

# Escaping the Russian War Children Seek Virtual Salvation When There Is No Other

Sergii Boltivets <sup>1\*</sup>, Oleksandr Bashynskiy <sup>2\*</sup>, Tymur Gonchar <sup>2</sup>, Oleksiy Gonchar <sup>3</sup>, Lyudmila Uralova <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Youth policy development department, State Institute of Family and Youth Policy, Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Psychiatry, Psychotherapy and Medical Psychology, Shupyk National University of Healthcare of Ukraine, Ukraine.

<sup>3</sup>Department of Radiology, Shupyk National University of Healthcare of Ukraine, Ukraine.

\*Corresponding Author: Sergii Boltivets, Youth policy development department, State Institute of Family and Youth Policy, Ukraine.

Received date: February 06, 2026; Accepted date: January 21, 2026; Published date: January 30, 2026

Citation: Sergii Boltivets, Oleksandr Bashynskiy, Tymur Gonchar, Oleksiy Gonchar, Lyudmila Uralova, (2026), Escaping the Russian War Children Seek Virtual Salvation When There Is No Other, *Clinical Research and Clinical Trials*, 15(1); DOI:10.31579/2693-4779/310

Copyright: © 2026, Jose Luis Turabian. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

## Abstract:

The growth of Internet addiction among children and adolescents is due to its spread in the context of the Russian military attack on Ukraine, since the Internet remains the only source of information about military dangers: the advance of the enemy, rocket and aerial bombardment, artillery shelling, looting by the Russian military of houses and apartments in which they they steal children's toys and clothes, rape children and their parents. The constant experience of danger to the life and health of oneself, one's parents and relatives significantly affects the formation of generalized Internet addiction, which reduces the quality of life and social functioning of young people. The article provides data on the comorbidity of Internet addiction with pathology of the central nervous system, neurotic, stress-related, and somatoform disorders, affective disorders, and social phobias. The results of examinations of 84 adolescent male patients are presented. Of them, 39 people with residual organic insufficiency (hemorrhagic and hypoxic-ischemic cerebrovascular injuries in the anamnesis, which later provoked various forms of deviant behavior of a non-psychotic register; and 45 patients with neurotic, stress-related disorders, namely: mixed anxiety and depressive, phobic and post-traumatic stress disorders. The algorithm of the emergence of Internet addiction in childhood is revealed, which includes a period of mild fascination, which brings partial relief in the emotional state of the child-patient, a period of primary pathological urge, which was characterized by the appearance of a new need in the form of social networks or of computer games, which acquires a systematic character, and the last stage with pronounced signs of psychological and physical dependence on the Internet. and social components of the formation of dependent states.

**Keywords:** Internet addiction; perinatal cerebrovascular lesions; danger to life; feeling of helplessness; mental disorders; somatoform disorders; social phobias; behavioral disorders

## 1.Introduction

Internet addiction is one of the most complex, mosaic and variable in clinical, psychological, therapeutic and social aspects of the manifestations of dependent states of children and adolescents, starting from 5-7 years of age, and is one of the urgent problems of modern medicine. This type of dependence has a tendency to grow in the conditions of the Russian military war against Ukraine, socio-economic instability in society, forced migration of millions of families fleeing the Russian occupation due to burnt and bombed housing. Children in the conditions of war quickly become adults, especially in many cases of death or loss of both parents and other relatives. Thus, seven-year-old children think like adults, have their own experience of saving lives and surviving in unsanitary conditions, lack of usual living conditions, often together with pets, but at the same time using the Internet as the only means of information about military risks, threats and dangers. On the one hand, the Internet performs an important function of warning

about possible military dangers, but on the other hand, it is incapable of truthfully and accurately giving concrete answers to possible threats, which children and adolescents learn about from the words of eyewitnesses. So, in particular, in the first days of the occupation of the city of Irpen near Kyiv, Russians raped 12-14-year-old girls, cut out their genitals and hung children's corpses along the road to intimidate the Ukrainian population. This became known without the Internet in Kyiv and other cities with the spread of a sense of horror in the children's environment and among families with children of the same age. According to our observations, this and other facts of murders, rapes and mutilations of children and adolescents by the Russian military, which became known outside the Internet, strengthened the multi-directional children's Internet drive to search for a reflection of these and other cruel war events on the Internet, an explanation of their consequences, further dynamics and possible punishment.

As our numerous observations show, Internet addiction in the conditions of the Russian war in Ukraine arises and is formed as a reaction to the substitution of child and adolescent helplessness, the inability to withstand the blows of 250- and 500-kilogram high-explosive bombs dropped by Russian pilots on residential buildings, artillery shelling of residential areas from the Grad, Smerch, Tornado, Uragan, Solntsepok rocket systems, barrel artillery strikes, drone bombings. The understanding and feeling by children and teenagers of the helplessness of adults, the inability to resist the Russian military threat - parents and relatives - prompts minors to seek virtual protection and the Internet, generalizing addiction. A certain analogy of such states is the experiences that arose during the recent devastating earthquakes in the Republic of Turkey. The difference is that in the event of an earthquake, all living beings resist the natural element, warn each other, help each other, save each other, that is, show solidarity in joint survival, and in the event of a Russian war against Ukraine, humanoid beings destroy the entire Ukrainian population, in first of all, shooting and bombing those cars, buildings, theaters, hospitals, schools, where there is an inscription "Children" or according to the children's purpose of these civilian objects. Observing the creatures that kill from a safer distance is the basis of the development of Internet addiction in children and adolescents, who compensate by this for the lost sense of security. The only value for them is the computer, which replaces the lost sense of security with surfing, virtual dating, cybersex, and computer games that more and more perfectly imitate reality [1,2]. Computer games, especially if they are also role-playing games, become one of the ways of addictive realization. Completely immersing himself in the game and achieving certain successes in it, the child realizes in this way virtually most of his needs and ignores others, including, first of all, the need for security. Teenagers enjoy playing computer games, which are accompanied by positive emotions. In parallel, the locus of control is internalized, self-esteem and self-awareness change. Addiction develops when the desire to leave reality is connected with the need to change the mental state. Repeatedly repeated in the form of virtual immersion, Internet addiction begins to dominate the child's mind, becoming the central idea of thinking, which leads to detachment from reality, leads to a decrease in social, family, professional, material values, neglect of one's duty [3]. The change in personality depends not only on the brevity and duration of the impact of computer addiction, but is also largely determined by the initial state of the organism. Internet addiction is comorbid with pathology of the central nervous system, neurotic, stress-related and somatoform disorders, affective disorders, and social phobias. And as a result, one of the most significant manifestations of Internet addiction are disorders of emotional and psychological states, negative changes in behavioral reactions, and disturbances in adaptive and compensatory systems [4, 5, 6, 7].

## 2. Research material and methods

In order to analyze the factors that contribute to the emergence of Internet addiction on the basis of the City Clinical Hospital "Psychiatry" in the city of Kyiv and the Department of Psychiatry, Psychotherapy and Medical Psychology of the P.L. Shupyk National University of Health Care of Ukraine during the years 2014-2024 84 adolescent male patients. Of them, 39 people with residual organic insufficiency (hemorrhagic and hypoxic-ischemic cerebrovascular injuries in the anamnesis, which later provoked various forms of deviant behavior of a non-psychotic register; and 45 patients with neurotic, stress-related disorders, namely: mixed anxiety and depressive, phobic and post-traumatic stress disorders. The study was conducted with the informed consent of the patients' parents in compliance with the principles of bioethics and deontology. The design of the research involved several stages: screening of the formation of groups with Internet

addiction in different nosologies, studying the mechanism of the formation of an addicted state. For this purpose, a comprehensive clinical-psychopathological and catamnestic study was conducted. For the diagnosis of perinatal cerebrovascular injuries in newborns in the anamnesis, neurosonography was used, followed by the use of computer tomography and magnetic resonance imaging methods; the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), the Shmishek questionnaire for a typological approach to diagnosis and the study of personality accentuation; the "tendency to addictive behavior" test, the quality of life assessment scale, the multidimensional scale of perception of social support (D. Zimet, 1988). Statistical data processing was carried out using the program (SPSS16.0) and "Excel" from the "Microsoft office 2003" package

## 3. Discussion

The analysis of the obtained data made it possible to identify a number of factors that sanction the Internet-dependent behavior of children and adolescents: clinical-biological, social-psychological and personal [8]. Clinical and biological factors primarily include perinatal pathology, cerebrovascular lesions, craniocerebral injuries, somatic and mental pathology. Hereditary alcoholism and drug addiction, mental illnesses also occur. The socio-psychological risk factors include microsocial conditions, which include a single-parent family, criminal convictions of parents, conflicts in the family, wasteful eating, deprivation of parental rights; conditions of upbringing, in particular hyper- or hypopopia, neglect. Factors of personality disorders include character accentuations of unstable, hysteroid and epileptoid types. The presence of residual organic insufficiency in the examined subjects plays an important role in the mechanism of formation of Internet addiction, which contributes to the emergence of disorders in adolescents with neurosis-like conditions according to the asthenodynamic and asthenohyperdynamic variants. The asthenohypodynamic state was characterized by increased mental and physical fatigue, affective lability, low mood with dysphoric episodes. The asthenohyperdynamic variant is expressed by increased fatigue, lack of attention, affective excitement, instability of behavior and mood. One of the most common risk factors for Internet addiction is mixed anxiety and depression, anxiety-phobia and post-traumatic stress disorders, which is confirmed by our research. Low stress resistance, anxiety, and fear in connection with military operations in Ukraine provoke the emergence of depression, which in turn leads to suicidal thoughts, post-traumatic disorders and, as a result, immersion in social networks. Our study made it possible to find out the algorithm for the emergence of Internet addiction in childhood. At first, this is a period of light excitement, which brings partial relief in the emotional state of the child-patient, who suffered as a result of military actions. Then comes the period of primary pathological drive, which was characterized by the appearance of a new need in the form of social networks or computer games, which acquires a systematic character. At this stage, emotional and volitional disorders increase. At the last stage of addiction, there are signs of psychological and physical dependence on the Internet. When trying to disrupt this process from the side, the mental state of the patients is dominated by psychomotor excitement and malice. aggressiveness.

Signs of school and social maladjustment appear, relations with parents and friends are disrupted. In the future, the clinical symptoms are characterized by a decrease in tolerance to computer games, social networks, and the presence of affective and neurotic-like registers.

## 4. Conclusions

1. As a result of the study, clinical-biological, social-psychological and personal factors of the emergence of Internet addiction in the examined children and adolescents were revealed.

2. Internet addiction is comorbid with organic pathology of the central nervous system, which includes cerebrovascular lesions in the anamnesis, craniocerebral injuries, neurotic, stress-related disorders. The typology of stress-related disorders includes mixed, anxiety and depressive disorder, anxiety-phobic disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

3. The stages of the formation of Internet addiction that we have determined include a period of easy fascination with the social network of computer games; the stage of the primary pathological drive with a new need for the Internet, which acquires a systematic character; the last stage of psychological and physical Internet addiction leads to pathological changes in the affective register, school, family and social maladjustment.

4. The presented results indicate the direction and provide an opportunity to study approaches to diagnosis and treatment, development of medical, social and preventive programs for children and adolescents with Internet addiction.

## Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## References

1. Young K.S. (2021). What makes the Internet Addictive: potential explanations for pathological Internet use. Paper presented at the 105th annual conference of the American Psychological Association, Chicago, IL
2. Shapira N.A. (2019). Problematic internet use. *Paper presented at American Psychiatric Association*, Toronto.
3. Zaporozhan V.M., Bitenskyi V.S., Aimedov K.V. (2017). Game pattern in compensation of noogenic neurosis. *Odesa Medical Journal*. № 6(116), 50-53
4. Custer R., Linnol M., Loren V. (2015). Personality factors and pathological / R. Custer, M/ Linnol, V. Loren // *Acta Psychiatr Scand*, 37-39
5. Zyss T., Boron J. (2019). The world of computer games I: a new entertainment medium and new danger. Description of atechnigue. *Psychiatr. Pol.* V. 30, № 2, 255-266.
6. Turkle Sh. (2021). Constructions and reconstructions of the Self in Virtual Reality. *Mas-sachusetts Institute of Technology. Identity workshop.*
7. Goldberg I. (2015). Internet addiction. Electronic message posted to research discussion list.
8. Boltivets S., Gonchar T., Gonchar O. and Uralova L. (2023). Rehabilitation of Children and Adolescents with Deviant Behavior and Neurosis-Like Pseudoneurasthenic States of Residual Organic Genesis. *Mental Health & Human Resilience International Journal (MHRJ)*.



This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License

To Submit Your Article Click Here:

[Submit Manuscript](#)

DOI:10.31579/2693-4779/310

### Ready to submit your research? Choose Auctores and benefit from:

- fast, convenient online submission
- rigorous peer review by experienced research in your field
- rapid publication on acceptance
- authors retain copyrights
- unique DOI for all articles
- immediate, unrestricted online access

At Auctores, research is always in progress.

Learn more <https://auctoresonline.com/journals/clinical-research-and-clinical-trials>