



DigiAddiction

Digital advises for youth.
How to deal with digital addictions.

Informative Manual

LenoWorks



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DIGIADDICTIONS - INFORMATIVE MANUAL

1. INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 Concept of Digital Addiction	2
2. MOST COMMON ADDICTIONS:	4
2.1. Addictions to social networks	4
2.2 Smartphone Addictions	6
2.3 Video Game Addiction	8
2.4 Online Shopping Addiction	11
2.5 Online Betting Addiction.....	13
2.6 Pornography Addiction	16
3. PREVENTION OF DIGITAL ADDICTIONS.....	19
3.1 General prevention strategies.....	19
3.2 Prevention through structured programs.....	19
3.3 Activities to prevent digital addictions in class	20
3.4 Role of youth workers in prevention.....	20
4. REFERENCES.....	22

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Concept of Digital Addiction

Digital addiction is a behavioral condition characterized by an excessive dependency on digital technologies that disrupts daily life. It encompasses overuse of devices such as smartphones, gaming consoles, computers, and platforms like social media, online shopping, and video streaming services. While technology itself is not inherently harmful, its overuse can create compulsions that interfere with an individual's physical, emotional, and social well-being.

1.1.1. Signals of Digital Addiction

Recognizing digital addiction involves identifying patterns of overuse and its impact on an individual. Key signals include:

- **Excessive Time Online:** Spending disproportionate amounts of time on devices, often at the expense of essential activities like eating, sleeping, or working.
- **Anxiety When Disconnected:** Feeling uneasy, irritable, or restless when unable to access the internet or a device.
- **Neglect of Responsibilities:** Failing to fulfill personal, academic, or professional duties due to digital distractions.
- **Relationship Strain:** Experiencing tension or conflicts in personal relationships caused by prioritizing digital interactions over real-life connections.

1.1.2. Causes of Digital Addiction

Several factors contribute to the development of digital addiction:

- **Design and Algorithms:**
 - Platforms and apps are intentionally designed to maximize engagement through notifications, rewards, and infinite scrolling.
 - Features like autoplay on video platforms and instant feedback from social media interactions amplify usage.
- **Psychological Triggers:**
 - **Escapism:** Many individuals use technology to escape from real-life challenges such as stress, loneliness, or boredom.
 - **Social Validation:** Seeking approval through likes, shares, and comments creates a dependency on online feedback.
- **Accessibility:**
 - The ubiquity of smartphones and internet access makes it easier than ever to engage with technology at any time.

1.1.3. Effects of Digital Addiction

The consequences of digital addiction can be classified into three categories:

- **Physical Effects:**
 - **Sleep Disorders:** Excessive screen time, particularly before bed, interferes with melatonin production, leading to poor sleep quality.

- o **Eye Strain:** Extended device usage causes digital eye strain, characterized by headaches, blurred vision, and discomfort.
- o **Sedentary Lifestyle:** Overuse of technology reduces physical activity, increasing the risk of obesity and related health issues.
- **Mental Health:**
 - o **Increased Anxiety and Depression:** Overexposure to online content can exacerbate mental health conditions.
 - o **Lower Self-Esteem:** Constant comparisons on social media can negatively impact self-image.
- **Social and Academic/Professional Life:**
 - o **Decreased Interaction:** Face-to-face communication suffers when digital interactions take precedence.
 - o **Reduced Productivity:** Frequent digital distractions lower concentration and hinder performance in academic and workplace settings.

1.1.4. Performance Impact

Digital addiction can significantly impair:

- **Academic Performance:** Students distracted by digital media may show declining grades and reduced engagement in studies.
- **Workplace Efficiency:** Employees might struggle to meet deadlines due to frequent interruptions from personal device use.

1.1.5. Activities to Work on in Class

To address the topic effectively, include interactive activities to raise awareness:

- **Time-Tracking Challenge:**
 - o Ask participants to log their daily screen time for a week using their device's tracking tools.
 - o Facilitate a discussion to compare their actual usage with their perceived habits.
- **Reflection Exercise:**
 - o Pose reflective questions: "How much of your device use is necessary versus compulsive?" or "How does technology use make you feel emotionally?"
- **Role-Playing Scenarios:**
 - o Divide participants into groups and assign scenarios (e.g., managing a day without a phone). Debrief by discussing their feelings and solutions.
- **Goal-Setting Session:**
 - o Encourage participants to set achievable goals to limit unnecessary screen time (e.g., tech-free dinners or device curfews).

2. MOST COMMON ADDICTIONS:

2.1. Addictions to social networks

Social media is deeply ingrained in modern life, particularly for younger generations. While it offers benefits such as connectivity and knowledge-sharing, excessive use can lead to significant mental, physical, and social challenges. Through education and practical interventions, youth workers can empower young people to foster healthier relationships with social media platforms.

2.1.1 Definition and Statistics

Social media addiction is characterized by an overreliance on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat, where users feel compelled to engage excessively with digital content. This addiction often disrupts daily routines, affects mental health, and creates dependency on virtual interactions.

- **Key Statistics:**
 - 88% of youth aged 15-24 use social media daily(KA210-YOU-B1509724.pdf).
 - Studies show that 4.4% of adolescents in Europe exhibit pathological internet use(KA210-YOU-B1509724.pdf).
 - On average, teens spend 3 hours daily on social media platforms(1st Newsletter_Spanish).

2.1.2 Signs of Social Media Addiction

Recognizing the signs of social media addiction is critical to addressing the problem. These include:

- **Constant Checking:** A compulsive need to check notifications or updates throughout the day.
- **Emotional Dependence:** Anxiety or frustration when unable to access social networks.
- **Avoidance of Offline Activities:** Preferring online interactions over face-to-face communication.
- **Loss of Time Awareness:** Spending hours scrolling or engaging online without realizing it.

2.1.3 Causes of Social Media Addiction

Several psychological and technological factors contribute to social media addiction:

- **Reward Mechanisms:**
 - Platforms are designed with features that trigger dopamine release, reinforcing behaviors like liking, sharing, or posting.
- **Fear of Missing Out (FOMO):**
 - Users feel pressure to stay updated on social trends or peers' activities to avoid feelings of exclusion.
- **Social Validation:**
 - Seeking likes, comments, and shares to boost self-esteem creates a dependency on external validation.

- **Algorithmic Design:**
 - Personalized feeds and infinite scrolling mechanisms keep users engaged longer than intended.

2.1.4 Effects of Social Media Addiction

Social media addiction has profound impacts on multiple aspects of an individual's life:

- **Mental Health:**
 - Increased anxiety, depression, and self-esteem issues caused by comparisons with idealized images or lifestyles shared online.
- **Physical Health:**
 - Poor sleep quality due to late-night scrolling and sedentary habits contributing to weight gain or muscle strain.
- **Social Impact:**
 - Reduced quality of in-person relationships as digital interactions take precedence.
- **Academic and Professional Life:**
 - Decreased focus and productivity due to frequent distractions.

2.1.5 Actions to Mitigate Social Media Addiction

Addressing social media addiction requires a combination of personal strategies and external support:

- **Daily Usage Limits:**
 - Use built-in screen time tracking tools to cap the amount of time spent on social media.
- **Digital Detox:**
 - Schedule regular breaks from social platforms to reset dependency habits.
- **Tech-Free Zones:**
 - Establish device-free areas, such as bedrooms or dining tables, to encourage face-to-face interaction.
- **Mindfulness Practices:**
 - Promote awareness of how social media affects emotions and behaviors to build healthier usage patterns.

2.1.6 Activities to Work on in Class

Incorporate engaging and reflective activities to help participants understand and address social media addiction:

- **Social Media Usage Diary:**
 - Have participants track the time they spend on social media for one week.
 - Encourage them to note how they feel before, during, and after each session. Discuss patterns and emotional triggers in a group setting.
- **“Digital Minimalism” Challenge:**
 - Ask participants to identify one social media app they could uninstall for a week and reflect on how it impacts their daily life.

- o Facilitate a follow-up discussion on the benefits and challenges of reducing usage.
- **Role-Playing Scenarios:**
 - o Present real-life challenges related to social media (e.g., cyberbullying, addiction to likes). Divide participants into groups to propose strategies for handling these situations.
- **Group Debate: "Is Social Media More Harmful or Beneficial?":**
 - o Divide participants into two groups and have them debate the pros and cons of social media. This encourages critical thinking about its role in their lives.

2.1.7 Classroom Discussion Questions

1. What motivates you to use social media? Do you feel it adds value to your life or causes stress?
2. How do you respond when you don't receive as many likes or comments as expected on a post?
3. Have you ever felt like social media affected your self-esteem or mood? How did you handle it?
4. Can you identify times when social media distracted you from important tasks or relationships?

2.2 Smartphone Addictions

Smartphones are indispensable tools in modern life but can also become significant sources of distraction and dependency. By fostering awareness and offering practical strategies, youth workers can help individuals develop healthier relationships with their devices, balancing convenience with mindful usage.

2.2.1 Definition and Statistics

Smartphone addiction refers to the compulsive use of mobile devices, where individuals rely excessively on their phones for communication, entertainment, and other digital tasks, to the detriment of their daily routines and responsibilities.

- **Key Statistics:**
 - o 90% of youth aged 15-24 use their smartphones as their primary internet access device(KA210-YOU-B1509724.pdf).
 - o The average European teenager spends 168 minutes per day on mobile internet(KA210-YOU-B1509724.pdf).
 - o Smartphone use accounts for a significant portion of the 21 hours per week spent online by adolescents(KA210-YOU-B1509724.pdf).

2.2.2 Signs of Smartphone Addiction

Recognizing smartphone addiction involves observing behavioral and emotional indicators:

- **Continuous Checking:** Repeatedly unlocking the phone, even without notifications.
- **Emotional Dependency:** Feeling anxious, irritable, or disconnected when unable to use the phone.
- **Using the Phone in Unsafe Situations:** Such as while driving or walking in traffic.
- **Neglect of Responsibilities:** Work, academic tasks, or relationships are impacted by excessive phone use.

2.2.3 Causes of Smartphone Addiction

The main drivers of smartphone addiction include:

- **Ubiquity and Accessibility:**
 - Smartphones provide instant access to social media, gaming, shopping, and communication, creating a constant connection to the digital world.
- **Reward Systems:**
 - Notifications and app designs (e.g., gamified interfaces) create a feedback loop that encourages prolonged use.
- **Social Pressure:**
 - The expectation to respond promptly to messages and stay updated with social interactions contributes to overuse.
- **Escapism:**
 - Smartphones become tools to avoid real-life challenges or emotions, offering temporary relief through entertainment or online interactions.

2.2.4 Effects of Smartphone Addiction

The overuse of smartphones affects individuals in multiple ways:

- **Physical Health:**
 - **Text Neck:** Strain caused by poor posture while looking down at a screen.
 - **Sleep Disorders:** Exposure to blue light before bed disrupts sleep cycles.
 - **Eye Strain:** Prolonged screen time leads to blurred vision and headaches.
- **Mental Health:**
 - Increased anxiety and stress due to constant notifications and social pressure.
 - Dependence on digital validation for self-esteem.
- **Social and Academic/Professional Life:**
 - Reduced productivity and focus due to interruptions.
 - Preference for digital communication over in-person interactions, leading to weakened relationships.

2.2.5 Actions to Mitigate Smartphone Addiction

Combating smartphone addiction requires structured approaches and conscious behavioral changes:

- **Set Usage Limits:**
 - Use built-in features or apps to monitor and restrict screen time.
- **Create Smartphone-Free Zones:**

- o Implement rules to keep phones out of bedrooms, dining areas, or study spaces.
- **Schedule Phone-Free Periods:**
 - o Encourage breaks from phone use during specific times of the day.
- **Focus on Alternatives:**
 - o Promote offline hobbies, physical activities, or social gatherings that don't involve screens.

2.2.6 Activities to Work on in Class

Interactive activities can help youth understand and address their smartphone habits:

- **Screen Time Tracking:**
 - o Participants record their daily screen time for one week using phone settings or apps.
 - o Facilitate a group discussion about the patterns and feelings observed during this period.
- **Phone-Free Challenge:**
 - o Have participants leave their phones in a designated area for 1-2 hours while engaging in group activities.
 - o Reflect on their experiences, emotions, and ability to focus without their phones.
- **Scenario-Based Problem Solving:**
 - o Present scenarios where participants must solve a task without using a smartphone, such as navigating without GPS or planning an event without messaging apps.
- **Mindful Use Practice:**
 - o Teach techniques like turning off unnecessary notifications and consciously using the phone only for specific tasks.

2.2.7 Classroom Discussion Questions

1. How much time do you think you spend on your phone daily, and how does it compare to your actual usage?
2. Do you feel anxious when you forget or misplace your phone? Why do you think that is?
3. What steps could you take to use your phone less without feeling disconnected?
4. How does smartphone use affect your relationships and face-to-face interactions?

2.3 Video Game Addiction

While video games provide entertainment and cognitive benefits, excessive use can lead to significant challenges in physical, mental, and social health. By educating youth on healthy gaming habits and encouraging a balanced lifestyle, youth workers can help mitigate the risks associated with video game addiction.

2.3.1 Definition and Statistics

Video game addiction, also known as gaming disorder, is characterized by excessive and compulsive engagement with video games that interferes with daily life. It includes both online and offline gaming and often leads to neglect of personal, academic, or professional responsibilities.

- **Key Statistics:**
 - Approximately 4% of adolescents worldwide show signs of problematic gaming behavior(KA210-YOU-B1509724.pdf).
 - Gaming overuse negatively impacts academic performance in at least 25% of affected youth(1_DIGIADDICTIONS_Techno...).
 - Many gamers report playing for several hours a day, with some exceeding 40 hours per week(1st Newsletter_Spanish).

2.3.2 Signals of Video Game Addiction

Symptoms of gaming addiction often manifest as:

- **Prioritization of Gaming:** Neglecting work, studies, or relationships to continue gaming.
- **Inability to Stop:** Repeated failed attempts to reduce or control gaming time.
- **Withdrawal Symptoms:** Irritability, anxiety, or sadness when unable to play.
- **Time Distortion:** Losing track of time while gaming, leading to extended sessions.
- **Social Isolation:** Spending more time in virtual worlds than engaging with family or friends in person.

2.3.3 Causes of Video Game Addiction

Several factors contribute to the development of gaming addiction:

- **Reward Systems:**
 - Games provide instant gratification through leveling up, unlocking achievements, and obtaining rewards.
- **Immersive Environments:**
 - Advanced graphics and engaging storylines captivate players, making it hard to step away.
- **Community Building:**
 - Multiplayer games create strong online communities that provide a sense of belonging.
- **Stress Relief:**
 - Gaming offers an escape from real-life challenges, often becoming a coping mechanism for stress or emotional distress.

2.3.4 Effects of Video Game Addiction

Gaming addiction affects individuals across several domains:

- **Physical Health:**
 - **Sleep Deprivation:** Late-night gaming sessions reduce sleep quality and quantity.

- o **Eye Strain:** Continuous screen exposure causes discomfort and visual fatigue.
- o **Sedentary Lifestyle:** Prolonged sitting during gaming increases the risk of obesity and musculoskeletal issues.
- **Mental Health:**
 - o Increased anxiety and depression, particularly when gaming is used to avoid real-world problems.
 - o Heightened aggression in some players due to frustration or violent game content.
- **Social and Academic/Professional Impact:**
 - o Isolation from family and friends as gaming becomes the primary focus.
 - o Declining academic or workplace performance due to lack of attention and time mismanagement.

2.3.5 Actions to Mitigate Video Game Addiction

Addressing gaming addiction involves creating a structured approach to limit gameplay and promote healthier alternatives:

- **Establish Time Limits:**
 - o Implement daily or weekly caps on gaming time and enforce breaks.
- **Promote Offline Activities:**
 - o Encourage hobbies or sports that require physical or social engagement.
- **Set Boundaries:**
 - o Restrict gaming during specific hours, such as before bed or during meals.
- **Parental and Peer Support:**
 - o Parents or peers can monitor gaming habits and help maintain a balanced lifestyle.

2.3.6 Activities to Work on in Class

Interactive activities help participants critically evaluate their gaming habits and understand the risks associated with overuse:

- **Gaming Habit Journal:**
 - o Participants document their gaming time and activities for a week.
 - o Facilitate a group discussion on patterns, motivations, and the impact on their daily lives.
- **Debate: "Is Gaming Beneficial or Harmful?":**
 - o Divide the class into two groups: one supporting gaming and the other discussing its risks.
 - o Encourage critical thinking by analyzing the pros and cons of gaming.
- **Role-Playing Scenarios:**
 - o Assign groups scenarios where gaming interferes with life (e.g., missing deadlines, ignoring friends).
 - o Participants discuss practical solutions and present them to the group.
- **Gaming-Free Challenge:**
 - o Challenge participants to abstain from gaming for three consecutive days.

- o Have them reflect on how they used their time and how they felt without gaming.

2.3.7 Classroom Discussion Questions

1. How do you feel when you play video games for extended periods? Does it energize or exhaust you?
2. Have you ever skipped responsibilities or social engagements to play games? What were the consequences?
3. What would your day look like without video games? What activities might fill that time?
4. How can parents, teachers, or peers help someone who is struggling with gaming addiction?

2.4 Online Shopping Addiction

Online shopping addiction is a growing issue exacerbated by the convenience and accessibility of e-commerce. By equipping individuals with awareness and tools to manage their habits, youth workers can encourage healthier financial behaviors and reduce the emotional toll of compulsive buying.

2.4.1 Definition and Statistics

Online shopping addiction, also known as compulsive buying disorder in digital contexts, is characterized by an uncontrollable urge to purchase goods or services through online platforms, often resulting in financial strain, emotional distress, and disruption of daily life.

- **Key Statistics:**
 - o A significant portion of young adults admit to making impulsive purchases online, driven by targeted advertisements and promotions(1st Newsletter_Spanish).
 - o E-commerce platforms report that over 70% of purchases from young users are unplanned, highlighting impulsive buying behavior(KA210-YOU-B1509724.pdf).
 - o Digital payment methods have made spending seamless, leading to a 15% increase in online shopping among European youth annually (1_DIGIADDICTIONS_Techno...).

2.4.2 Signals of Online Shopping Addiction

Indicators that someone may be struggling with online shopping addiction include:

- **Frequent Purchases:** Making daily or weekly unplanned purchases, often for non-essential items.
- **Emotional Spending:** Using online shopping as a coping mechanism for stress, anxiety, or boredom.

- **Hiding Purchases:** Concealing spending habits from friends or family out of guilt or shame.
- **Financial Instability:** Accumulating debt or frequently maxing out credit cards due to excessive online shopping.

2.4.3 Causes of Online Shopping Addiction

Multiple factors contribute to the prevalence of online shopping addiction:

- **Convenience:**
 - E-commerce platforms are accessible 24/7, making shopping effortless and immediate.
- **Psychological Triggers:**
 - Targeted marketing and personalized ads exploit users' preferences, encouraging impulsive decisions.
- **Social Influences:**
 - Social media influencers and peer recommendations often pressure individuals into purchasing trending products.
- **Emotional Relief:**
 - Shopping provides temporary relief from negative emotions, creating a cycle of emotional dependence.

2.4.4 Effects of Online Shopping Addiction

The impacts of online shopping addiction are far-reaching:

- **Financial:**
 - Accumulation of debt due to excessive spending.
 - Strained personal budgets, leading to financial insecurity.
- **Mental Health:**
 - Guilt, regret, or anxiety about purchases.
 - Increased stress from managing debt and hiding behavior.
- **Social:**
 - Strained relationships due to secrecy or conflicts over spending habits.
- **Lifestyle:**
 - Hoarding of unnecessary items, contributing to clutter and waste.

2.4.5 Actions to Mitigate Online Shopping Addiction

Effective strategies to address online shopping addiction include:

- **Set Spending Limits:**
 - Use budgeting apps or pre-set spending caps on digital payment platforms.
- **Practice Delayed Gratification:**
 - Wait 24-48 hours before making non-essential purchases.
- **Limit Access:**
 - Unsubscribe from promotional emails and notifications from e-commerce sites.
- **Seek Alternative Outlets:**

- o Engage in hobbies or activities that provide emotional satisfaction without financial cost.

2.4.6 Activities to Work on in Class

Educational and practical activities can help participants recognize and manage online shopping behaviors:

- **Shopping Diary:**
 - o Participants track all online purchases for two weeks, including reasons for the purchase and whether the items were necessary.
 - o Facilitate a group discussion about patterns and motivations behind their spending habits.
- **Budgeting Workshop:**
 - o Teach participants basic budgeting skills and how to allocate funds responsibly.
 - o Use real-life scenarios to practice making financial decisions, highlighting the impact of impulsive buying.
- **Role-Playing Scenarios:**
 - o Assign groups hypothetical situations, such as dealing with buyer's remorse or resisting an impulsive purchase during a sale.
 - o Groups brainstorm strategies and present their solutions to the class.
- **Simulated E-Commerce Exercise:**
 - o Create a mock online shopping platform with simulated ads and discounts.
 - o Ask participants to navigate the platform while staying within a set budget, reflecting on the challenges they face.

2.4.7 Classroom Discussion Questions

1. How do advertisements and discounts influence your decision to shop online?
2. Have you ever regretted an online purchase? What did you learn from the experience?
3. How do you feel about the items you buy impulsively versus the ones you plan for?
4. What strategies do you think could help limit unnecessary online shopping?

2.5 Online Betting Addiction

Online betting is a rapidly growing form of addiction due to its accessibility and design. By equipping young people with the knowledge and skills to recognize and resist these behaviors, youth workers can help prevent long-term financial and emotional harm.

2.5.1 Definition and Statistics

Online betting addiction is characterized by an uncontrollable urge to participate in gambling activities through digital platforms. This behavior often leads to financial losses, emotional distress, and strained relationships. The accessibility and anonymity

of online gambling make it particularly appealing to young people, increasing the risk of addiction.

- **Key Statistics:**
 - Over 20% of European youth aged 18-24 have participated in online betting in the past year(1st Newsletter_Spanish).
 - Approximately 6% of young gamblers exhibit signs of problem gambling (1_DIGIADDICTIONS_Techno...).
 - Online betting platforms report significant revenue growth from mobile users, highlighting the convenience factor driving addiction(KA210-YOU-B1509724.pdf).

2.5.2 Signals of Online Betting Addiction

Identifying online betting addiction involves observing behavioral patterns such as:

- **Frequent Gambling:** Regularly placing bets, often daily or multiple times a week.
- **Chasing Losses:** Betting larger amounts to recover previous losses.
- **Financial Instability:** Accumulating debt or selling personal items to fund gambling.
- **Secrecy:** Hiding gambling activity from friends and family.
- **Mood Swings:** Experiencing intense highs after wins and deep lows after losses.

2.5.3 Causes of Online Betting Addiction

Several factors contribute to the prevalence of online betting addiction:

- **Ease of Access:**
 - Gambling platforms are available 24/7, making it easy to participate at any time.
- **Reward Systems:**
 - Intermittent rewards in gambling create a strong dopamine response, reinforcing the behavior.
- **Peer Pressure:**
 - Friends or social groups that encourage betting can lead to increased participation.
- **Escapism:**
 - Gambling provides temporary relief from stress, loneliness, or other emotional challenges.

2.5.4 Effects of Online Betting Addiction

The consequences of online betting addiction can be severe and multifaceted:

- **Financial:**
 - Mounting debt due to continuous betting.
 - Loss of savings and financial security, sometimes leading to bankruptcy.
- **Mental Health:**
 - Anxiety and depression caused by guilt, stress, and financial problems.
 - Increased risk of substance abuse as a coping mechanism.
- **Social:**
 - Damaged relationships due to dishonesty and financial strain.

- o Isolation as individuals prioritize gambling over social activities.
- **Academic/Professional:**
 - o Declining performance due to distraction and stress related to gambling.

2.5.5 Actions to Mitigate Online Betting Addiction

Addressing online betting addiction involves a combination of self-awareness, education, and external support:

- **Limit Access:**
 - o Use blocking software to restrict access to gambling websites and apps.
- **Budgeting Skills:**
 - o Develop financial literacy to manage money more effectively and avoid impulsive spending.
- **Seek Professional Help:**
 - o Engage with counselors or support groups specializing in gambling addiction.
- **Promote Alternative Activities:**
 - o Encourage participation in hobbies or sports to replace the time spent gambling.

2.5.6 Activities to Work on in Class

Educational activities can help participants understand the risks and develop strategies to manage or avoid online betting:

- **Simulated Gambling Exercise:**
 - o Create a mock betting environment to demonstrate how quickly losses can accumulate.
 - o Discuss the psychological effects of wins and losses and how they influence behavior.
- **Budgeting and Goal-Setting Workshop:**
 - o Teach participants how to create and stick to a personal budget.
 - o Incorporate exercises to identify financial goals and prioritize spending.
- **Role-Playing Scenarios:**
 - o Assign groups scenarios involving gambling dilemmas (e.g., betting with limited funds or peer pressure).
 - o Participants discuss solutions and share their approaches with the class.
- **Behavioral Analysis:**
 - o Ask participants to reflect on times they or someone they know gambled and the consequences of those actions.
 - o Use this as a foundation to discuss strategies for avoiding risky behaviors.

2.5.7 Classroom Discussion Questions

1. What motivates people to engage in online betting, and why is it so addictive?
2. How does gambling impact financial stability and mental health?
3. Have you or someone you know experienced the consequences of gambling? What lessons were learned?
4. What alternative activities could replace the excitement of gambling?

2.6 Pornography Addiction

Pornography addiction, though often stigmatized, is a growing issue that impacts mental health, relationships, and personal development. By fostering open dialogue, promoting critical thinking, and providing practical strategies, youth workers can help young people navigate this challenge with greater awareness and resilience.

2.6.1 Definition and Statistics

Pornography addiction refers to a compulsive behavior where individuals excessively consume pornographic content, often leading to negative effects on mental health, relationships, and daily functioning. The accessibility of free online content has made this issue particularly prevalent among young people.

- **Key Statistics:**
 - Over 70% of adolescents report accessing pornography online, with 30% viewing it weekly(1_DIGIADDICTIONS_Techno...).
 - Youth aged 15-25 are the largest demographic of online pornography consumers(1st Newsletter_Spanish).
 - A significant percentage of frequent users report feeling dependent on pornography for emotional or sexual gratification(KA210-YOU-B1509724.pdf).

2.6.2 Signals of Pornography Addiction

Signs that someone may be struggling with pornography addiction include:

- **Frequent Viewing:** Spending significant time consuming pornography, often at the expense of other activities.
- **Escalation:** Seeking more extreme content to achieve the same emotional or psychological effect.
- **Secrecy:** Hiding usage patterns from friends, family, or partners due to shame or guilt.
- **Relationship Challenges:** Difficulties forming or maintaining intimate relationships due to unrealistic expectations influenced by pornography.
- **Emotional Dependence:** Using pornography as a coping mechanism for stress, anxiety, or boredom.

2.6.3 Causes of Pornography Addiction

Several factors contribute to the development of pornography addiction:

- **Accessibility and Anonymity:**
 - Online pornography is available 24/7 and can be accessed privately, reducing barriers to consumption.
- **Psychological Factors:**
 - Stress, loneliness, or trauma can drive individuals to seek temporary relief through pornographic content.

- **Reward Mechanisms:**
 - Watching pornography triggers dopamine release, creating a cycle of reward and reinforcement.
- **Cultural and Social Influences:**
 - The normalization of pornography consumption among peers can increase its appeal.
 -

2.6.4 Effects of Pornography Addiction

The impact of pornography addiction is often multifaceted:

- **Mental Health:**
 - Increased anxiety, depression, and feelings of shame or guilt.
 - Development of unrealistic expectations about physical appearance, relationships, and intimacy.
- **Relationships:**
 - Decreased emotional connection and intimacy with partners.
 - Conflicts in relationships due to secrecy or differing values regarding pornography use.
- **Physical Health:**
 - Potential sexual dysfunction, such as difficulty achieving arousal without pornography.
- **Productivity:**
 - Reduced focus on academic or professional responsibilities due to time spent consuming pornography.

2.6.5 Actions to Mitigate Pornography Addiction

Addressing pornography addiction requires a comprehensive approach that combines education, personal reflection, and external support:

- **Set Boundaries:**
 - Use content filters or accountability software to limit access to pornography.
- **Develop Healthy Coping Mechanisms:**
 - Encourage physical activities, mindfulness, or creative hobbies as alternatives.
- **Seek Support:**
 - Access counseling or support groups specializing in managing compulsive behaviors.
- **Educate on Media Literacy:**
 - Help individuals critically analyze the unrealistic portrayals in pornography and their impact on real-life expectations.

2.6.6 Activities to Work on in Class

Classroom activities can help participants reflect on the effects of pornography and build healthier habits:

- **Media Literacy Workshop:**

- o Discuss the portrayal of relationships and intimacy in pornography versus reality.
 - o Analyze how these portrayals shape attitudes and expectations.
- **Reflection Journals:**
 - o Participants write about their thoughts on the impact of media consumption on their relationships and mental health.
 - o Encourage sharing insights in a safe, non-judgmental environment.
- **Scenario-Based Problem Solving:**
 - o Present situations where individuals face challenges in relationships or self-esteem due to pornography use.
 - o Groups brainstorm solutions and share their approaches.
- **Alternative Rewards Exercise:**
 - o Teach participants to identify and pursue healthier sources of emotional or psychological rewards, such as connecting with friends or practicing a skill.

2.6.7 Classroom Discussion Questions

1. How do you think pornography influences expectations in relationships and self-image?
2. What are some ways to manage or reduce dependence on digital content, including pornography?
3. How can education help young people develop healthier attitudes toward intimacy and media consumption?
4. What role do cultural and societal norms play in shaping views on pornography?

3. PREVENTION OF DIGITAL ADDICTIONS

The prevention of digital addictions focuses on equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to recognize and mitigate unhealthy behaviors with technology. This section outlines strategies, methods, and activities that can help prevent digital addictions from developing or escalating.

Prevention is the most effective way to address the growing issue of digital addiction. By fostering awareness, promoting healthy habits, and equipping youth with practical tools, youth workers and educators can empower individuals to manage their digital lives responsibly and sustainably.

3.1 General prevention strategies

Preventing digital addictions requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses individuals, families, and communities. Key strategies include:

- **Education and Awareness:**
 - Educate young people about the risks and signs of digital addiction through workshops, seminars, and classroom activities.
 - Raise awareness of how digital tools are designed to capture and maintain user attention.
- **Digital Literacy Training:**
 - Teach critical thinking skills to help individuals evaluate the content they consume.
 - Promote understanding of algorithms, advertising strategies, and data privacy.
- **Time Management:**
 - Encourage the use of apps or built-in phone features to track and limit screen time.
 - Set specific goals for daily tech-free periods, such as during meals or before bedtime.
- **Family Involvement:**
 - Promote family-based solutions, such as creating tech-free zones and times at home.
 - Educate parents on recognizing signs of digital addiction and guiding their children toward healthier habits.
- **Encouraging Offline Activities:**
 - Provide opportunities for young people to engage in hobbies, sports, and social activities that do not involve screens.

3.2 Prevention through structured programs

Structured programs can systematically address the root causes of digital addiction. Examples include:

- **Workshops for Youth:**
 - Focus on self-regulation, stress management, and time management.
 - Incorporate interactive activities to engage participants actively.
- **Training for Youth Workers:**
 - Equip youth workers with tools to detect early signs of digital addiction.
 - Teach non-formal education techniques to address digital risks.
- **Peer Support Programs:**
 - Create groups where young people can share experiences and strategies for managing their digital habits.
 - Encourage collaboration on group challenges, such as tech-free weekends.
- **Digital Competency Frameworks:**
 - Use frameworks like **DigComp** to help youth develop healthy digital skills, focusing on their importance in the labor market.

3.3 Activities to prevent digital addictions in class

- **Digital Balance Tracker:**
 - Have students monitor their weekly screen time and reflect on their usage habits.
 - Discuss how they can better balance online and offline activities.
- **Mindfulness Exercises:**
 - Teach techniques such as deep breathing or journaling to manage stress without resorting to digital devices.
- **Scenario Analysis:**
 - Present scenarios involving risky digital behavior (e.g., spending hours gaming or compulsively checking social media).
 - Have students propose alternative actions and strategies.
- **Gamified Challenges:**
 - Create a competition to see who can spend the most time offline in a week, rewarding participants with recognition or small prizes.
- **Tech-Free Event Planning:**
 - In small groups, plan an event or activity that does not involve any digital tools, such as a picnic or board game night.

3.4 Role of youth workers in prevention

Youth workers play a crucial role in preventing digital addiction. Their responsibilities include:

- Acting as role models by demonstrating healthy digital habits.
- Identifying early signs of digital addiction in youth and intervening appropriately.
- Organizing engaging non-digital activities that promote social interaction and personal growth.

- Collaborating with families and communities to create a supportive environment for healthy technology use.

Classroom Discussion Questions

1. What are some activities or hobbies you enjoy that don't involve technology?
How can you incorporate more of these into your routine?
2. How do you feel after spending a day disconnected from your devices?
3. What can families and communities do to support healthy technology use among young people?
4. How can schools and youth centers help raise awareness about digital addiction?

4. REFERENCES

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