted to the Internet (21%) grew up in an incomplete family. Repeated conflicts with parents were more frequent among students at risk of addiction (47%) and those addicted to the Internet (46%) than among school youth who were not addicted to the Internet (25%). Students addicted to the Internet more often felt misunderstood (51%) and unaccepted (25%) by their families in contrast to other respondents. Nearly every second person at risk of addiction (47%) and Internet-addicted (43%) admits that their parents rarely pay attention to the amount of time spent on the Internet by their child.

Conclusions:

1. Conflicts between parents / carers and school youth are more frequent in the group of respondents addicted to the Internet or at risk of this addiction.

2. Misunderstandings and lack of acceptance from the family more often accompanied the Internet-addicted school youth.

3. Parents of students addicted to the Internet or at risk of this addiction do not pay enough attention to the amount of time spent on the Internet by their child.

Keywords: the Internet addiction, students, youth, family, relationships

Introduction

The family is a system of interrelated elements and there are some interactions between this elements. These interactions are based on principles, moral norms and values passed down by the family to subsequent generations as well as on communication between individual family members [3; 14].

According to the Fred Streit' family environment perception theory each member of the household can interpret what is happening in his family or immediate environment in different ways. This concerns for example the parents' attitudes, the ability to express feelings and mutual relations between the parents, the parents and the child and the relationship between the siblings. All these elements play an extremely important role in the maturing of a young person - if they are inappropriate, it may result in the development of disorders in the child's behavior, for example addiction to the Internet [13; 16].

Nowadays, the Internet addiction is a fairly common theme. This problem mainly affects teenagers in adolescence - the time of great changes both in the physical and mental dimensions when a young man shapes his identity and learns new patterns of thinking. Sometimes the adolescence is a difficult situation for a young people. Some of them may not understand what is happening to their organism, which is why they can start to rebel against reality that surrounds them. It is often accompanied by various types of risky behaviors, threatening their health or even life. In addition, the lack of family support, strained relationships with parents and a sense of loneliness worsen the course of this period [1, 3, 8, 20]. The Internet addiction among young people depends on many factors and the family situation deserves special attention. The child's development is largely based on the observation of behaviors presented by the family members. With time, the child begins to identify with these behaviors and takes them as a pattern of behavior - if they are inappropriate, they may cause disorders that are sometimes a sign of family dysfunction [10, 13].Mass media and the form of spending free time have an undoubtedly impact on the development of the Internet addiction. It's about situations, in which children are witnesses of the abuse of the Internet by parents, or cases when the caregivers become initiators of the child's first contact with the network, for example they buying them a new mobile device. The fact that increasingly younger users are logging on the Internet is alarming, because they are much more exposed to the impact of virtual reality and the development of addictions. When children spend time on the Internet, they learn new ways of behaving and begins the process of growing up in this unreal world [3; 13; 17].

Conflicts with parents, siblings and other family members significantly worsen the quality of communication and relationships in the family. They are also the cause of excessive use of the Internet, which is a kind of "escape from problems". In this way, the teenager gains the sense of acceptance and understanding which he did not get from the family [2, 9, 18]. Wandering through the virtual reality, a young man experiences an emotional crisis - he discovers that there are differences between the values that parents give him and those who are popular on the Internet. Family relationships are gradually being replaced by online friends and activity on

social networks. On the other hand ,, gray "reality becomes unbearable and can cause social anxiety, depression, problems in establishing ,,real" interpersonal contacts and helplessness in the future. In extreme cases adolescents abusing the Internet may experience the phenomenon of "hikimori" (,, separation "), described by Japanese scientists. The symptoms of this are chronic isolation from members of the household and all friend to be in the virtual world. This phenomenon is often accompanied by aggression or autoaggression and a bad mood [4, 13]. The family as the primary human environment has an important role in the life of each of its members. It impacts on future decisions or choices that is why it is important for parents to take care of their children's upbringing [15].

Purpose of research:

The aim of the study was to determine the impact between the family relationship and on the level of Internet addiction among school youth.

Material and research methods:

The study covered 263 junior high school students and high school students. The surveys were carried out using two tools: a questionnaire the Kimberly Young' Internet Addiction Test and the authors' self-designed questionnaire included questions concerning demographic characteristic of the respondents, their family structure and relationships between family members. The survey was anonymous, and participation in the study was voluntary. STATISTICA 13.1 PL was used for statistical analysis. The results are presented as percentages and cardinality. Interrelation between the groups is determined by the compatibility test Pearson Chi square, accepted at $p < 0.05$.

Results:

Among the respondents were 52% of junior high school students and 48% high school students. Nearly 75% of them were girls and 25% were boys. The majority of students came from the countryside (59%), while 41% of them were inhabitants of cities. The average age of respondents was 15.4 ± 1.4 years.

The Kimberly Young' Internet Addiction Test showed that 11% of respondents were addicted to the Internet, and 7% of them have the risk of the Internet addiction. Among junior high school students, the Internet addiction was twice as likely as high school students (14%:7%). Every fifth student addicted to the Internet (21%) grew up in an incomplete family.

The structure of the family was not statistically significant with addiction to the Internet (p> 0.05) (Table 1).

Table 1. The family structure and the Kimberly Young' Internet Addiction Test

You are bringing up in family?		Together	Level of addiction		
			No addiction	Risk	Internet addiction
full	n	221	182	17	22
	%	84.0%	84.3%	89.5%	78.6%
incomplete	n	39	31	2	6
	%	14.8%	14.4%	10.5%	21.4%
reconstructed (re-couple the parent)	n	3	3	0	0
	%	1.1%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%
altogether	n	263	216	19	28
Stat. Chi^2, *"p"*		-	p = 0.75172		

There were significant statistical dependencies between conflicts with parents, the sense of understanding by the family and the Internet addiction (p <0.05) (Table 2). Over 47% of students from the risk group and 46% of those addicted to the Internet reported frequent conflicts with their parents. More than half (57%) of students addicted to the Internet and 37% respondents at risk of addiction did not feel understood in their families. Nearly 25% of the students addicted to the Internet and 10.5% at risk of addiction declared that they did not feel accepted by their family. The feeling of being understood and accepted by parents was not statistically significant with the result of the Kimberly Young' Internet Addiction Test (p> 0.05) (Table 2).

More than half of students at risk of addiction (58%) and the Internet addicts (57%) declared that their parents do not know what websites their children visit. Parents of non-addicted children less frequently do not have knowledge about websites that their children browse (38%). There were significant correlation between the result of Kimberly Young' Internet Addiction Test and parents' awareness about the kind of websites their children visit (p <0.05) (Table 3).

Table 2. Family relationships and the Kimberly Young' Internet Addiction Test

Do you often quarrel with their parents?		Together	Dr. Young test		
			No addiction	Risk	Internet addiction
yes	n	75	53	9	13
	%	28.5%	24.5%	47.4%	46.4%
no	n	188	163	10	15
	%	71.5%	75.5%	52.6%	53.6%
altogether	n	263	216	19	28
Stat. Chi ^ 2, "p"		-	**p = 0.00911**		
Do you feel understood and your family?		**Together**	**Dr. Young test**		
			No addiction	Risk	Internet addiction
yes	n	170	146	12	12
	%	64.6%	67.6%	63.2%	42.9%
no	n	93	70	7	16
	%	35.4%	32.4%	36.8%	57.1%
altogether	n	263	216	19	28
Stat. Chi ^ 2, "p"		-	**p = 0.03589**		
Do you feel accepted by your family?		**Together**	**Dr. Young test**		
			No addiction	Risk	Internet addiction
yes	n	225	187	17	21
	%	85.6%	86.6%	89.5%	75.0%
no	n	38	29	2	7
	%	14.4%	13.4%	10.5%	25.0%
altogether	n	263	216	19	28
Stat. Chi ^ 2, "p"		-	p = 0.22980		

Table 3. The awareness of parents about the type of Internet activity of their children

Do your parents /carers know what websites you visit?		Together	Level of addiction		
			No addiction	Risk	Internet addiction
yes	n	155	135	8	12
	%	58.9%	62.5%	42.1%	42.9%
no	n	108	81	11	16
	%	41.1%	37.5%	57.9%	57.1%
altogether	n	263	216	19	28
Stat. Chi ^ 2, "p"		-	p = 0.04182		

Almost half (47%) of students at risk of addiction and 36% of the Internet addicts declare that the family often pays attention to the time spent by them on the Internet. Every fifth person addicted to the Internet (21%) admits that a family member always pays attention to too long time spent online. Almost every second student at risk of addiction (47%), and addicted to the Internet (43%) admitted that its parents rarely pay attention to the amount of time spend online. A statistically significant relationship between the degree of addiction and the frequency response of family members to the time spent by the youth in the network (p <0.05) shows Table 4.

Table 4. Notes on the time spent on the network and the Kimberly Young' Internet Addiction Test

Did anyone of your family and friends pay attention to the amount of time you spend on the Internet?		Together	Level of addiction		
			No addiction	Risk	Internet addiction
never	n	36	35	1	0
	%	13.7%	16.2%	5.3%	0.0%
rarely	n	136	115	9	12
	%	51.7%	53.2%	47.4%	42.9%
often	n	82	63	9	10
	%	31.2%	29.2%	47.4%	35.7%
always	n	9	3	0	6
	%	3.4%	1.4%	0.0%	21.4%
altogether	n	263	216	19	28
Stat. Chi ^ 2, "p"		-	p = 0.00001		

Discussion

Nowadays, almost every person has access to the Internet. The virtual world has become a part of the lives of people, especially young, and it is often difficult to separate them from "normal" reality. That is why the Internet addiction is not unusual anymore [6; 19].

The Internet brings many benefits, but it is also dangerous. An inappropriate use of online resources is a source of dangers to its users. The risk of developing cyber-dependence concerns mainly teenage people, often rebellious, for whom the network is a way to deal with problems. In this difficult period, which is adolescence, family relationships play an important role that may or may not protect youth from the negative effects of the Internet abuse [14; 15; 21].

The study analyzed the impact of family structure on the degree of the Internet addiction school children. In the group of internet addicts 78.6% teenagers grew up in a complete and every fifth student (21.4%) – incomplete family. Among respondents at risk of the Internet addiction 89.5% admitted that their family is complete and 10.5% of them indicated the opposite answer. For comparison, in the Miłkowska and Papiór' studies [7] carried out on a group of 2508 junior school students 84.3% of Internet addicts had the full - family, while 15.3% of this group grew up in an incomplete family. A similar results can be found in Potembska' studies [11], which included 291 junior school students and high school students, where nearly 87% of addicted students identified their family as full. There were no statistically significant relationship between the family structure and the addiction of the Internet among young people both in ours and the above-mentioned authors' studies.

Frequent conflicts with parents, the feeling of being misunderstood and unacceptable by the family determined the degree of Internet addiction of junior and high school students. Repeated conflicts with their parents were reported by 46% of teenagers of the Internet addicts and 47% of students at risk of this addiction. The vast majority of adolescents abusing the network (57%) declared that they do not feel understood by their parents too. In contrast, nearly 11% of students at risk of the Internet addiction and 25% of students addicted to the Internet claimed that they did not feel accepted by the family. A similar results can be found in Potembska' studies[11], where nearly 70% of Internet addicts came into frequent disputes with their parents, while 59% of them felt a lack of understanding by the father or mother. Pawłowska et al. [8] claimed that teenagers experiencing a lack of understanding or acceptance in the family believe that only online contacts allow them to express their true feelings and enable them to be understood and fully accepted. In other studies carried out on 129 male junior high school students the same authors [9] showed that people at risk of Internet addiction treated

the Internet as an escape from family conflicts more often than the other students. What's more, the Internet addicts want their parents to devote them as much time as online friends [9].

In conclusion, the negative relationship between family members has an influence on frequent contacts of young people with the virtual world which can compensate the family dysfunctions. This study showed that parents of students addicted to the Internet and at risk of this problem are not aware of sites that their children use. They also do not pay enough attention to the amount of time spent on the Internet by their children. The Orange' studies [12] carried out on a group of 512 parents and the same number of children in age 12 to 18 years appeared that 22% of parents do not have enough knowledge about online' threats. Moreover, they rarely controlled their children's mobile devices. Nearly 60% of parents has established the rules of using the Internet with their children. Lack of parents' knowledge, inappropriate attitudes and actions in relation to children which are addicted of the Internet are very disturbing. It is important to remember that parents are largely responsible for the way of using Internet by their children and the appropriate relationships between family members can make that the Internet will be safe for them.

Conclusions:

1. Conflicts between parents / carers and school youth are more frequent in the group of respondents addicted to the Internet or at risk of this addiction.

2. Misunderstandings and lack of acceptance from the family more often accompanied Internet-addicted school youth.

3. Parents of students addicted to the Internet or at risk of this addiction do not pay enough attention to the amount of time spent on the Internet by their child.

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