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ONLINE ON CAMPUS: INTERNET ADDICTION AND PERSONALITY IN ENGLISH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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A number of studies suggests that for a small minority of users, excessive engagement with the Internet can lead to Internet addiction. Internet addiction has been linked to specific personality traits. Research indicates that Internet addicts score high on introversion, and low on agreeableness and emotional stability. In terms of populations at risk for developing Internet addiction, university students have been identified. They have free and unlimited access, flexible schedules, and university settings can foster social intimidation and alienation. Sixty percent of students jeopardizes their academic and professional performance because of their Internet habits and in order to cope, they engage in Internet activities excessively. Internet addiction in students is claimed to be as high as 15% in Taiwan, however, no such data exists for English students. In order to fill this gap in knowledge, a web-based study on the prevalence of Internet addiction and its associations with personality traits in UK university students ($N = 2257$) was conducted. Results indicate that 3.2% of the sample can be classified as potentially addicted to the Internet. A combination of online shopping and neuroticism decreased the risk for Internet addiction, whereas online gaming together with openness to experience increased it. Moreover, frequent usage of online shopping and social online activities, high neuroticism and low agreeableness significantly increased the chances of being addicted to the Internet. Findings and their implications are discussed.