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Differences in psychosocial problems across multiple addiction typologies among young adults in South Korea

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This study aims to categorize the complexity of addiction among young adults in Korea and to explore differences in levels of psychosocial problems.

An online survey involving 521 Korean young adults aged 19-39 was conducted to examine various addictions (alcohol, gambling, gaming, and smartphone dependency) and to categorize complex addiction patterns. Using SPSS and Mplus programs, latent class analysis and analysis of variance were conducted.

A latent class analysis was revealing three latent classes in the study. Class 1 is a group whose level of smartphone overdependence is relatively higher than other addictions, but corresponds to the general user group; class 2 is characterized by high-risk drinking (AUDIT 15+), problematic gambling (CPGI 14+), borderline gaming disorder (I-GUESS average 11), and general smartphone use, which can be seen as a risky group with complex addiction behaviors. Class 3 is characterized by gaming disorder with low levels of other addictions and high level of gaming (I-GUESS average 15+). Second, differences in psychosocial problems between the three classified latent classes were as follows. There were statistically significant differences in the levels of depression (class 2 complex addiction group > class 3 gaming addiction group > class 1 normal user group), self-esteem (class 1 > class 2 > class 3), interpersonal relationships (class 1 > class 3 group > class 2), and social isolation (class 3 > class 2 > class 1).

These findings underscore the necessity for tailored interventions that account for the varied typologies of multiple addictions.

Keywords: multiple addiction typologies; young adults; psychosocial problems; latent class analysis; analysis of variance