INTERNET ADDICTION AND THE LEVEL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FATIGUE AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: AN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Over the past decades, the widespread integration of digital technologies into the educational process has led to a sharp increase in internet use in the daily lives of primary school–aged children.

Childhood, particularly the primary school period (6–11 years), represents an active stage in the development of the central nervous system, cognitive functions, and emotional regulation. During this period, environmental factors—especially digital technologies—can leave a profound impact on children's mental health. Under conditions of global digitalization, the internet is becoming not only a source of information but also the primary means of play, communication, and leisure for children.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), prolonged use of screen-based devices among school-aged children increases the risk of sleep disturbances, attention deficits, and the development of psychological fatigue. Epidemiological studies identify internet addiction as an independent psychosocial risk factor, emphasizing that its early formation may predispose individuals to mental disorders in later adolescence.

Therefore, scientifically assessing the extent of internet use among primary school students and its relationship with mental well-being is a pressing issue.

The prevalence of internet addiction varies significantly depending on regional, socio-economic, and cultural factors. Epidemiological studies conducted in China, South Korea, and Japan report that problematic internet use among children aged 6–11 reaches 20–30%. In European countries, this figure is comparatively lower, averaging 7–15%.

Regarding psychological fatigue, screen time exceeding two hours per day has been reliably associated with rapid fatigability, reduced attention, and emotional lability in children. According to meta-analyses, children who engage in prolonged internet use have a 1.6–2.3-fold higher risk of developing psychological fatigue. Online gaming and dependence on social networks, in particular, represent high-risk categories.

The reviewed evidence indicates that the relationship between internet addiction and psychological fatigue is multifactorial in nature. In addition to screen time, disrupted sleep patterns, insufficient physical activity, and weak parental supervision play significant roles. The development of psychological fatigue during the primary school years negatively affects learning motivation and academic performance. From this perspective, internet addiction should be considered not only as an individual issue but also as a public health concern.

Internet addiction and psychological fatigue among primary school students constitute a globally relevant psychohygienic problem. Epidemiological data demonstrate that problematic internet use is widespread at an early age. Internet addiction is reliably associated with psychological fatigue, attention disorders, and emotional instability.

As preventive measures, strengthening digital hygiene practices, parental supervision, and psychohygienic education within the school environment is essential.

In conclusion, protecting children's health does not require restricting internet use outright; rather, conscious and controlled management of internet use emerges as a modern requirement of hygiene.

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