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Investigation of Problematic Internet Usage of University Students With Psychosocial Levels at Different Levels

Mehmet EROĞLU[a]*, Mustafa PAMUK[b], Kübra PAMUK[c]

[a]Firat University, Faculty of Education, "Elazığ", Turkey
[b]Firat University, Faculty of Education, "Elazığ", Turkey
[c] Anadolu İmam Hatip High School" "Elazığ", Turkey

Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyse problematic internet usage of university students according to pyscho-social features (loneliness and shyness) and gender. Survey model is used for this research. To collect data; personel information form, problematic internet usage scale, UCLA-loneliness scale and shyness scale were applied for 601 students who are from different Departments of Faculty of Education at Fırat University. To analyse these data correlation, t test, one way variance (ANOVA) analysis and Scheffe test were used. Results revealed that problematic internet usage was significantly associated with loneliness (r=.35) and shyness (r=.31). Furthermore, there were significant differences between problematic internet usage and independent variables (gender, loneliness and shyness). The results of the study were discussed together with the results of different studies and suggestions were made.

Keywords: Problematic internet usage, loneliness, shyness.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +90 424 237 00 00 / 4927
[a]E-mail address: mehmeteroglu@firat.edu.tr
*[b]E-mail address:*mustafapamuk@firat.edu.tr
*[c]E-mail address:*konyali_mustafa@hotmail.com

1. Introduction

Today which is called technology era, it is a reality that technology makes our lives easier. Internet comes first among these technologies which makes our life easier. Besides providing easy access to information, internet offers online shopping, online banking and communication by social networks. While providing these facilities, it has some risk factors which can effect our lives in negative ways. The most important of them is the problematic usage of internet as a risk of human life.

Beard and Wolf (2001) defined problematic internet usage (PIU) as use of the internet that creates psychological, social, school, and/or work difficulties in a person's life. PIU is a multidimensional syndrome consisting of cognitive and behavioural symptoms that result in negative social, academic, or professional consequences (Caplan 2002, 2003; Davis, 2001; Davis, Flett, & Besser 2002; Morahan, Martin & Schumacher, 2003, cited in Caplan, 2005). According to Young (1996) problematic internet users who spare little time for real people in life prefer to spend time alone on computer. The definition of problematic internet usage focuses on variations in one's life.

A variable which studied with problematic internet usage is loneliness. Loneliness is generally defined as being physically alone in a society. A person can feel the loneliness despite being with others. Thus, the reason of loneliness is because of insufficient social relationships and satisfaction taken from these relationships (Buluş, 2007). Engelberg and Sjoberg (2004) have found that there is a positive relationship between internet addiction and loneliness and negative relationship between social episodes and internet addiction. Nalwa and Anand (2003) has found that addicted internet users are much more lonely comparing non addicted ones. Whang, Lee and Chang (2003) reported that Internet addiction group had higher degree of loneliness and depressed mood compared with the non-addicts group. In a different study, Deniz and Tutgun (2010) found that there is a correlation between loneliness levels and problematic internet usage of prospective teachers studying at education faculties.

Another variable which studied with problematic internet usage is shyness. Definition of Melchoir and Cheek (1990) is that shyness is an anxious preoccupation of the self in response to real or imagined social interaction and is associated with heightened self-consciousness during self-presentation and evaluation situations. Yuen, Lavin, Weinman and Kozak (2004) applied online questionnaire to assess Internet dependency and shyness. The results demonstrated the predicted interaction such that shyness level for nondependents did not differ online or in face-to-face (FTF) interactions. However, dependents' shyness was greater in FTF interactions relative to online interpersonal exchanges. The research Yang and Tung (2007) applied in Thaiwan shows that students with personalities characterized by dependence, shyness, depression and low self-esteem are more likely to become addicted than students without these characteristics.

Aim of study

The aim of this study is to examine problematic internet usage of university students at the age of 16-24, which are the most common internet users' age range in Turkey (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2012) , according to pyscho-social features (loneliness and shyness) and gender.

2. Method
2.1. Sample
The sample group of this study is 601 students from different Departments of Faculty of Education at Firat University. 328 (%54,6) of the students are female, 273 (%45,4) of them are male, average age of students is 22,35 (Sd:1,07).