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Psychological Dimensions of Computer/Internet Addiction in Adolescents in Turkey

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Abstract

Measures to be taken for a healthy society involve elimination of the negative effects that affect the health of individuals. Adolescents adversely affecting the health of the community form a part of various studies on Internet addiction. The Internet, which has emerged to increase communication and to reach information more easily, has brought both psychological and physical problems, together with the rapid increase in usage. Mental concerns seem to be the main focus of these problems. Psychological problems such as lack of self-esteem, social anxiety levels and high aggressive behaviours can be seen.

Keywords: Dependency, Internet dependency, computer dependency, psychologic, mental.

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1.Introduction

The Internet is a communication tool that enables individuals to reach information in a very short time, very quickly and communicate with each other [1]. The rapid development of computer and Internet technology not only facilitates our everyday life but also leads to some negative consequences. It is seen that issues such as addiction [2], problematic use [3] and pathological use [4] are prevalent when overuse of computers is made [2]. Internet is a term formed by combining the words Inter (national) and Net (work), as in 'international network' or 'general network', according to the Turkish Language Institute.

In the Household Use of Information Technologies survey conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TSI), comprising participants aged 16–74, it was determined that the age group in which the rate of computer and Internet usage is the highest is 16–24. Based on the education level, it was found that those who use the computer and Internet more commonly are those with higher education, the faculty and higher education TSI graduates. Similar to these statistics, research findings show that the use of computers and Internet among adolescents is very common [4]. In 2015, 49% of them were active Internet users, 52% of them had active social media accounts and 80% of them had reached mobile social networking accounts (Global Web Index, 2015). However, according to the data of 2016, it is reported that there are 2,307 billion active social media users in the world, and 85% of this number accesses the social media via mobile devices. The same report shows that 58% of the total population is based on the year 2016 of our country, and 42 million of Internet users are actively involved in the social media. 85% of these users have reached social media from mobile devices. Research has shown that 66.7% of these children are not monitored for Internet use. In addition to this, 61.6% and 59.8% of them did not read their books, the Internet usage was controlled and the children who used Internet for educational purposes had high reading habits; in other words, children who did not use the Internet had a problem [5].

Adolescence is a period of rapid and continuous development; it is a transition from childhood to adulthood, where biological, psychological, mental and social development and maturation take place. The rapid progress in Internet technology has created a very large area for young people. So much so that they use these new technological means of making and maintaining new friends, creating social relations and norms [6]. Today, technological tools such as televisions and computers enter children's bedrooms. Despite the numerous adverse effects of TV and the Internet, the vast majority of young people aged 8–18 now spend about 6.5 hours/day in front of these technological tools after school (İnan 2015). However, there are some mental problems caused by using these technological tools so intensely. There are many studies investigating the relationship between adolescent problematic Internet use and demographic variables, Internet use behaviours and mental health variables [4]. According to Young [3], who first defined computer and Internet addiction, computer and Internet dependence reveals familial problems, school, job success declines and relational problems. In Young's study, it was found that relational problems of the addicts were present and that they spent very little time with people in their surroundings. Excessive time spent on the computer can cause harmful social relationships, interruptions in school/business life and the transition of dependency to action. At the same time, psychologically aggressive behaviour, personality changes, hyperactivity and high anxiety level, psychomotor disorders, health problems, antisocial behaviours, loss of free thought and desire/tendency, deterioration of interpersonal relations and avoidance of relationships, immature human relationships are emerging [7].

Risk factors of the health problems caused by the use of the computer is physical, environmental and spiritual, in three dimensions [8]. Other current research shows that such common mass media as television and Internet affect children and teens physically, psychosocially, morally and cognitively (İnan 2015). When we examine the research on the psychological symptoms of adolescents with Internet addiction, those with problematic Internet use are aware of their behaviour but cannot take themselves away from using the computer continuously. When these people cannot reach the computer, it is reported that they experience deprivation issues such as nervousness and anxiety.

68.1% of adolescents had a moderate level of loneliness,while 31.9% had low level of loneliness and 45.49 ± 8.03 was the loneliness score (medium). It was determined that 66% of Internet addiction levels were moderate, 17% was low, 17% was high level and the Internet addiction point average was 90.21 ± 27.89 (moderate). It was also found that adolescents between the ages of 13 and 15 had a higher mean loneliness score ($p < 0.05$) than those who were not satisfied with friendship relations and those without close friends [3, 5]. Again, a positive and moderate bilateral relationship between virtual bullying and somatisation, obsessive compulsive disorder, interpersonal susceptibility, depression, anxiety, anger and hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid thoughts, psychotism is observed [9]. Many studies have found that use of the Internet causes consequences such as isolation of the individual from the outside world, feeling of loneliness and depression [3].

In addition to measuring Internet addiction in research, a more problematic Internet use by high-risk groups is its effects on the personality [2]. There is need for more in-depth research into the mental effects of computer/Internet addiction.

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