

## YOUTH AND THE INTERNET: USEFUL ENGAGEMENT OR ADDICTION?

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### Abstract

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of young people's internet usage in the modern digital era. It explores both the benefits—such as the internet's role in education, communication, and access to information—and the increasing problem of internet addiction among youth. The study highlights the psychological, social, and health-related negative consequences of excessive internet use and offers suggestions for developing responsible and controlled internet habits. It also emphasizes the importance of motivating young people to seek inspiration from real life rather than the virtual world.

**Keywords:** youth, internet, internet addiction, digital technologies, psychological impact, social networks, education, controlled use.

The Role of the Internet in Modern Life. Modern information technologies have become an integral part of our lives. Especially among young people, the rate of internet usage is extremely high. The internet offers opportunities for learning, communication, and entertainment. However, excessive use can negatively affect young people's mental health, physical well-being, and social activity. This article examines both the positive and negative aspects of the internet in youth life, the signs of internet addiction, and ways to prevent it. Positive Aspects of the Internet: the internet serves as a valuable source of knowledge. Young people actively use it to prepare lessons, conduct research, and learn new skills. Moreover, social networks enable them to stay in touch with friends, share ideas, and build new relationships. In today's world, internet technologies have penetrated almost every area of human life. When used purposefully, the internet increases efficiency across many fields:

Education: Online classes, video lectures, virtual labs, and distance-learning platforms such as Coursera, EdX, and Khan Academy have made education accessible to everyone, enabling lifelong learning opportunities. Information and Knowledge: The internet functions as the largest database of information—containing academic papers, books, news, statistics, and expert discussions—that helps users continuously develop in their field. Social Connections: As a means of communication, the internet shortens distances between people through email, messaging apps, and social networks, allowing instant contact with family, friends, and colleagues. Business and Economy: Digital marketing, e-commerce, online banking, and remote work are essential parts of modern business. The internet also helps small entrepreneurs access global markets. Health and Medicine: Telemedicine, online consultations, and medical databases enable individuals to monitor their health and receive timely medical assistance, improving both the speed and quality of healthcare. Culture and Entertainment: The internet helps spread art and culture globally through online theaters, music platforms, and virtual museums, meeting people's cultural needs.

Internet Addiction and Its Negative Effects: psychologists identify internet addiction as one of the major problems of the modern age. It is characterized by a constant desire to stay online, loss of time control, and disconnection from real-life relationships. Among addicted youth, depression, sleep disorders, and academic problems are common. Although the internet has simplified human life, its misuse can lead to serious issues—one of them being addiction. Internet addiction refers to an uncontrollable urge to use the internet, leading to withdrawal from social, educational, or professional activities. Some experts even classify it as a psychological disorder. Prevention and Maintaining Balance: preventing addiction requires self-control, time management, real-life communication, and involvement in physical or creative activities like sports and art. Parental and teacher supervision also plays a vital role. Digital Hygiene and Time Management: Setting daily time limits (e.g., 2–3 hours) helps avoid unnecessary content consumption. Apps such as Digital Wellbeing or Screen Time can monitor usage. Digital Literacy: Teaching youth about internet safety,

media literacy, and critical thinking when using online platforms is crucial. Schools and universities should include digital literacy education in their curriculum. Alternative Activities: Engaging in sports, reading, creativity, and outdoor events helps youth balance virtual and real-life experiences. Parental and Pedagogical Supervision: Parents should monitor their children's internet use and set positive examples. Teachers and psychologists can work together to conduct social and psychological monitoring. Psychological Support: causes: Constant information flow, desire for online validation ("likes," comments), loneliness, or lack of real-life activities. Consequences: Sleep disturbances, stress, depression, physical health issues (eye strain, obesity, back pain), social isolation, and poor academic performance. In cases of severe addiction, professional help from psychologists or psychiatrists may be necessary.

### **Conclusion**

The internet is a powerful tool. Used correctly, it opens great opportunities for youth; used without control, it can lead to harmful habits. Therefore, teaching responsible and balanced internet use is an urgent task today. While digital technologies have transformed life for the better, misuse can result in psychological, physical, and social problems—especially among young people. Increasing digital literacy, managing time wisely, encouraging real-life engagement, and strengthening family and educational support are key to prevention. Ultimately, using the internet wisely, fostering digital culture, and eliminating factors that lead to addiction are essential goals for modern society. Every user should view the internet as a tool—and strive to stay in control of it.

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