

## **Predictive effects of self-esteem, shyness and loneliness on internet addiction, case of Albania.**

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### ***Abstract***

*Aim.* This study aim to give an overview about the phenomenon of internet addiction in Albania, gender differences according internet addiction, tend to examine if exist any relationship between internet addiction, self esteem, loneliness and shynnes and also to study if internet addiction differ according to this three variables.

*Methods.* The sample of the study consisted of 652 adolescents, aged 15-18, in the city of Tirana. The data was collected through the application of the Internet Addiction Test, Rozenberg Self Esteem Test, UCLA Loneliness Scale and Shyness Scale.

*Results.* The results of the study show us that adolescents have high levels of internet addiction, and male are more addicted that females. Internet addiction correlates positively with loneliness and shyness, but there is no significant relationship between internet addiction and self – esteem. Shyness best predicts internet addiction.

***Keywords:* Internet addiction, self-esteem, loneliness, shyness, adolescents.**

### **1. Introduction**

Internet is developing very fast and its cost is becoming cheaper rapidly increases the number of people using this technology. (Yilmaz, et..2014) According to Miniwatts Marketing Group, (2010), Internet access and usage in the world has been proliferating year by year, with approximately 1.11 billion users in 2007, 1.67 billion in 2009, and 1.97 billion in 2010 indicating an upward trend in the number of digitally literate people. (Gencer; Koc, S. L.; , Mustafa;, 2012). And It has also turned out to be an important source of risk. (Eldeleklioglu, J., Vural-Batik, M., 2013). According to a group of authors, internet is as a way of meeting new people, having fun and solving problems and this sometimes could lead to addiction to internet. (Yilmaz, et..2014). Some **authors (2000)** defined internet addiction as problematic and pathological internet use. (Eldeleklioglu, J., Vural-

Batik, M., 2013). According to Peele (1991) addiction is explained as something that gives you feelings and gratifying sensations that you are not able to get in other ways". (Young). A wide range of studies have been carried out into the danger of the Internet addiction. According to Viñas- Poch et al., (2002); Young, (1998), the excessive use of the Internet is linked to other potentially addictive forms of conduct such as sex, gambling and spending. And according to Jackson, Von Eye, Fitzgerald, Zhao, & Witt, (2010); Kim & Davis, (2009), Internet addiction is associated with personality variables such as depression, anxiety and self-esteem. According to Stieger & Burger (2010). self-esteem was found to be the factor most associated with addiction (Casas, et.,2013). Caplan (2002) specified the variables related to problematic internet use as depression, loneliness, shyness and self-esteem. Some of the problems researchers associated with excessive Internet use include failure to manage time, a loss of sleep, skipped meals, social isolation, and poor performance at school (Watkins, 2009). Some studies have found differences between men and women, suggesting that men tend towards an abusive use of the Internet more than women but in others no significant differences between the sexes have been noted. (Casas, et.,2013). According to Armstrong, Phillips, & Saling, (2000), with regard to age, younger users seem to have a greater possibility of becoming addicted to the Internet than adults. (Casas, et.,2013). Adolescents, from a developmental perspective, are particularly in the most vulnerable age group and a unique social group who establish their identity and self-esteem in the relationship with others. (Akin, Iskender, 2011).

Different authors say that adolescents with low self-esteem tend to spend more time in social networking sites than those with higher self-esteem. (Aydin & Sari, 2011) and other authors (1998) concluded that the increases in the amount of Internet use were resulted from the increased levels of loneliness. (Akin, Iskender, 2011).

Although the Internet is mostly used to interact with others, loneliness has long been associated with excessive use. Griffiths (1999) found that people who are addicted to Internet are lonelier than others of the Internet addiction. Other researches show that there is not a close relationship between Internet addiction and loneliness. These studies indicate that using the Internet helps people to socialize and increases their life satisfaction and general well-being. Another study shows that lonely people use the Internet excessively, due to the fact that the Internet provides a social environment for lonely people to interact with others. (Demirer, Bozoglan & Sahin, 2013). And another variable related to internet addiction is shyness. There is a significant positive relationship between internet addiction and shyness (Eldeleklioglu, Vural-Batik, 2013).

### **Research questions**

- What is the level of Internet addiction among 15-18 years old Albanian high school students?
- Gender differences according to internet addiction.
- What is the relationship between internet addiction, self esteem, loneliness and shyness?
- Does internet addiction differ according to self-esteem, shyness and loneliness?

## 2. Research Methods

*2.1. Procedure:* we used cluster method to recruit the participants from the population of high school students in six public high schools in the city of Tirana, Albania. 652 adolescent participated in this study, 252 (38.7%) male and 399 (61.2%) female, age 15-18. 193 adolescent were in the first year of high school, 176 were in the second year of high school and 283 were in the third year of high school. We selected in casual way high schools from the list of schools from Tirana Regional Education Directorate (DAR), and then we use the method of clustering to select the classes in these high schools. Permission for participation of students was obtained from the director of each school and students voluntarily participated in research. Completion of the questionnaires was anonymous and there was a guarantee of confidentiality. The instruments were administered in the classrooms. All participants were told about purposes of the study.

*2.2. Instruments:* The data was gathered through Internet Addiction Test, Rosenberg Self Esteem Test, UCLA Loneliness Scale and Shyness Scale.

*The Internet Addiction Test*, developed by Dr. Kimberly Young, comprises 20 items rated in a five-point Likert scale (from 1 - not at all, to 5 – always), that measures mild, moderate and severe level of Internet Addiction. On the basis of the total score obtained on the test, the individual is placed into one of three categories: average online user (from 20 to 39) who has a full control of his or her usage; experiences occasional or frequent problems because of excessive Internet use (from 40 to 69); or has significant problems because of Internet use (from 70 to 100). The internal consistency of Internet Addiction Test is  $\alpha = .893$

*Rosenberg self esteem test* is a 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The internal consistency of Rosenberg self esteem test is  $\alpha = .837$

*UCLA Loneliness Scale* developed by Russell, D., Peplau, L. A., & Ferguson, M. L. (1978), which was composed of 20-items and tends to measure one's subjective feelings of loneliness and social isolation. It is a Likert-type scale with four options. A high score means that the loneliness level is high. The internal consistency of UCLA Loneliness Scale is  $\alpha = .909$

*Shyness Scale*. Cheek, J.M., & Melchior, L.A. (1985), which was composed of 20-items rated in a four-point Likert scale (from 1 - Very uncharacteristic or untrue, to 4 – Very characteristic or true). The internal consistency of Shyness Scale is  $\alpha = 0.795$

*2.3. Data Analysis:* First, the questionnaires were coded and then all the data were entered to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 22). Then, they were subjected to frequency and percentage analyses, and Pearson Correlation Analyze was used to examine the relationships between internet addiction, self-esteem, loneliness and shyness. Multiple linear regression was used between internet addiction, loneliness and shyness.

## 3. Analyses Results

As shown in the table below, in this study, participated 652 adolescents. 193 of them were in the first year of high school, 176 were in the second year of high school and 283 were in the third year

of high school. In total there were 399 female and 252 male. So, the proportion of females 61.2% was larger than those of males 38.7%.

Table 1.

	<b>Groups</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Boys	252	38.7
	Girls	399	61.2
<b>Class</b>	First year	193	29.6
	Second year	176	27.0
	Third year	283	43.4

### 3.1 The Status of Internet Addiction

As shown in the table 2, 328 adolescents or 50.3% of them were identified as average online users, which mean that they have control over the usage of internet. 105 adolescents or 16.1% of them were classified as possible Internet abusers, with moderate levels of addiction, who experience occasional or frequent problems in their lives about internet usage. 114 adolescents or 17.5% of them resulted non addicted, so they score under the 20 point in the test of internet addiction. And 7 adolescents or 1.1 % of them resulted very addicted with severe levels of internet addiction, scoring up to 80 points in the test of internet addiction.

Table 2.

	<b>Groups</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>(n)</b>
<b>Internet Addiction</b>	No addiction	114	17.5	34.9	17.5	554
	Average	328	50.3			
	Possible abusers	105	16.1			
	Internet addicted	7	1.3			

### 3.2 Differences between males and females according to the level of internet addiction.

In this study participated 252 males that fill in the forms. 22.9.3% of them are not addicted, 55.1% of them are average addicted which mean that they can have control over their internet usage, 19.2% of them have moderate levels of internet addiction, classified as possible internet abusers, who experience occasional or frequent problems in their lives about internet usage and only 2.8% of them are non addicted to the internet. On the other hand, in total there were 399 females and 19.1% of them are not addicted, 61.8% have average levels of internet addiction so they can have control over their internet usage, 18.8 % of them have moderate levels of internet addiction,

classified as possible internet abusers, who experience occasional or frequent problems in their lives about internet usage, and 0.3% of them are very addicted to the internet. In the sample of this study, males (85.7%) have high levels of internet addiction than females (14.3%).

### 3.3 Correlations among internet addiction, self-esteem, loneliness and shyness

According to Pearson correlation, Internet addiction correlates positively with loneliness ( $r=.118, p < .05$ ) and shyness ( $r=.158, p < .05$ ), and these relationship are significant at low levels. but there is no significant relationship between internet addiction and self-esteem ( $r=.029$ ).

### 3.4 Prediction of the variables

In this study was used multiple linear regression analysis to predict which of the two variables explain better internet addiction. Loneliness and shyness are correlated with internet addiction. These two variables best predict internet addiction.  $R^2 = .035$ . 3.5% of the total variance is explained by these two variables, but only shyness is statistically significant,  $p < 0.05$ .

For loneliness  $\beta = .102, t = 1.341, p < 0.05$ , for a total variance 3.5% and for shyness  $\beta = .147, t = 1.933, p < 0.05$ , for a total variance 3.5%.

Depend.V.	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	Indipend. V.	t	P
Internet addiction Scale	188	.035	3.084	Loneliness	1.341	.182
				Shyness	1.933	.050

\*\* $p < .01$  \* $p < .05$

## 4. Discussion

From the total sample of this study 50.3% of the adolescents were identified as average online users or mild addicted, which mean that they have control over the usage of internet. They used internet in their everyday life for different things, but they can managed it. 16.1% of the adolescents were classified as possible Internet abusers, with upper average levels of addiction, who experience occasional or frequent problems in their lives about internet usage. 17.5 % adolescents resulted non addicted, so they scored less then 20 in the test of internet addiction, and 1.1% were diagnosed as Internet abusers, which show severe levels of internet addiction, that cause serious problems in their everyday life. Also, it's very important to emphasise that most of the adolescents are classified as average and upper average addicted and this can cause frequent problems in their life, and maybe being more internet addictive in their future. Males have high levels of internet addiction than females. The raport between them is 85.7% / 14.3%.

Internet addiction correlates positively with loneliness and shyness, but there is no significant relationship between internet addiction and self-esteem.

According to multiple linear regression analysis shyness predict better internet addiction than loneliness,

The first positive aspect is that, this research give a good contribution in our country according to the situation of the phenomenon of internet addiction in adolescents, because studies like this are very limited. And this because internet addiction is a new phenomenon in our country. But also, the study has its own limitations. Adolescents fill in the questionnaires in their classes and they were influenced by each other.

### Conclusion

In the end, based on the evidence of this study, we can say that internet addiction is a present phenomenon in our country and it seems growing very fast day by day in adolescents in Albania. Mens have high levels of internet addiction than females, and there does exist a significant relationship between internet addiction, loneliness and shyness, but no significant relationship between internet addiction and self-esteem. Shyness best predicts internet addiction.

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