

Prediction Of Problematic Internet Use By Attachment In University Students

Hatice Irem Ozteke Kozan¹, Sahin Kesici¹, Cagla Girgin Buyukbayraktar², S. Barbaros Yalcin¹

¹School of Education, Necmettin Erbakan University, Konya, Turkey

²College of Applied Science, Selcuk University, Beysehir-Konya, Turkey

Correspondence: Hatice Irem Ozteke Kozan, School of Education, Necmettin Erbakan University, Konya, Turkey.

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Abstract

Aim of this research is to examine the predictive power of attachment style on problematic internet use among university students. Participants of study consist of 481 university students (230 girls). Results indicate that there is a negative correlation between secure attachment style and social benefit/social comfort and there is a positive correlation between preoccupied attachment style and social benefit/social comfort which is a sub-dimension of problematic internet use. Considering predictive power of attachment on problematic internet use, results show that preoccupied, secure and dismissing attachment styles are significant predictors of social benefit/social comfort. Results and comments for the future studies on problematic internet use and attachment were discussed in general.

Keywords: attachment, problematic internet use, university students

1. Introduction

One of the main notions in understanding close relationships is the attachment theory (Hazan & Shaver, 1994) which makes a reference to seek proximity with a specific figure in certain situations (Bowlby, 1969, 1982). In this theory, when individuals feel distressed they seek proximity to their attachment figure. If the attachment figure is available, the resulting contact alleviates distress (Selcuk, Zayas, Gunaydin, Hazan, & Kross, 2012). The attachment system seems to have evolved to protect infants from danger by keeping them close to the mother figure (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). In their model, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) proposed four attachment styles in adult attachment: The first one is secure attachment style which refers to a sense of worthiness. The second is preoccupied attachment which refers to unworthiness of the self and/or less positive view about themselves while they have a positive evaluations of others. The third one is fearful attachment which can be defined as the untrustworthy expectations about others. Lastly, rejecting and dismissing attachment style which is described as maintaining a sense of independence instead of developing close relationships.

The bond between child and parents has an everlasting effect in the adulthood and shapes their future behaviors. In adulthood and adolescence, the attachment behavior is directed to other people and groups (Bowlby, 1969, 1982). In that point, it may be assumed that attachment has a significant influence on people's social life. Attachment has been studied with various variables in the literature such as depression (e.g. Feeney, Alexander, Noller, & Hohaus, 2003; Wei, Shaffer, Young, & Zakalik, 2005), perfectionism (e.g. Rice & Mirzadeh, 2000; Ozteke & Kesici, 2015; Wei, Mallinckrodt, Russell, & Abraham, 2004) and relationship satisfaction (e.g. Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Kachadourian, Fincham, & Davila, 2004). Problematic internet use has also been studied with attachment in the literature usually in recent years (e.g. Lei & Wu, 2007; Schimmenti, Guglielmucci, Barbasio, & Granieri, 2012; Schimmenti, Passanisi, Gervasi, Manzella, Fama, 2014).

For decades, internet has become a crucial factor on the social life of people as a consequence of rapid developments and changes in the world (Orchard & Fullwood, 2009). This also brings many requirements for psychological adjustments in the lifestyle of people. Problematic internet use is defined as a use of internet that causes problems and difficulties in social, psychological and business life by Beard and Wolf (2001). Similar explanation for problematic internet use were made by Shapira, Goldsmith, Keck, Khosla and McElroy (2000) as one's inability of control his or her internet use and which causes impairments on his daily functions. Problematic internet use has been studied with several subjects in psychology such as career indecision (e.g. Lehman & Knstam, 2010), risk-taking behavior (e.g.

Odaci, 2013), shyness (e.g. Ebeling-Witte, Frank, & Lester, 2007; Odaci & Celik, 2013), social anxiety (e.g. Caplan, 2007), aggression (e.g. Odaci & Celik, 2013), personality traits (e.g. Orchard & Fulwood, 2010; Ozturk & Ozmen, 2011) as well as studies on attachment (e.g. Odaci & Cikrikci, 2014; Schimetti et al., 2012; Shin, Kim, Jang, 2011). These researches present how attachment and other notions, which are mentioned above, in psychology have an impact on problematic internet use. In this point, the impact of attachment cannot be ignored on problematic internet use. From this perspective, the aim of this study is to examine the associations and predictive power of attachment on problematic internet use.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

In Turkey, 481 (230 women) university students participated to this study. After receiving approval from the Faculty Review Board, Data were collected from the voluntary students at Necmettin Erbakan University.

2.2 Instruments

2.2.1 The Problematic Internet Use Scale (PIUS):

The Problematic Internet Use Scale is comprised of 33 items which was developed by Ceyhan, Ceyhan, and Gurcan (2007). The scale consists of three subscales named as negative results of the internet, social benefit/social comfort and overuse. In the scale high points refers to unhealthy internet use and internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found as 0.94 (Ceyhan et al., 2007).

2.2.2 Relationships Scale Questionnaire

RSQ was developed by Griffin & Bartholomew (1994) and Turkish adaptation was made by Sumer & Gungor (1999). Scale comprise of 17 items and aim to measure four attachment styles as –secure, preoccupied-fearful and dismissing-. Items are assessed on a Likert type scale ranging from 1 to 7.

2.3 Data Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was used to reveal the relationship between attachment styles and problematic internet use. Then with stepwise regression analysis, the predictive power of attachment styles on problematic internet use was propounded.

3. Results

Correlation analysis results indicate that secure attachment style is negatively correlated with social benefit/social comfort in a significant level (-.09, $p < .05$). There is a positive and significant correlation between preoccupied attachment style and social benefit/social comfort (.11, $p < .05$).

Table 1. Correlation Analysis of Attachment Styles and Problematic Internet Use

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Attachment Style							
1.Fearful	1	.16**	-.39**	-.05	.05	.06	.07
2.Dismissing		1	.09*	.22**	-.04	-.07	.00
3.Secure			1	.07	-.08	-.09*	-.06
4. Preoccupied				1	.07	.11*	.06
Problematic Internet Use							
5.Overuse					1	.58**	.65**
6.Social benefit/social comfort						1	.77**
7.Negative results of internet							1

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Stepwise regression analysis revealed that attachment styles are a significant predictor of problematic internet use in university student sample. Results indicate that, preoccupied attachment style predicts 11% of the variance in social benefit/ social comfort. This attachment style predicts 19% of the variance in same variable with secure attachment. With secure and dismissing attachment styles preoccupied attachment explains 26% of the variance in social benefit/ social comfort in university student sample.

Table 2. Stepwise Regression Analysis Predicting Problematic Internet Use

Model	R	R ²	R {Adj}	S.E.	F	P
A	.113	.013	.011	7.31617	6.163	.01
B	.152	.023	.019	7.28475	5.679	.00
C	.179	.032	.026	7.25992	5.237	.00

A: Preoccupied

B: Preoccupied, Secure

C: Preoccupied, secure, Dismissing

4. Discussion

The current study demonstrates the associations between attachment styles and problematic internet use in university sample. Correlation analysis indicates that, while there is a negative relationship between secure attachment style and problematic internet use- contrary to the findings of Odaci and Cikrikci (2014) which they report there was no significant relations between these variables- there reveals a positive relationship between preoccupied attachment style and problematic internet use which is similar to study of Odaci and Cikrikci (2014). Also, in their study they also found that dismissing attachment style is a significant predictor of problematic internet use which has some similarities with this current study. In this study preoccupied, secure and dismissing attachment styles are significant predictors of problematic internet use. In another study which examines Facebook use from attachment perspective, Oldmeadow, Quinn and Kowert (2012) discovered that people with high attachment anxiety used Facebook more, which supports current study findings. Senormanci, Senormanci, Guclu and Korkan (2014) revealed that patients with internet addiction have more anxious attachment styles and this is another study which is similar to our findings. Shin et al. (2011) reported that both avoidant and anxious attachment style explain problematic internet use. Schimmenti et al. (2014) found that individuals higher in problematic internet use scores also were discovered to be higher in attachment insecurity scores in their study. Lei and Wu (2007) found that positive relationships such as trust and acceptance are important predictors of internet use of adolescents.

The current study findings have similar results with the researches which were held before in the literature. As a recommendation for future studies, problematic internet use and attachment would be studied with different variables. In clinical samples, more studies would be conducted considering attachment insecurity and internet related psychological problems. Attachment-based approaches would be included in counselors' and psychologists' sessions in preventing internet addiction and problematic use of internet.

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Notes

Note 1. This study has been presented in “World Conference on Psychology Sciences” in Las Vegas, USA on July 13-14 2014 as an oral presentation.

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