




# SESRIC Conversations “Digital Addiction and Youth Mental Health ”

in collaboration with UNFPA

Tuesday, 30 June 2026 | 14:300 – 17:30 (GMT+3)

SAVE THE DATE		REGISTRATION
<b>Programme</b>	SESRIC Conversations	To access to the registration page, please visit: <a href="https://erp.sesric.org/events/SESRIC-CONVERSATIONS-YOUTH/Apply">https://erp.sesric.org/events/SESRIC-CONVERSATIONS-YOUTH/Apply</a> or scan the below QR Code:  <i>The event will be conducted in English</i> <i>For more information, please contact SESRIC through <a href="mailto:training@sesric.org">training@sesric.org</a> and UNFPA through <a href="mailto:yapar@unfpa.org">yapar@unfpa.org</a></i>
<b>Topic</b>	“ Digital Addiction and Youth Mental Health ”	
<b>Date</b>	30 June 2026	
<b>Time</b>	14:30 – 17:30	
<b>Venue</b>	Al-Aqsa Library SESRIC Headquarters, Ankara	

## DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

### Background and Rationale:

Youth mental health is a foundational determinant of long-term emotional, psychological, and social well-being. As digital technology becomes increasingly integral to daily life, it presents a complex paradox. While it offers transformative benefits particularly for youth in vulnerable situations—it also poses significant risks to their physical and mental health. The relationship between digital consumption and mental health is highly nuanced, often manifesting in digital addiction, privacy vulnerabilities, violence and broader social or legal challenges that affect individuals differently.

According to the latest data from the International Telecommunication Union<sup>1</sup>, internet usage among young people aged 15–24 reached approximately 79% globally in 2023, compared to 65% among the overall population. This indicates a persistent 14-percentage-point gap between youth and the wider population, a trend that has remained stable over the past four years and is observed across all regions.

Youth internet usage exceeds the overall population average across all world regions, reaching 98% in Europe, 95% in the Americas, 94% in the Commonwealth of Independent States, 81% in Asia-Pacific, and

<sup>1</sup>International Telecommunication Union, World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database



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78% in the Arab States. Although youth connectivity in Africa remains above the regional average, only 53% of young people use the internet, highlighting a persistent digital divide.

Within OIC member countries with available data, the SESRIC Youth Report 2025<sup>2</sup> further highlights that young people are the most intensive internet users in terms of daily screen time. Individuals aged 16–24 spend more than seven hours online per day on average, making them the most digitally engaged age group. While internet use gradually declines with age, overall usage remains substantial across all population groups.

At the country level, youth internet usage is nearly universal in a number of OIC member countries, reaching 100% in the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, and exceeding 95% in Qatar, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Oman, Türkiye, Albania, Indonesia, and Iran.

This widespread digital connectivity reflects the central role of technology in daily life, particularly for young people who rely on digital platforms for communication, learning, and social interaction. At the same time, it raises increasing concerns about digital overuse and its implications for youth well-being. Excessive screen time has been associated with reduced physical activity, sleep disruption, and emerging mental health challenges, including anxiety and social isolation. For instance, a study conducted by Digital Violence Research indicates that one in five young people aged 15-17 and one in three aged 18-32 in Türkiye are exposed to digital violence<sup>3</sup>. Türkiye Youth Survey highlights social media as the main source for sexual and reproductive health information (69%) and a significant source for content on violence against women (88%), child marriage (64%), and youth violence (61%)<sup>4</sup>.

This high level of exposure embodies mental and social consequences highlighted by numerous studies — misinformation, diminished physical activity, sleep disturbances, victimization and violence, academic decline, deteriorating social skills and severe mental health challenges. Growing concerns about these challenges have sparked global initiatives to protect vulnerable populations in the digital age including the UNCRC’s General Comment No. 25 (2021) and declaration of 2025 by the UN as the International Year for the Elimination of Digital Violence Against Women and Girls. Ultimately, securing digital environments is essential for empowering future generations and achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, specifically regarding good health and wellbeing (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), and strong institutions (SDG 16).

Accordingly, these concerns were addressed in key national policy documents including 12th National Development Plan, the vision Document for the Protection and Empowerment of the Family (2024-2028), Child Rights Strategy Document (2023-2028), 2019-2023 National Strategy Document and Action Plan for Combating Behavioural Addiction and the Action Plan for Empowering Children in the Digital World (2026–2030). These documents aim to empower young people and families through digital literacy while

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<sup>2</sup> SESRIC. (2025). State of Youth in the OIC Member States 2025

<sup>3</sup> UNFPA, Common Knowledge and Communication Association-TBİD, Digital Violence Research 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Hacettepe University and UNFPA; 2023 Türkiye Youth Research.



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also protecting them from the risks of technology and emphasize raising awareness, early intervention, and supporting research to address behavioral addictions and promote safe internet use.

The Joint OIC Youth Strategy<sup>5</sup>, adopted in 2023, builds on earlier evidence and policy frameworks to strengthen coordinated action for youth development in Member States. As highlighted in the SESRIC OIC Youth Report 2025<sup>6</sup>, the well-being of young people requires coordinated action across all sectors and stakeholders. In response, the Strategy promotes digital literacy, youth empowerment, and the creation of safer and more inclusive online environments, while also emphasising the importance of improved access to mental health services as a core component of effective youth development. The Strategy also notes that, only 58% of OIC countries have an established mental health policy, an alarming gap given the urgent needs arising from conflict situations in the region.

The aforementioned challenges, together with the fact that young people aged 15–24 account for 18% of the total OIC population (approximately 381 million individuals), indicate the scale of youth development needs in OIC countries. In Türkiye, youth constitute 15% of the total population (approximately 12.9 million individuals)<sup>7</sup>. As such comprehensive strategies that expand access to mental healthcare and mitigate digital risks are imperative. Consequently, strengthening youth mental health and safeguarding them from harmful digital practices is not merely a developmental priority for OIC Member Countries; it is a strategic imperative for international cooperation, solidarity, and sustainable growth.

**Event objectives:** The primary goal of this SESRIC Conversations session, organised in collaboration with UNFPA Türkiye, is to address the intersections of digital technology and youth mental well-being. Specifically, the event aims to:

- Provide a high-level platform for diplomatic engagement and policy exchange regarding youth mental health.
- Reaffirm the collective commitment of OIC Member Countries and international partners to youth empowerment and wellbeing.
- Identify shared priorities to strengthen visibility for collaboration on sustainable development and building a resilient future.

**Participants:** Representatives of OIC and diplomatic missions in Ankara, relevant national institutions, international organisations, academia, and civil society organizations in Türkiye.

## Event format and methodology:

- **Venue:** Al-Aqsa Library, SESRIC Headquarters, Ankara
- **Language:** English (no translation provided)

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<sup>5</sup> The OIC Youth Strategy

<sup>6</sup> State of Youth in OIC Member States 2025 <https://www.sesric.org/publications-detail.php?id=616>

<sup>7</sup> <https://oicstat.sesric.org/>