

THE DEVELOPEMNT OF ADAPTIVE AND MALADAPTIVE PATTERNS OF INTERNET USE AMONG EUROPEAN ADOLESCENTS AT RISK FOR INTERNET ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS: A GROUNDED THEORY INQUIRY

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Introduction: Full findings from the European Commission funded EU-NET-ADB study (Safer Internet Programme) will be presented.

Objectives: Empirical findings that elucidate the development of an internet addictive behaviour are still incomplete. This is also related to risk as well as protective factors of internet use. Here a process oriented approach to identify underlying conditions of an internet addictive behaviour was chosen.

Aims: The aim of the study is to enhance the knowledge and understanding of underlying processes which lead to situation where internet addictive behaviour can evolve.

Methods: In total 124 in-depth interviews were conducted with adolescents with an age of 14-17 year. Adolescents from seven different European countries (Greece, Spain, Poland, Germany, Romania, Netherlands & Iceland) participated in this study. Eligibility was granted when adolescents scored more than 30 point or equal in the Internet Addiction Test (IAT; Young, 1998). Data analysis was conducted by use of a step-wise full version of Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998).

Results: Adolescents employed maladaptive and adaptive strategies in regard to their involvement in the internet. Thus different Digital Outcomes such as "I am addicted" (Stuck Online) ranging to more adaptive internet behaviour like (Juggling it All) and patterns of self-correcting (Coming Full Cycle) were identified. These Digital Outcomes were consequently linked to adolescent's developmental pathways and can be characterized by the core category "Navigating Adolescent Pathways".

Conclusions: Contextual and developmental factors that mediate the development of an internet addictive behaviour could be identified and linked to multiple Digital Outcomes.