

Plasticity and Stability as Higher-order Personality Factors, Autonomy, and Problematic Internet Use among University Students



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AIM: The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between the higher-order personality factors Plasticity (Extraversion, Openness to Experience) and Stability (Emotional stability/Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness) and Problematic Internet Use (PIU) with respect to the role of autonomy in this relationship. **METHODS:** Autonomy (A scale for measuring autonomy), Ten-Item Personality Inventory, GPIU2 (Generalized Problematic Internet Use Scale 2). **SAMPLE:** The sample consisted of 1525 first-year university students from three countries: the Slovak Republic (38.5%, N=814, 73% of them females, mean age 19.6), Lithuania (36.4%, N=936, 71% of them females, mean age 20.0), and Hungary (25.1%, N=940, 76% of them females, mean age 21.4). This research is part of SLiCE (a European cohort study looking into university students' behaviour and

perspectives on life). **RESULTS:** Models of linear regression showed that all the predictors under scrutiny explained the variance in PIU after controlling for gender and country. The analysis showed a negative relationship between Plasticity and PIU, between Stability and PIU, and between autonomy and PIU. Furthermore, the Sobel test showed that autonomy was a mediator of the relationship between Plasticity and PIU and between Stability and PIU. **CONCLUSION:** Highlighting the significant protective role of autonomy in relation to PIU as well as the mediating role of autonomy in the relationship between the higher-order personality factors and PIU, the findings of this study can be implemented in prevention and intervention programmes for university students.

KEY WORDS: PERSONALITY FACTORS – AUTONOMY – PROBLEMATIC INTERNET USE

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