

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNET ADDICTION AND BODY MASS INDEX IN TURKISH ADOLESCENTS

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Introduction: It is widely accepted that obesity is a major public health problem in the world. The rapid rise in prevalence suggests environmental factors are responsible. Increased use of information and communication technology is also reported to be associated with increased rates of obesity.

Objectives: Although many studies have analyzed the impact of television viewing on obesity, the association of excessive Internet use with body mass index (BMI) has heretofore been evaluated only in relatively few studies.

Aims: The purpose of this study was to investigate Internet use patterns and Internet addiction among adolescents and to examine the correlation between problematic Internet use and BMI.

Methods: The study was conducted among 1938 students, aged between 14 and 18 years. Internet Addiction Test (IAT), Eating Attitudes Test, and a sociodemographic query form were used in the collection of data.

Results: According to the IAT, 10.5% of the study sample was a 'problematic Internet user' or an 'Internet addict'. A significant positive correlation between BMI and IAT ($r = 0.307$; $p < 0.01$) and weekly Internet use ($r = 0.215$; $p < 0.01$) was found. Linear regression analysis revealed a significant independent association of IAT with BMI ($r = 0.235$; $p < 0.001$). Web surfing, watching online videos, chat rooms and Internet messaging, and playing online games were significantly associated with increased BMI ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusions: These results indicate an association between the Internet addiction and BMI. Further studies are needed to describe the causality of this association.