TECHNOLOGY ADDICTION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The coronavirus pandemic has brought significant changes to individuals daily habits and routines. As part of global fight against the novel coronavirus, governments across the globe have taken a series of restrictive measures to prevent the diseases from further spreading. These measures have included restriction of face-to-face interaction, limiting access to indoor spaces, school closures, transition to home-based/remote education and work system. Required to stay at home most of the time due to restrictive measures, individuals had to continue their lives through the help of technology. This being the case, global technology and internet usage rates, and average time spent playing video games have significantly increased.

Technology addiction refers to a type of addiction associated with the excessive and uncontrolled use of mobile phones, computers, smart devices, video game consoles, tablets and other similar digital devices. The loss of control over the use of technology and its excessive and uncontrolled use may lead to significant damages, even worse, may result in addictions. In technology addiction, it is observed that a person fails to overcome his or her uncontrollable desire to use a technological product, and when the person cannot have access to that product, s/he will likely experience symptoms of deprivation. If the person has difficulty controlling his or her thoughts, emotions and behaviours when s/he stays away from technological devices indicates the presence of an addiction problem. The technology addiction negatively affects individuals' physical and mental health. Due to increasing amount of time spent in digital environments, such individuals are likely to experience personal and family/school-related problems, asocial tendencies, desire to be alone all the time, attention and concentration deficits, exhaustion, headaches, posture problems, sleep and eating disorders.

Signs & Symptoms:

- Spending most waking hours online.
- Lying about the time you spend online.
- Complaining about the negative physical side effects of using the computer for long periods.
- Slowly adopting an anonymous personality, preferring talking to people online over a face-to-face interaction.
- Skipping meals, classes or dates/appointments to spend more time online.
- Feeling guilty, ashamed, or anxious, yet having feelings of euphoria as a result of online behaviour or while performing internet-based activities.

- Feeling tense and anxious while you are away from your computer.
- Spending most nights online.

Tips on How to Manage Healthy Technology Use:

- Try to manage the amount of time you spend using your smart phone, computer, watching television or playing video games.
- Using applications that provide feedback about the amount of your daily technology use may help you build awareness about healthy technology use. Such applications may help you maintain a healthy balance when using technology.
- You may also prepare a weekly technology usage schedule and try to adhere to it.
- You may regain control of your digital life by putting your smart devices away or turning off notifications while you are engaged in non-technology related activities.

If you think you are having difficulty managing your technology use or your online life, you can always contact us at psikolojikdestek@altinbas.edu.tr to get therapy or counselling. Remember to include your first and last name, and your major in your email.

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