

The Drug Addicts' Usage of Information and Communication Technologies

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Abstract. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are broadly used to support people's daily needs. Individuals addicted to psychoactive drugs sometimes present social exclusion as well as, limitations to the usage of ICT such as Internet, devices and applications. The aim of this paper is to present the findings of a pilot study related to the use of Information and Communication Technologies by Drug Addicts. A survey was conducted on 204 users of psychoactive substances. According to the results, the majority of the drug addicts seem to use ICT on a daily basis, showing their preference on Smartphones compared to other devices. The Internet access and the usage of Social Media and Communication Networks by addicted individuals is quite high, probably because they are willing to reintegrate into the society through Social Networks. Age is often related to the usage of ICT on Drug Addicts.

Keywords. Addicted Individuals, ICT Usage

1. Introduction

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are broadly used to support people's daily needs. Internet and electronic devices have become a part of the everyday life for the majority of the people in society. Individuals addicted to psychoactive drugs sometimes present social exclusion as well as, limitations to the usage of ICT such as Internet, devices and applications [1,2]. The aim of this paper is to present the findings of a pilot study related to the use of Information and Communication Technologies by Drug Addicts.

2. Methods

To investigate the usage of ICT by addicted individuals, a self-developed questionnaire was constructed based on previous surveys [3] and was distributed among 204 users of psychoactive substances, who were in the reception and treatment rooms of 12 KETHEA (Therapy Centre for Dependent Individuals) centres (after KETHEA's research study permit) in three-month period in Greece. The questionnaire was anonymous and it was in Greek language. It included questions related to demographics, some personal characteristics, and the usage of the current communication devices and technologies.

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All participants were over 18 years old. The data analysis included Descriptive Statistics and Correlations, and was conducted using the SPSS.

3. Results and Discussion

The 89,2% (N=182) of the sample were males. The average age was 34,72 years old. The main substance used was heroin (N=86 / 42,4%), followed by cannabis (N=56 / 27,6%) and cocaine (N=42 / 20,8%). About the device usage, Smartphones was 79,4%, Laptop Computer was 41,7%, Desktop Computer was 36,8%, and Tablet was only 17,2%. Specifically, the 73,6% of the Smartphone users were using their device daily. 186 (91,6%) participants had access to the Internet and 82,2% were using it for Social Networks and Media.

The majority of them (85,5%) were using Smartphones to access the above services. Comparing the age with the internet access was found to have a significant relation ($p<0.01$). The mean age of internet users were 33,2 years old and for non-users 45,7 years old. Additionally, Smartphone usage was found to be related with age ($p<0.01$). The mean age of Smartphone users were 33 years old and for non-users 38,2 years old. No significant relations have been found between the above usages and the substances or gender. Also, neither age, gender, nor substances were related to the usage of Internet for Social Media and Networking.

4. Conclusions

Based on the aforementioned results, the majority of the drug addicts seem to use ICT on a daily basis, showing their preference on Smartphones compared to other devices. The Internet access and the usage of Social Media and Communication Networks by addicted individuals is quite high, probably because some of them are socially excluded and they are willing to reintegrate into the society through Social Networks. Only the age, from personal characteristics of the addicts, is often related with the usage of ICT. A limitation of this study is that the sample was collected at therapy centres and does not include drug addicts who are not having any support. Future work may include the further investigation about the reasons of Internet use by drug addicts and their opinions whether ICT can be a valuable tool on the rehabilitation process.

References

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