

Current perspectives of Internet-communication disorder regarding social cognitions and craving reactions

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Internet-communication disorder (ICD) is considered one type of specific Internet-use disorders and contains the excessive use of online-communication applications such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, or Instagram (Brand et al., 2016). Cue-reactivity and craving are crucial concepts in both substance-use disorder and behavioral addiction research. Additionally, social cognitions such as social connectivity and fear of missing out are assumed to be specific predispositions for using online-communication applications. These concepts have been recently investigated in subjects with specific Internet-use disorders such as Internet-gaming disorder, Internet-pornography-viewing disorder, Internet-shopping disorder, or unspecific Internet-use disorder. Studies are summarized, which present the relevance of social connectivity, and which address behavioral correlates of cue-reactivity and craving for ICD symptoms. Overall, different studies support the theoretical hypothesis that cue-reactivity and craving are mechanisms underlying ICD. It could also be shown that specific social cognitions intervene with cognitive and affective responses to external stimuli. These findings on cue-reactivity and craving as well as the interaction of social cognitions with further cognitive responses in ICD are consistent with the recently suggested Interaction of Person-Affect-Cognition-Execution (I-PACE) model of specific Internet-use disorders. It suggests that gratification and reinforcement contribute to the development of cue-reactivity and craving. However, social cognitions and the interaction with affective and cognitive components describe main mechanisms of an ICD. Specifications of the I-PACE model for ICD are discussed.