



Relationships and associations between video game and Internet addictions: Is tolerance a symptom seen in all conditions



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ABSTRACT

There are several similarities and relationships between behavioral addictions. These relationships between behavioral addictions could be said to result especially from Internet use. It is seen that problematic or excessive use of the Internet not only results in Internet addiction but also leads to and contributes to such other behavioral addictions as video game addiction. The present study examined the associations in related literature with the relationships between video game and Internet addictions and aimed at determining the correlations between video game and Internet addictions. Also, the study further focused on whether the symptom of tolerance occurred in all conditions or not. In the study, correlational research was used. The study was carried out with 200 students from a high school located in the Eastern part of Turkey. Video Game Addiction Questionnaire and Internet Addiction Scale were used to collect the research data. For the analysis of the data, descriptive statistics, TwoStep Cluster Analysis, correlation analysis and Independent Samples *t*-Test were applied. Consequently, it was found that there was a strong correlation between video game addiction and Internet addiction. Also, not in all conditions can tolerance be said to be among the symptoms of video game addiction or Internet addiction.

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1. Introduction

Video game and Internet addictions are considered to be a type of behavioral addictions (non-chemical or non-substance) different from substance addiction. In substance addiction, addiction develops depending on the substance used, while in behavioral addictions, addiction develops based on the activity carried out or on the behavior. However, regarding video game and Internet addictions, it is an issue of discussion whether individuals are addicted to the platform or to the content provided by the Internet or whether one is more influential on individuals than the other (Griffiths, 1999a). Some researchers claim that addiction develops in relation to such contents of the Internet as games, chatting, shopping and gambling rather than the Internet platform itself (Davis, 2001), while others assert that software and software design are influential on addiction (Alrobai, Phalp, & Ali, 2014). In any case, the Internet provides different types of content: useful-harmful, good-bad or safe-dangerous. One important difference between behavioral addictions and substance addiction is that it is not possible or reasonable to avoid behaviors completely. The reason is that most behaviors provide benefits for individuals. On the other hand, the main problem is that such behaviors are

excessive and harmful for individuals/society in psychological, physiological and sociological aspects. For example, in today's digital age, online shopping is a necessity in some cases, while excessive shopping or lack of self-control is likely to result in addiction. Another example could be the fact that the purpose of playing online games is socialization, spending nice time and learning via entertainment (Cole & Griffiths, 2007; De Freitas & Griffiths, 2007, 2008; Griffiths, 2002). However, excessive or uncontrolled online gaming could lead to addiction accompanied by loss of considerable time, depression, failure in school and sleeping problems (Eidenbenz, 2011; Stojakovic, 2011). It is not easy to diagnose behavioral addiction or to observe its symptoms easily as it is in substance addiction. Therefore, not only because it is difficult to diagnose behavioral addiction but also because it is impossible to remove such behaviors completely from our lives, it is not easy to reach a consensus on the definition, diagnosis, prevention and treatment of behavioral addiction. It is seen that with the developing technology, video game and Internet addictions are among the most striking behavioral addictions especially for children and adolescents.

2. Behavioral addictions: video game and internet addictions

Among behavioral addictions are such addictions or disorders as video game addiction (online or offline) (Porter, Starcevic,

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Berle, & Fenech, 2010), Internet addiction (Ko, Yen, Chen, Yeh, & Yen, 2009; Ko, Yen, Chen, Yang, et al., 2009), sexual addiction (Goodman, 1992), pathological gambling (Blanco, Moreyra, Nunes, Sáiz-Ruiz, & Ibáñez, 2001; Griffiths, 2008a) and shopping addiction or compulsive buying (Black, 1996) (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders [DSM-V], 2013). Internet and computer addictions are considered within the scope of technological addictions based on human–machine interaction (Griffiths, 1999a). Technological addictions can be regarded as a subset of behavioral addictions.

It is seen that behavioral addictions such as the Internet, video game and gambling addictions have some common points regarding symptoms as well as prevention and treatment (Griffiths, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Keepers, 1990; Kuczmierczyk, Walley, & Calhoun, 1987). Before DSM-V, the fact that video game and Internet addictions have been defined using the diagnosis criteria for pathological gambling shows the relationships between these addictions (Fisher, 1994; Griffiths, 2005b; Johansson & Götestam, 2004; Thurlow, Lengel, & Tomic, 2004). Internet addiction, though not currently found fully in the scope of DSM-V, is considered to be similar to “Online Gaming Disorder” found in DSM-V. These symptoms include mood modification, salience, conflict, relapse, preoccupation with gaming/Internet, lying or hiding gaming/Internet use, loss of interest in other activities, defensiveness and anger, social and psychological withdrawal, tolerance, using gaming/Internet as an escape, excessive use and negative consequences (DSM-V, 2013). Withdrawal symptoms are defined by DSM-V (2013) as symptoms that occur *when Internet gaming is taken away*. These symptoms are typically described as irritability, anxiety, or sadness, but there are no physical signs of pharmacological withdrawal. Tolerance is defined by DSM-V (2013) as *the need to spend increasing amounts of time engaged in Internet or Internet games*. The negative consequences of Internet addiction and video game addiction are likely to cause problems in a wide range of areas in physiological, psychological and sociological aspects and to have negative influence on the welfare of individuals and on the order in the society (Chou, Condron, & Belland, 2005; Flisher, 2010; Gunuc & Dogan, 2013; Ko, Yen, Chen, Yeh, et al., 2009; Kraut et al., 1998; Lam, Peng, Mai, & Jing, 2009; Murali & George, 2007; Ni, Yan, Chen, & Liu, 2009; Park, Kim, & Cho, 2008; Scherer, 1997; Young, 1998; Young & Rogers, 1998). Aspects of tolerance and withdrawal are seen with concomitant physical discomfort (Greenfield, 2011), and these symptoms are used as the primary and common symptoms for the diagnosis of behavioral addictions in a number of studies (Beard & Wolf, 2001; Blaszczynski, Walker, Sharpe, & Nower, 2008; Block, 2008; Caplan, 2002; DSM-V, 2013; Griffiths, 1993; Ko, Chen, Chen, & Yen, 2005; Kuss & Griffiths, 2012b; Kwon, 2011; Paik, Oh, & Kim, 2014). In addition, tolerance and withdrawal symptoms are also found among the diagnosis criteria put forward by Goldberg (1996), Goodman (1990), Griffiths (1996) and Young (1998). Although all these symptoms have been used by researchers, there is still no consensus on the number of symptoms necessary for the diagnosis of addiction or on whether all symptoms have equal importance (Blinka & Smahel, 2011).

Gunuc and Kayri (2010), in their Internet Addiction Scale, determined the sub-dimensions of Internet addiction as Withdrawal, Controlling Difficulty, Disorder in Functionality and Social Isolation. Within the scope of these sub-dimensions, though the tolerance-related indicator was found as an item in the scale, tolerance did not occur as a separate dimension. However, in DSM-V, tolerance is regarded as one of the important symptoms of video game and Internet addictions. In this respect, it is important to find answers to the questions of “Is tolerance a symptom of video game/Internet addiction that occurs in all conditions?”, “Do Internet-addicted adolescents get rid of their addiction when they

do not have the opportunity to increase the amount of their gaming/Internet-use time?”, “If Game/Internet-addicted adolescents’ gaming/Internet-use time were restricted, would this be enough for treatment alone?” and “Is analysis of only the symptoms enough for the diagnosis of addiction?”

Though not valid for every behavioral addiction, beneficial use of the Internet and video game differs from substance addiction and certain behavioral addictions such as gambling. Therefore, it is not possible and reasonable to fully avoid not only the Internet, which is an indispensable tool today, and but also the video games, which constitute an indispensable source of entertainment especially for children and young people. It is seen that individuals start playing video games to have fun and generally to experiment the exciting and satisfying process (Blinka & Smahel, 2011; Paik et al., 2014). As individuals enjoy this process, they want to continue the process and to increase their delight in time. In addition, video games are not played just for entertainment purposes; there are also other types of video games, though few in number, used for such educational purposes as personal development, memory development and learning (De Freitas & Griffiths, 2007, 2008; Griffiths, 2002; Procci, Bowers, Wong, & Andrews, 2013), therapy (Blinka & Smahel, 2011; Griffiths, 2005a) and social interaction (Cole & Griffiths, 2007). However, it could be stated that addiction develops mostly due to entertaining video games (Beranuy, Carbonell, & Griffiths, 2013; Wan & Chiou, 2006b) not due to educational video games. Use of video games and of the Internet is likely to bring about positive and negative results. Therefore, purpose and duration of use of video games are important for balanced use of these games (Gunuc, 2013). Establishment of balance regarding the purpose and duration of use of video games could prevent problematic and excessive use of video games (Griffiths & Meredith, 2009). Failure to establish such a balance either in time or with the involvement of other internal and external factors in the process is likely to ruin the balance. In order to maintain this balance, a number of internal and external factors such as individual, family-related, social and financial factors should be kept under control. Especially for children and adolescents, this balance could be said to be fairly fragile due to factors specific to several developmental periods.

Besides these factors, some other factors resulting from the use of the Internet or video game mechanisms also play a role in addiction. Among these factors, probably the most important one is easy access to the Internet and video games (DSM-V, 2013). In other words, accessing video games via the Internet and mobile devices is likely to lead to negative results regarding addiction. In this respect, video games can be divided into online and offline video games. Therefore, video game addiction could be regarded as online video game addiction and offline video game addiction. Online and offline video game addictions differ from one another with respect to the digital platform they are played in. The differences between these concepts can be seen not only in the symptoms of video game addiction but also in psychological outcomes. It is seen that from time to time, gamers play games using the two platforms. In this respect, the question of whether online video game addiction also has a relationship with Internet use or Internet addiction comes into the mind. Although online and offline video game addictions are similar in many respects, online video game addiction is different since there is a need for Internet connection to play the game.

3. Internet addiction and its relationships with video game addiction and other behavioral addictions

Interaction of Internet or video game addiction with other behavioral addictions is important not only for the identification of causes of Internet or video game addictions but also for its

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