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PSYCHOLOGIC PREDICTORS AND EPIDEMIOLOGY OF INTERNET ADDICTION
AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN GREECE

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Aim: To present the epidemiology and psychological predictors of Internet Addiction (IA) among Greek University students.

Methods: This random sample consisted of 3545 students, drawn from 24 higher education institutions (1618/1927 M/F, mean age 20.12±2.4 years). The survey was conducted in the 4 Greek cities: Athens, Preveza, Thessaloniki and Amfissa.

Results: The prevalence rates of IA according to Young's Test in the four cities were: Athens (17.5%), Preveza (15.9%), Thessaloniki (19.3%), Amfissa (16.3%). There was a statistically significant association between location and IA ($\chi^2=28.251$, $df=3$, $p<0.001$), gender and IA for males and females ($p<0.001$). We performed a t-test with the dependent variable S=sum of scores in the psychological features of loneliness, feeling abandoned, disappointed, aimless in life, and with low self-esteem; the grouping variable was IA. Results showed that the variable S was much lower for the non-addicted than for addicted students ($t=19.329$, $p<0.005$, $df=3085$). Binary logistic regression was performed to assess the impact of psychological characteristics on the likelihood that respondents would be Internet Addicted.

The model was statistically significant $\chi^2_{(10, N=3085)}=316.3$, $p<0.001$. The model classified correctly 85.1% of the cases. The strongest predictors of IA were the following: Loneliness (OR = 2.15, 95% CI=1.67-2.71), feeling abandoned (OR = 1.63, 95% CI = 1.2-2.1), low self-esteem (OR=1.72, 95% CI=1.4-2.1) and fear of losing their job (OR=1.36, 95% CI=1.01-1.7).

Conclusion: Loneliness, helplessness, low self-esteem and fear of unemployment are the strongest predictors of IA among Greek university students.