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

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

aFırat University, Faculty of Education, “Elazığ”, Turkey
bFırat University, Faculty of Education, “Elazığ”, Turkey
cAnadolu İmam Hatip High School “ Elazığ”, Turkey

Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyse problematic internet usage of university students according to psycho-social features (loneliness and shyness) and gender. Survey model is used for this research. To collect data; personal 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.
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 psycho-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).
2.2. Instruments

Problematic Internet Usage Scale (PIUS): The PIUS was developed by Ceyhan, Ceyhan and Gürcan (2007) with the assumption that the severity of Internet use shows continuity from normal to pathological use. The PIUS consists of 33 items rated on a five point scale. The high scores on the scale indicate that an individual’s Internet usage is too unhealthy in that it may affect his or her life negatively and it may increase the tendency to addiction. According to the validity and reliability studies, the PIUS is a valid and reliable instrument which can be used to measure university students’ problematic computing behaviour (Ceyhan, Ceyhan & Gürcan, 2007). In the present study, the internal consistency coefficient of the scale was computed as .91.

UCLA Loneliness Scale (UCLA-LS): UCLA Loneliness Scale was developed by Russell, Peplau and Cutrona (1980); the validity and reliability of its adapted version is tested by Demir (1989). The scale measures the overall feelings of loneliness in individuals through a self-report Likert-type scale comprised of 20 items. 10 of these items are positive statements and the rest are negative statements. The scale reports range from 20 to 80 where higher scores mean a higher degree of feelings of loneliness. Reliability of the scale is reported as .96. In the present study, the internal consistency coefficient of the scale was computed as .85.

Shyness Scale (SS): The SS used in the study was developed by Cheek (1983) as a revision of the original shyness scale developed by Cheek and Buss (1981). It measures the inhibition and discomfort that people experience in the presence of others. The scale contains 13 items, each of which consists of five response options in a Likert-type format and anchored by ‘‘very uncharacteristic or untrue, strongly disagree’’ and ‘‘very characteristic or true, strongly agree.’’ The Cronbach alpha reported for the revised scale was .90. Shyness scores on the revised scale were also correlated substantially (r= .68) with the aggregated ratings of subjects’ shyness as provided by three to five close friends and family members (Leary, 1991). The scale was translated into Turkish, and reliability and validity studies of the scale were carried out with a Turkish sample of 300 university students (Gungor, 2001). The result of the construct validity study, using principal component analysis with varimax rotation, showed that the scale had one identifiable dimension. After this study, a new form of the scale consisted of 20 items. The result of the reliability study showed that the test-retest correlation coefficient was .83. Gungor (2001) reported internal consistency reliability for the scale as .91. In the present study, the internal consistency coefficient of the scale was computed as .89.

2.3. Procedure

Survey model is used for this research and to collect data; personal information form, PIUS, UCLA-LS and SS were applied to students from different Departments of Faculty of Education at Firat University. UCLA-LS and SS were categorised by using mean and standard deviation as low, middle and high. Correlation test, t test and one way variance (ANOVA) were used in this study. Furthermore, to find out the differences among groups, Scheffe test was used.

3. Findings

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, correlations, and alpha reliabilities for variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.PIU</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.UCLA-LS</td>
<td>.35*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. SS</td>
<td>.31*</td>
<td>.50*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standart Deviation</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.01

As seen in Table-1, the results indicated that there is a positive relationship between problematic internet usage and loneliness (r=.35). It has been found that there is a positive relationship between problematic internet usage and shyness (r=.31). Furthermore there is a positive relationship between loneliness and shyness (r=.50).
Table 2. Means, standard deviations and t values of problematic internet usage of university students according to gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Female (n=328)</th>
<th>Male (n=273)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PIU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Sd</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Sd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05

Table 2 show that there is a significant difference between males and females in relation to problematic internet usage (t(599) = -3.249; p<.05). When these results analysed, it is seen that problematic internet usage of males (X = 73.8, Sd = 20.1) is higher than the females (X = 68.4, Sd = 20.9).

Table 3. Means, standard deviations and F values of problematic internet usage of university students according to levels of loneliness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Loneliness</th>
<th>Low (n=113)</th>
<th>Middle (n=380)</th>
<th>High (n=108)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PIU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Sd</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Sd</td>
<td>19.582</td>
<td>H&gt;M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>H&gt;L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05

As seen in Table-3, the result showed that significant difference was found between problematic internet usage and levels of loneliness (F(2,598) = 19.582; p<.05). Scheffe test was performed to determine the groups which caused difference. The results showed that problematic internet usage is higher for the student who feel lonely in high level when it is compared with middle and low levels. Furthermore, problematic internet usage is higher for students who feel lonely in the middle level than who feel in the low level.

Table 4. Means, standard deviations and F values of problematic internet usage of university students according to levels of shyness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Shyness</th>
<th>Low (n=103)</th>
<th>Middle (n=401)</th>
<th>High (n=97)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PIU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Sd</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Sd</td>
<td>10.713</td>
<td>H&gt;M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>H&gt;L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05

As seen in Table-4, the result showed that significant difference was found between problematic internet usage and levels of shyness (F(2,598) = 10.713; p<.05). Scheffe test was performed to determine the groups which caused difference. The results showed that problematic internet usage is higher for he student who is shy in high level when it is compared with middle and low levels. Furthermore, problematic internet usage is higher for students who is shy in the middle level than who is in the low level.

4. Results and discussion

This study examined the relationship between problematic internet usage and pyscho-social features (loneliness and shyness). Furthermore, problematic internet usage was examined according to independent variables (gender, levels of loneliness and shyness).

When the problematic internet usage was examined according to gender, there was a significant difference between males and females in relation to problematic internet usage (t(599) = -3.249; p<.05). When this result was analysed, problematic internet usage of males (X = 73.8, Sd = 20.1) was higher than the females (X = 68.4, Sd = 20.9).
Sd=20.9). This finding is consistent with the finding in literature (Bakken, Wenzel, Götestam, Johansson & Ören, 2009; Balta & Horzum, 2008; Bulut-Serin, 2011; Choi, 2001; Li & Chung, 2006; Odaci & Kalkan, 2010; Tahiroglu, Celic, Uzel, Ozcan & Avci, 2008). The reason of higher problematic internet usage of males can be considered as effect of culture. Male in Turkey can access internet easier than female in Turkey. Some other studies show that there are no significant difference between male and female users (Ceyhan, 2010; Hall & Parsons, 2001; Ferraro, Caci, D’Amico & Blasi, 2007; Subrahmanyam K & Lin G., 2007). In another study, Dogan, Isiklar and Erolgu (2008) found that the level of problematic internet usage of females were higher than males.

When the relationship between problematic internet usage and loneliness of university students was examined, it was found that there was positive moderately relationship (r=.35). Besides when the problematic internet usage is examined according to levels of loneliness, it was found that there was significant difference (F(2-598)=19,582; p<.05). According to this significant difference it was found that problematic internet usage was higher for the student who felt lonely in high level when it was compared with middle and low levels. Furthermore problematic internet usage is higher for students who feel lonely in the middle level than who feel in the low level. One hand these findings are consistent with the findings other studies in literature. (Batoglu & Hasta, 2010; Bozooglan, Demirer & Sahin, 2013; Caplan, 2007; Engelberg, & Sjoberg, 2004; Esen, 2010; Moody, 2001; Nalwa & Anand, 2003; Odaci & Kalkan, 2010; Ozcan & Buzlu, 2007; Wang, Lee & Chang, 2003). On the other hand some studies’ results are not consistent with the results obtained from this research. (Dittman, 2004; Subrahmanyam & Lin, 2007). According to these results, it was mentioned that as the level of feeling loneliness gets higher, problematic internet usage gets higher too and there were positive significant relation between loneliness and problematic internet usage. The reason of relationship between loneliness and problematic internet usage can be thought as a result of accepting people of internet without any condition. Furthermore, spending time on the internet limits the time for face to face relationship with other people. This situation causes low social interaction and loneliness in society. According to Moody (2001), although internet is used as communication tool, it affects people’s social being in negative way.

When the relationship between problematic internet usage and shyness of university students was examined, it was found that there was positive moderately relationship (r=.31). When the problematic internet usage is examined according to levels of shyness, it was found that there was a significant difference (F(2-598)=10,713; p<.05). According to this significant difference it was found that problematic internet usage was higher for the students who were shy in high level when it was compared with middle and low levels. Furthermore problematic internet usage was higher for students who were shy in the middle level than who were in the low level. These findings are consistent with the findings other studies in literature (Caplan, 2002; Chak & Leung, 2004; Ebeling-Witte, Frank & Lester, 2007; Yang & Tung; 2007; Yuen et al., 2004). Internet may be so attractive for shy individuals because they disguise their identities easily and live less anxiety in internet. This situation may increase the possibility that those individuals may isolate from the social life.

An increase in problematic internet usage due to the increase in loneliness and shyness level, which influence interrelationship among individuals negatively, is a notable finding of this study. In accordance with these findings, individual or group counselling can be provided for students to improve their interpersonal capabilities. Also, Implementation of social skills education may be effective in reducing loneliness and shyness. Furthermore, these programs may have indirect effect in prevention of problematic internet usage.

References


T.C. Başbakanlık Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu. Haber Bülteni, 16 Ağustos 2012; Sayı:10880.


