

## **“Adolescents’ Relationships with the Internet and the Issue of Addiction” (funded by N.K.U.A./S.A.R.G)**

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### **Summary of dissertation (presented in September 2014)**

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship of adolescents, aged 12 - 15 years, with the internet and computers, the importance of ICTs in their daily life among other mandatory (school) or leisure activities, and adolescents’ psychological investment in ICTs. Triggers of this study were the academic debate about increased frequency of internet addiction in adolescence which disregards the uniqueness of this transitional developmental period, the particular developmental needs of adolescents, as well as the fact that this particular generation was born and raised within the digital environment. The psychological investment in ICTs use was investigated on the basis of the psychoanalytic theory of Donald Winnicott on transitional objects and transitional phenomena, and cyberspace was conceptualized as a transitional space. This transitional experience with cyberspace (and the computer as an object) is invested with alleviating capacity- mainly towards loneliness and separation- and constitutes a space where reality and fantasy can merge creatively, to soothe from frustrations of everyday life. As one of the main issues of this research was the debate about problematic internet and computer use and taking into account that in order to detect any kind of dysfunction, it is necessary to fully comprehend the psychological importance of adolescents’ internet and computer use, the method of in depth interviews was implemented in order to allow personal narrations of the adolescents' experience to emerge. The second part of the research was to test the possibility of generalization of the qualitative findings, by use of a questionnaire constructed on the basis of interview findings. The questionnaire together with traditional addiction scales were administered to a representative sample of 522 adolescents in secondary schools of the area of Athens. Quantitative findings were analyzed by the use of principal components analysis and multiple correspondence analysis. Our findings pointed out towards a use of internet in adolescence as a form of experimentation with self and others, during a transitional period, where integration of self has not yet been completed; therefore the usual diagnostic criteria of addiction cannot be applied. Internet appears to be invested with psychological significance and offers opportunities for creative management of intrapersonal and interpersonal problems and conflicts. In addition, the findings shown that, despite their involvement with the internet, adolescents continue to seek and value face to face interaction, while friendship and out-of-internet activities are the most important factors that hinder the development of a dysfunctional relationship with ICTs.

Full dissertation (in Greek): <https://www.didaktorika.gr/eadd/handle/10442/35008>