INFO-DIGITAL ADDICTION: A NEW INTEGRATED CONCEPT AND TERM FOR NON-CHEMICAL ADDICTIONS RELATED TO THE USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

ADDICȚIA INFO-DIGITALĂ: UN NOU CONCEPȚ ȘI TERMEN INTEGRAT PENTRU DECENDENTELE NECHIMICE LEGATE DE UTILIZAREA TEHNOLOGILOR INFORMAȚIILOR ȘI COMUNICĂRII

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Summary. *The aim of this work is to draw the attention of the scientific community to the necessity of a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon related to gaming or internet addiction, social media addiction, and other types of addictions often generalized under the term "digital addiction" or "technological addiction". This article proposes the introduction and use of a new integrated term, "Info-Digital Addiction" (IDA), which takes into account the interdependence and interconnectedness of both information and digital technologies that exist inseparably from each other, as well as the complexity and multifaceted nature of the phenomenon under consideration. The analysis is based on an extensive review of literature and current research. The introduction of a unified term is necessary for the standardization, integration, and unification of the understanding of the entire spectrum of this issue and the development of common strategies for the prevention and treatment of the vast variety of types of this non-chemical (behavioral) addiction among children and adults, which, in the future, will likely need to be distinguished and defined as a separate group of addictions. The topic of the article represents an innovative and controversial approach to the study of addiction related to the use of information and digital technologies.*

Keywords: *addiction, information and communication technologies, stress.*

INTRODUCTION

Throughout evolution, humanity has constantly faced new challenges and trials, becoming increasingly complex and dangerous not only for humans but also for society

as a whole. Having “tamed” the atom and begun space exploration, humanity declared itself omnipotent, and in the era of flourishing information and digital technologies - almighty. Humanity created artificial intelligence but still cannot answer whether it can control it. By opening “Pandora’s digital box,” humanity does not foresee the consequences of the boundless possibilities and the threats it will face in the nearer and distant future as total digitalization of society increasingly resembles a tsunami every day.

Digital (technological) addiction is a phenomenon humanity has only recently encountered. The scientific community defines it in various ways, lacking a unified opinion on the criteria for defining and diagnosing the problem. Some researchers associate it exclusively with internet addiction, viewing it as compulsive internet use leading to deterioration in various areas of a person’s life [1, p. 237]. Others focus on a broader spectrum of technological addiction, including the excessive use of any digital devices and technologies, leading to significant negative consequences for mental and physical health and overall well-being [2, p. 414]. Some emphasize the connection between digital addiction and time spent in the digital environment, including social networks, online games, and other internet resources [3, p. 176]. Thus, there is no exhaustive and comprehensive concept, term, or definition for the new type of addiction associated with information and/or digital technologies. This creates difficulties and discrepancies in defining, diagnosing, classifying, understanding, and developing strategies for preventing and treating this phenomenon.

This article proposes a new integrated and generalizing term “Info-Digital Addiction” (IDA), which considers the interconnection of information and digital technologies to cover the entire spectrum of addictions related to the use of digital devices and informational resources.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study conducted an extensive review of scientific literature and current research on various aspects of non-chemical addictions related to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT). The sources used include peer-reviewed scientific articles, books, data from international organizations, and some results from the authors’ own research.

The research methods include:

Literature Review: Analysis of publications on the aforementioned topic.

Comparative Analysis: Comparison of various forms of addiction and their classifications in scientific literature.

Data Analysis: Processing and analyzing collected data using statistical methods to identify key trends and relationships.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Abuse or addiction - any compulsive action or behavior that repeats despite its negative consequences - is defined as a chronic disease characterized by compulsive

seeking and consumption of substances or performing certain actions, regardless of consequences. Addictions are categorized as chemical, non-chemical, and food related. Non-chemical (behavioral) addictions include gambling, shopping addiction, internet addiction, workaholism, etc. According to sources, compulsive internet navigation, gaming addiction, social network addiction, and other addictions covered in this article, as well as severe forms of chemical addictions, have a common psychophysiological and psychodynamic core [4, p. 3542].

IDA related to ICT use is proposed as a state characterized by compulsive and uncontrolled use of information and digital technologies, leading to significant negative consequences for mental health (anxiety states, depression, sleep disturbances, etc.) and/or physical health (vision deterioration, musculoskeletal pain, etc.), as well as social life (social isolation, deterioration of interpersonal relationships, etc.).

The concept of technology addiction began to form in the late 20th century with the development of the internet and mobile devices. The first mentions of digital addiction appeared in 1996, research of Kimberly Young, who introduced the term "Internet Addiction" [1, p. 237-244]. Since then, the concept of addiction has evolved, covering a broader spectrum of technologies and forms of behavior [5, p. 95; 6, p. 156].

The methodology for forming the integrated concept of IDA includes analyzing existing definitions, identifying common features, and creating a comprehensive definition that considers the interconnection of information and digital technologies. Introducing the integrated concept of IDA will unify diagnosis and treatment, improve problem understanding, and develop more effective prevention and intervention strategies. It will also facilitate international cooperation and knowledge exchange. The standardization process includes agreeing on the definition of IDA among researchers and practitioners, developing diagnostic criteria, and integrating the new term into clinical practice and scientific research.

Information technologies (IT) involve using computers, networks, software, and other digital tools to create, process, store, and exchange information [7, p. 10-11]. Digital technologies cover a wide range of devices and software that use digital information to perform various tasks, such as communication, entertainment, work, and learning [8, p. 38-39]. Information and digital technologies are closely interconnected and often used together. For example, computers and mobile devices (digital technologies) use software and networks (information technologies) to perform tasks. Info-digital technologies are a unified term encompassing all technologies used to work with information in digital format, including both hardware and software components.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), as of January 1, 2022, excessive engagement in computer games, leading to gaming addiction, has officially gained the status of a disease and was included in the ICD-11 as an addictive behavior disorder. WHO believes that gaming disorder is characterized by a pattern of persistent or recurrent engagement in computer and video games, which may occur online and offline. It includes symptoms such as impaired control over gaming, prioritizing gaming over other life interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite

negative consequences [9, p. 4]. Specialists warn that excessive engagement in computer games can lead not only to gaming addiction but also to health deterioration, such as vision problems, spinal curvature, insomnia, increased irritability, and aggression [10, p. 3-5]. This recognition highlights the need to expand the boundaries and definition of new types of Digital Addictions.

Addictions related to ICT use include internet addiction, gaming addiction, social network addiction, online shopping addiction, and many other forms of compulsive behavior related to the use of info-digital technologies. These addictions significantly impact mental health, causing anxiety and depressive disorders, cognitive function decline, and sleep disturbances, leading to a complex of interrelated negative physiological changes in the human body. Social consequences include deterioration of interpersonal relationships, social isolation, and decreased professional and academic performance [11, p. 6].

Some specific types of Info-Digital Addictions include:

- Online gaming addiction: Excessive engagement in video games, leading to social life and professional activity deterioration [7, p. 237-244; 12, p. 170].
- Social network addiction: Constant use of social media platforms, which can cause depression, anxiety, and social isolation [7, p. 55-56].
- Online shopping addiction: Compulsive online shopping, leading to financial and personal problems [7, p. 78-79].
- Pornography addiction: Excessive consumption of online pornography, negatively affecting relationships and psychological state [7, p. 188-189].
- Streaming content addiction: Excessive use of streaming services, leading to physical health deterioration and productivity decline [7, p. 102-103].
- Online gambling addiction: Compulsive participation in online gambling, leading to serious financial and personal problems [7, p. 213-214].
- Mobile application addiction: Excessive use of mobile applications for various purposes, including social networks, games, and other entertainment, negatively impacting physical and mental health [7, p. 67-68].

This is far from an exhaustive list, and the listed addictions emphasize the broad diversity of forms of IDA and the need for a comprehensive approach to their study and treatment.

CONCLUSIONS

1. “Info-Digital Addiction” (IDA) represents a new integrated concept that encompasses various types of addictions related to the use of information and digital technologies. The current fragmented definitions do not cover the complexity and diversity of this phenomenon.
2. The use of the term IDA is appropriate and justified, as it reflects the close interconnection between information and digital technologies. Information technologies provide the infrastructure for data processing, while digital technologies offer platforms and devices for user interaction. The introduction of this new term allows for a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of all

aspects of addiction related to modern technologies.

3. Additionally, it should be considered that the definition "information" can also carry a semantic load directly related to the concept of "information." In the modern world, information has become more accessible than ever before, and its volumes are growing exponentially every year. This aspect requires further discussion to form the final version of the IDA concept. On one hand, this will allow for a more precise description of the addiction phenomenon in the context of informational impact, and on the other hand, it will highlight specific mechanisms and consequences of information overload.
4. Recognizing IDA as a distinct type of addiction will provide a broader understanding of the problem and more accurate diagnostics, which in turn will improve treatment. This will be an important step in the development of scientific research and clinical practice in the field of digital and behavioral addictions. The introduction of the term IDA will also facilitate international cooperation and knowledge exchange, contributing to the unification of diagnostic and therapeutic approaches.
5. Thus, the recognition and use of the term IDA will not only improve diagnosis and treatment but also help develop new approaches to education and social adaptation, considering the influence of information and digital technologies on modern life. The introduction of this term will combine all types of digital addictions into one category, simplifying the development and implementation of effective prevention and therapy measures.

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