

# ***Impact of IAD on Teenagers' Emotion Regulation and Anxiety***

**Weiran Zhang<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>School of Communication, American University, Washington DC, 20016, The United States of America*

*a. wz0160a@american.edu*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** The probability of adolescents becoming addicted to the Internet has increased as a result of the increasing number of adolescents using the Internet and media. Internet addiction disorder (IAD) cannot be ignored for the mental health of adolescents. This study examines the harm of IAD on adolescents in terms of mental health from two perspectives: the impact of IAD on adolescents' emotion regulation and the cause of adolescents' anxiety disorders. IAD affects adolescents' proper emotion regulation mechanisms from the step of reconceptualization that affects the process of emotion regulation and causes adolescents to suffer from anxiety disorders, which manifests itself in the impact on adolescents' social life and lack of self-confidence in their body image Impact. This study calls for increased societal attention to the impact of IAD on adolescent mental health. This study also may provide a basis for future research on IAD prevention strategies by researchers and mental health professionals.

**Keywords:** Internet addiction disorder (IAD), emotion regulation, anxiety

## **1. Introduction**

It is critical to study internet addiction disorder (IAD) and its impact on mood regulation and anxiety disorders in adolescents. The prevalence of IAD is on the rise and has a profound impact on the mental health of adolescents. In our digital age, IAD has become increasingly generalized, especially among adolescents who lack self-control. During the epidemic, the number of adolescents using the Internet increased, the amount of time spent using the Internet per day increased, and IAD continues to impact the mental health of adolescents. Based on this phenomenon, the wide-ranging impact of IAD on society cannot be ignored.

There are many manifestations of the impact of IAD on the mental health of adolescents. For example, adolescents with IAD often experience emotional dysregulation, they have difficulty controlling their emotional regulation, and their overall emotional health declines. These emotional challenges, if left unaddressed, can become the basis for developing and deteriorating into mental illnesses such as depression in the future, further damaging a teen's mental health. By delving deeper into the complex relationship between emotion regulation and anxiety disorders caused by IADs, in the future, people can better understand the underlying mechanisms that lead to these conditions.

This study helps to reveal the complex relationship between IAD and adolescent mental health, which can inform the development of more effective prevention and treatment strategies. In addition,

this research is critical to promoting healthier online behaviors and maintaining the emotional health of adolescents in an increasingly connected world. This research is critical to the well-being of individual adolescents, the healthcare aspects of society and social relationships, and the overall mental health of humanity.

## 2. Manuscript Preparation

Internet addiction disorder (IAD) is a condition in which people have a strong compulsive urge to use the Internet. When this urge is satisfied or eliminated, extreme stress and aggressive behavior occur, affecting their social life and social relationships [1]. People suffering from IAD use the Internet as a medium for all the activities of their lives and use it without restraint, going beyond the purpose for which ordinary people use the Internet. IAD can cause people to be severely affected both physically and psychologically.

According to Ali, argues that like drug, alcohol, and gambling addictions, certain Internet addicts' actions can have a severe impact on relationships, which can lead to difficulties finding work, unhappy marriages, and divorce [2]. Also, in adolescents, who are in a stage of physical and mental growth, their brains are developing, and external factors easily influence them. Not only that, but contemporary adolescents are also particularly vulnerable to the negative impact of IAD on their mental health because they have been living with the internet and have a serious dependence on it.

The negative effects of IAD on the mental health of adolescents include effects on adolescent mood regulation and anxiety disorders. Emotion regulation is when people are able to control and process their emotions appropriately. Emotion regulation will lead to a person's cognitive reappraisal, which is about reducing anxiety, and depression, and regaining a new awareness of your emotions by recognizing your negative thoughts [3]. However, IAD then interferes with a teenager's normal emotional regulation. Further, anxiety disorders can cause teens anxious thoughts about their appearance or social life.

There is a direct relationship between emotion regulation and IAD [2]. People with IAD find it difficult to effectively regulate their emotions. For example, adolescents may use the Internet as a coping mechanism to avoid or numb negative emotions such as stress and depression. This may make using the Internet an inappropriate means of managing emotional distress. Adolescents with IAD can get caught in a negative cycle of using the Internet to suppress their emotions, and eventually, the adolescent is affected by the Internet interfering with their normal emotional regulation process.

Furthermore, in the process of emotion regulation, the study found an association between the process of cognitive reappraisal and IAD [4]. Cognitive reassessment is one of the two common strategies for emotional regulation [5]. The cognitive reassessment process occurs in the initial stage of the emotion generation process, involving understanding changes in situational methods and reducing the impact of situational factors on emotions [5]. Since cognitive reappraisal involves reinterpreting negative emotional stimuli in a nonemotional manner, teenagers' excessive use of the Internet is likely to avoid difficult emotions through immediate emotional satisfaction, avoidance, care, and superposition [4]. For some teens, the Internet can be a temporary distraction from negative emotional states such as stress and sadness, and a teen's emotional regulation system can be disrupted by prolonged Internet use. IAD, which can result from long-term Internet use, does not address the root causes of the emotional distress that teens suffer from. Moreover, unlike depression, cognitive reassessment occurs early in the emotional process and may not necessarily be a sustained self-regulation effort during emotional events [4]. Teenagers experience constant emotional changes and quickly need emotional satisfaction, so it can be assumed that reassessment is the most direct strategy for dealing with negative emotions [4].

Teenagers should not rely on using the Internet to regulate their emotions. People should help teens use cognitive reappraisal skills that will help teens increase their emotional health and resilience to

emotion regulation. In conclusion, IAD affects teenagers' emotional regulation by affecting the cognitive reappraisal process which is one of the emotional regulation processes.

In addition to talking about how IAD affects teenagers' emotional regulation, IAD also leads to teenagers' anxiety disorder. First, based on the definition of IAD, IAD means the use of the Internet exceeds normal needs and is accompanied by symptoms such as anger, tension, and anxiety in the user [6]. It already shows that IAD will come with anxiety disorder. First, IAD can lead to anxiety disorders, and teenagers will use the Internet to relieve their anxiety, but people will find that this behavior will increase anxiety symptoms in teens. This is because teens don't realize that using the internet to relieve anxiety is the wrong way to address anxiety and can be counterproductive. Teenagers with anxiety disorders usually trigger problems in social relationships that can affect the teenager. Problematic Internet use might heighten social anxiety and make it easier to avoid social contact [7]. Teenagers brush up on the constantly updated information on online platforms to numb themselves and try to escape from real life through the internet, but they will only become more afraid of facing real life. They become less inclined to express themselves in future social relationships.

Also, one of the most serious impacts of internet addiction is anxiety disorder. The increase in network usage among youth teams can cause some problems, such as adverse symptoms of network anxiety [8]. Research has shown a significant positive correlation between anxiety levels and IAD [8]. IAD is constantly accompanied by the possibility of having an anxiety disorder, and there is a clear relationship between the two.

The second manifestation of anxiety disorder triggered by IAD is the anxiety teenagers feel about their body image after seeing perfect body images on the Internet, a symptom mostly found in teenage girls. Anxiety disorder which leads to IAD can have a profoundly negative impact on adolescent girls' body image, creating more room for body dissatisfaction. This is due to the frequency with which adolescent girls see body images and photographs portrayed in social media and the gradual recognition and internalization of body image by adolescent girls. The portrayal of adolescent girls' body image in social media leads to body dissatisfaction in adolescent girls.

According to Danielle Ridolfi, appearance-centered social comparisons in networks are associated with body image disorders in adolescent girls [9]. In addition, the cognitive-emotional domain of body image refers to a person's unfavorable and disordered perceptions and emotions about their appearance [9]. Body dissatisfaction is one example of this. Internet Addiction Disorder causes teenage girls to frequently browse the internet for ideas of perfect bodies and thinness, thus teenage girls gradually believe that their bodies are imperfect and develop dissatisfaction with their bodies. Further, teenage girls' dissatisfaction with their bodies can cause them to become anxious about their bodies. Due to teenage girls' lack of a complete or mature conceptualization of their body image, coupled with the fact that social media is filled with harsh depictions of women's body image and ideas of thinness, the likelihood that teenage girls will be dissatisfied with their body image is greatly increased. Thus, there is a strong correlation between Internet addiction disorder and adolescent girls' dissatisfaction with their body image.

### 3. Discussion

All in all, IAD affects adolescents' emotional regulation processes to varying degrees and may lead to anxiety disorders that affect adolescents' social relationships. According to research, drug addiction and the behavioral patterns of excessive Internet use are very similar [10]. It has been demonstrated in certain neuroimaging research that the root reasons for Internet addiction behaviors are comparable to those of other addiction illnesses [10]. Brain structural changes may make it more difficult to plan and reason, which could increase impulsivity and increase the likelihood of addiction [10]. Adolescents with Internet addiction may display difficult-to-control obsessive behaviors [10].

In contrast, IAD is a special disease that shares similarities with traditional addictions such as gambling and drug use, sometimes leading to compulsive behavior or withdrawal symptoms. Teenagers who have experienced IAD may find themselves forced to browse social media, online games, and other internet-related activities. For example, if teenagers want to spend less time online, they may experience withdrawal symptoms, or feel uneasy and irritable. However, due to the modernity of the internet, internet addiction is different from traditional gambling and drug use, and it is difficult for teenagers to completely avoid it, just to prevent it. Therefore, the unique nature of internet addiction complicates the fight against diseases.

In the future, IAD will continue to be a relevant issue affecting the mental health and emotional well-being of adolescents, so early education and support for adolescents from parents and teachers will be critical to mitigating the detrimental effects of IAD on adolescents. Specifically, schools and parents should reduce the likelihood of adolescents suffering from IAD by educating them about responsible use of the Internet as well as educating them about the need to prevent excessive Internet use and Internet addiction. Schools and parents should encourage teens to participate in more offline activities and maintain a balanced relationship between the Internet and the real world. The community can also play a protective role for teens, such as living in a supportive community that provides a sense of belonging and caters to teens' daily socialization. These can often help teens prevent and combat IAD-affected emotion regulation and anxiety disorders. Furthermore, teens themselves should be more aware of the signs of Internet addiction and its effects on mood regulation and anxiety disorders.

#### 4. Conclusions

Overall, this research mainly talks about how IAD affects teenagers' emotional regulation and leads teenagers to have anxiety disorders, which manifest as feelings of anxiety and thoughts of dissatisfaction with one's body image in the adolescent's daily social life. Among these aspects, IAD can severely affect the reconceptualization step in the adolescent's emotion regulation process, limiting the adolescent's ability to correctly alleviate emotions and regulate them. Adolescents' incomplete mental development, low self-control, lack of ability to recognize correct and incorrect ideas on the Internet, and insufficient social attention to the mental health of IAD-affected adolescents have increased the number of IAD adolescents suffering from the disease. In modern teenage life, IAD can end up having a huge impact on the mental health of teens, who can repeatedly fall into overuse of the Internet. People need to pay more attention to the impact of IAD on the mental health of adolescents and call for society's attention to teaching adolescents how to prevent IAD. People should strive for the proper use of the Internet so that the Internet and the media can be turned into a tool for people to utilize, and to reduce the harm it can do to them.

#### References

- [1] Masih, J., & Rajkumar, R. (2019). IAD and mental health in adolescents. *Depress Anxiety*, 13, 002.
- [2] Nosratabad, T. H., Bayrami, M., & Shiri, A. (2020). Structural relationships between negative cognitive emotion regulation strategies and symptoms of Internet addiction: the mediating role of anxiety. *Zahedan Journal of Research in Medical Sciences*, 22(3).
- [3] Clark, D. A. (2022). Cognitive reappraisal. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 29(3), 564-566.
- [4] Trumello, C., Babore, A., Candelori, C., Morelli, M., & Bianchi, D. (2018). Relationship with parents, emotion regulation, and callous-unemotional traits in adolescents' Internet addiction. *BioMed research international*, 2018.
- [5] Gross, J. J. (2002). Emotion regulation: Affective, cognitive, and social consequences. *Psychophysiology*, 39(3), 281-291.
- [6] Goldbreg, (1995). IAD. *Wikipedia the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <https://www.wikipedia.org>
- [7] Lee & Stapinski, (2012). Seeking safety on the internet: Relationship between social anxiety and problematic internet use. *J Anxiety Disord* ;26(1):197-205doi: 10.1016/j.janxdis.2011.11.001.

- [8] Nima & Nazanin, (2012). *World academy of science, engineering and technology*.  
<https://waset.org/Publications/XML?id=1656&t=endnote>
- [9] Ridolfi, D. R., Myers, T. A., Crowther, J. H., & Ciesla, J. A. (2011). *Do Appearance Focused Cognitive Distortions Moderate the Relationship between Social Comparisons to Peers and Media Images and Body Image Disturbance? Sex Roles*, 65(7-8), 491-505. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-011-9961-0>
- [10] Kurniasanti, K. S., Assandi, P., Ismail, R. I., Nasrun, M. W. S., & Wiguna, T. (2019). *Internet addiction: a new addiction? Medical Journal of Indonesia*, 28(1), 82-91.