

Study analyses internet, mobile and video game effects on young users

January 29 2015

A recent study has analysed the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by secondary school students, by using a sample of 5,538 students from the Vallès Occidental region of Catalonia. The study, based on surveys taken in the 2010/2011 academic year, finds links between school failure and an elevated use of computers at home. It also correlates an intensive use of ICTs with the consumption of toxic substances.

The study's researchers created the research group "Joves i Tecnologia de la Informació i la Comunicació" (JOITIC) which has now published in the journal *Atención Primaria* the first results of a study which aims to determine the accessibility and use of information and [communication technologies](#) (ICTs: internet, mobile and video games) among [secondary school](#) students. The group is formed by ICS primary healthcare nursing and medical staff of the Vallès Occidental region, teachers at the secondary school centres, researchers from the Department of Nursing and the Department of Basic, Developmental and Educational Psychology at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and a psychologist from the Ramon Llull University.

Thanks to the infrastructure of the Health and School Programme of the Government of Catalonia, during the 2010/2011 academic year, a survey was conducted on the use of internet, mobile phones and video games. A total of 5,538 secondary [school students](#) participated from public and private centres located in the towns of Sabadell, Castellar del Vallès, Sant Quirze del Vallès, Sentmenat, Polinyà, Palau-Solità i Plegamans and

Santa Perpètua de Mogoda. The survey gathered information on after-school activities, school performance, consumption of toxic substances, family relations, use of ICTs and parental control. It also included a validated questionnaire on their experiences with internet, mobile phones and video games (CERV).

The results of the study demonstrate that ICTs are easily accessible for young students and their exposure to these technologies begins at an increasingly early age. At the moment of the survey, 98 per cent of the students had internet at home and 89 per cent already owned a [mobile phone](#) before turning 13. The use of video games reached 54.2 per cent and decreased with age.

Internet access of those participating in the study focused mainly on social networks (87%), chats (52%), e-mails (68.3%) and school work (50%). The use of video games decreases with age; at the same time as parents also decrease the control on how many hours and what type of games their children play.

Researchers have observed a linear increase in school failure in relation to an increase in the hours spent on the [computer](#) and less control by parents. School failure reaches 16 per cent among students who use the computer less than one hour a day; 17 per cent for those who use it one to two hours; 20 per cent, two to three hours, and 29 per cent if they use the computer for more than three hours a day. Nevertheless, the study shows that not using a computer at all also increases school failure up to 27 per cent.

The lack of parental control and an intense use of the computer and video games are also associated with a higher index of young people who have suffered from alcohol intoxication or consume cannabis or other [toxic substances](#). For example, among first year students, 11 per cent of those who use the computer more than three hours daily had already

suffered from alcohol intoxication and 10 per cent had already consumed cannabis, while these percentages lower to 4 and 2 per cent in the case of those who use a computer less than three hours per day.

The research helped to study risk factors associated with an addictive use of these technologies, as well as to form a "photograph" from which to observe the evolution of ICTs use in new generations.

More information: Raquel Muñoz-Miralles et al., "Acceso y uso de nuevas tecnologías entre los jóvenes de educación secundaria, implicaciones en salud." Estudio JOITIC. *Atención Primaria*, Volume 46, Issue 2, 2014, Pages 77–88. [www.sciencedirect.com/science/ ... ii/S021265671300187X](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S021265671300187X)

Provided by Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

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