JLSB Journal of Life Science and Biomedicine

J. Life Sci. Biomed. 4(1): 9-14, 2014

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ISSN 2251-9939



Parenting Style and Internet Addiction

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ABSTRACT: The study was done to examine the effects of parenting style on the Problematic Internet Use/Internet/Internet Addiction. 379 university students were selected by multi-phase clustery sampling method. Problematic Internet Use Questionnaire and Schaefer Parenting Style as the measures and ANOVA as the statistical method were used. In the examined parenting styles, the Permissive and Authoritative styles had the least and the Authoritarian style had the most effect on Problematic Internet Use. Impact of Kindness was negative whereas of Control was neutral. So people from warm family were unlikely addicted to internet and kindness was a preventive factor for Problematic Internet Use.

Key Words: Parenting style, Cyberspace, Problematic Internet Use, Internet Addiction

ORIGINAL ARTICLE
Received 12 Sep. 2013
Accepted 04 Nov. 2013

INTRODUCTION

The virtual experiences in the Internet Cyberspace have expanded in the real daily life, especially among adolescents and young adults. The usage, speed, interactivity, and access to internet over the past decade have a tremendous increase. Estimation of the number of online people indicates that approximately 729 million people have online access around the world. Despite the benefits due this increase, there is a potential for leading to pathological/ problematic negative consequences of excessive internet use, as well as symptoms that can mirror an addiction [1].

So in the field of psychology, and particularly psychopathology, Cyber psychology as an interdisciplinary field studying the multiple dimensions (social, psychological, pedagogical, political, technical, cultural, artistic & etc.) of the internet access and related information and communication technologies has been growing rapidly. So, Cyber psychology is a new subfield of psychology discipline and is the main core of the scientific investigation of Internet Related Psychological Problems.

Any inability to control the internet use that causes to distress and dysfunctions in daily life is referred as Problematic Internet Use [2]. In the view of many researchers and scientists of the field, this is categorized in the impulse control disorder [2, 3, and 4]. Recently, "Problematic Internet Use" and other similar general forms are called by researchers as "Internet Addiction" [5]. Dr. Ivan Goldberg that originally proposed the term "Internet Addiction", assumed it as a parody of an actual disorder [6]. Goldberg defined this term as pathological compulsive use of the internet. Other theorist and researcher in this area, Griffiths, defined spending more than 40 hours per week on the Internet as a symptom of addiction [7]. Although some researchers propose that terms such as "excessive", "problematic", or "maladaptive" patterns of internet use should be used instead of the word "addiction" to refer to this construct [4].

Griffiths categorizes internet addiction as a subset of a behavioral addiction and considers the core features of an addiction for that. These are such features like salience, mood modification, tolerance (increasing amounts of time on the internet to achieve satisfaction), withdrawal, conflict, and relapse [7].which the major symptoms seem to include tolerance, compulsive use and withdrawal, and consequent problems with family, friends, loved ones, as well as problems at work or school [5].

Davis has splatted "Internet Addiction" into two categories:

- 1. " Specific Pathological Internet Use (SPIU) »: using the internet to heighten a preexisting addiction like gambling or pornography.
- 2. " Generalized Pathological Internet Use (GPIU) »: using the internet in a general way, like browsing or chatting, usually associated with the social aspects of the internet [8].

Phenomenological, there appear to be at least three subtypes: excessive gaming, sexual preoccupations (cybersex), and e-mail/text messaging [9].

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Because of the growing rate of use of the internet in recent years, it is becoming increasingly difficult to estimate the prevalence rate of internet addiction [10]. A more recent review of the literature on internet addiction found the overall prevalence to be around 0.3% to 38% [11]. This wide prevalence range emphasizes the need to create a universal definition of internet addiction as well as an assessment that can be used across studies to get a more accurate picture of the prevalence of this phenomenon [12]. On the e other hand, researchers have recently highlighted the need to examine more global parenting concepts such as parenting styles to advance understanding of parental influence upon psychosocial development [13,15].

During the developmental period of adolescence, supervision of parents can play an important role in managing the adolescence leisure activities to avoid the Internet addiction. Parents can alter maladaptive behaviors of adolescents; monitoring can play a central role in family management [15].

The family structure and parental monitoring play an important role in predicting Internet addiction. Lin investigated the effects of parental monitoring and leisure boredom on Internet addiction. Their results showed that parental monitoring, family and outdoor activities had significantly negative effects on Internet addiction [15]. Parenting style is a constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child, reflects a global set of parenting attitudes and values that are transmitted to the child across a variety of commutative settings and contexts and create an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviors are expressed [16].

In light of the overwhelming changes in the broader cultural and social environment, the influence of parenting and parenting style may hold great potential for ensuring the healthy psychosocial development of children [17]. There are not so many categorization of parenting styles. One of the best known theories of them is the three-typology (tripartite) model of parenting style which was developed by Diana Baumrind [18]. Her theory is based on two central parental orthogonal dimensions of warmth and strictness which is determined in details like this [16, 19, and 20]:

- 1. Acceptance and Responsiveness (warmth): the extent to which parent's foster individuality and self-regulation, are supportive, and responsive to their children's needs.
- 2. Control and Demandingness (strictness): claims parents make on their children to become integrated into the family, and includes control, supervision, and a willingness to confront children.

So Baumrind broadly created three parenting styles:

- 1. Authoritative Parents so called 'assertive democratic' or 'balanced': who
- Are both demanding and responsive. They provide rules and guidance without being overbearing.
- 2. Authoritarian Parents: who are demanding but less or not responsive. They tell their children exactly what to do.
 - 3. Permissive or Nondirective Parents, so called "indulgent»: who are

Responsive but less or not demanding. They allow their children to do whatever they wish.

Baumrind's initial tripartite model divided the original "permissive" category in two, differentiating theoretically between neglectful and indulgent according to degree of responsiveness, in the same way as the distinction is drawn between authoritarian and authoritative according to degree of demandingness [21].

This theory was later extended to the four-typology (quadripartite) model of parenting style that includes the 4th parenting style:

4. Rejecting- negligent Parents: who are neither demanding nor responsive? They disregard the children, and focusing on other interests [22].

With authoritative and permissive parenting on opposite sides of the spectrum, most conventional and modern models of parenting fall somewhere in between [12]. Recently in his investigation for the effective factors on a child's well-being and intrinsic motivation to engage in various behaviors, Grolnick suggested three concepts of parenting style: autonomy support versus control, structure, and involvement [23].

The reader must be noted that although parenting style is in contrast to parenting practices or behaviors which reflect parents' domain- or context-specific interactions with their children [16] but this contrast is not complete because parenting styles are partly expressed through more specific practices. Hence, parenting styles can be understood as general approaches across domains, whereas parenting practices—a sub dimension of parenting styles—are specific techniques reflecting parents' goals for their children in a certain context. Given this distinction, parenting styles are assumed to have a relatively indirect influence on children's behaviors, whereas parenting practices have a direct influence on children's behaviors in specific contexts.

As a findings literature, a great deal of research on Problematic Internet Use shows that overuse of the internet and problematic/pathological internet use or the internet addiction have a significant relationship with such factors as loneliness, low self-esteem [24], depression [25], the symptoms of antisocial tendencies and external control [5], psychological symptoms [25], shyness [26], social disinhibit ion, low social support and pleasure with the internet [27, 28]

Additionally, scores from the parenting style measure were calculated such that higher scores were reflective of higher parental authoritativeness (as perceived by the male youth soccer players).

A number of studies conducted in the USA and other countries not only supported this idea that the authoritative parenting style is always associated with optimum youth outcomes, but also compared to that, a neglectful parenting style, corresponded with children's' poorest performance, (whereas authoritarian and indulgent parenting occupied an intermediate position), school integration, psychological well-being, adaptive

achievement strategies, self-enhancing attributions drug use, and accuracy in perceiving parental values . Those drugs abusers who rated their parents' style as authoritative had significantly lower lifetime consumption and average dose of ecstasy relative to those describing their parents as neglectful. A study done to explore the impact of general parenting style and specific food-related parenting practices on children's dietary habits shows that general parenting style did not show any significant impact on dietary habits, whereas "pressure," "catering on demand/" and "permissiveness" were practices with an unhealthy impact. Relative to those describing their parents as neglectful, participants from authoritarian backgrounds had significantly smaller lifetime consumption of ecstasy and cocaine and significantly smaller average doses of cannabis, ecstasy and cocaine. Research suggests that certain parenting styles are linked with the propensity for substance abuse among adolescents. For example, alcohol abuse was higher among adolescents who perceived low parental control, and the children of authoritative parents were less likely to use illicit substances than those of neglectful parents. A further study found that adolescents who rated their parents more highly on these dimensions had lower tobacco, alcohol and 'other drug' consumption [29].

Compared to non-users, a greater proportion of ecstasy/polypro users characterized their parents' style as neglectful. The modal style endorsed by non-users was authoritative. Findings of research to assess the relationships between perceived parenting styles, shows that parenting style proved to exert a differential effect on adolescents with and without heart disease. Perceived parental acceptance had a more substantial effect on psychological well-being than perceived parental control depressed mood, anxiety and self-esteem in adolescents with heart disease compared with healthy adolescents. Based on the older and later research literature, parenting style is one of the factors in childhood and adolescence that can have a great deal with the life stylish habitual behaviors in the life spends. Also, internet use related behaviors, as pathological or even habitual behaviors, are some of the hard solved problems of the modern aspects of today's life. So this study aims at determining relationship between internet habitual use, so called internet addiction, and adolescents or young adults perceived parental style, to identify any causal or correlative relationship between them [7].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

The participants were 400 university students form which 379 questionnaires were usable (including 257 females with average 23.7 years of age and 122 males with average 22.8 years of age) from Tehran and were selected by multi-phase clustery sampling method.

- **1. Measures:** Participants completed two main questionnaires, Schaefer Parenting Style and Problematic Internet Use Questionnaire (PIUQ).
- **2. Schaefer Parenting Style**: It consists of 77 items with Likert 5-point scale, (completely disagree= 1 to completely agree= 5) (Schaefer, 1965). It measures two components of control and kindness with reliabilities found for Iranian students by the Cronbach's alpha to be 0.73 and 0.82, respectively [30].
- **3. Problematic Internet Use Questionnaire (PIUQ)**: The PIUQ consists of 20items with scores between 20and 100. Higher score corresponds to more problematic internet usage and it may be a signal of such pathology as Internet addiction. Cronbach's alpha was determined for Iranian students as 0.903 and test re-test reliability was significant (r= 0.71, sig=0.001) [32].

RESULTS

Table 1 displays means and standard deviations of the Problematic Internet Use (PIU) in different groups of Parent-Styles (PS). The ANOVA test indicates that the PIU significantly differs between 4 groups of PS (P=0.009).

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of the Problematic Internet Use in different groups of Parent-Styles†

Parent styles	N	M	SD
Neglectful (LC/LK)	25	37.56	14.720
Permissive (LC/HK)	113	32.33	12.893
Authoritarian (HC/LK)	17	41.76	13.089
Authoritative (HC/HK)	224	31.67	14.201
Total	379	32.71	13.970
† F=3.91, df=3, 375, P=0.009	· ·	-	-

The Tukey's post-hoc test was carried out to determine significant pairwise differences. Results are presented in table 2 and show that the PIU in 2 groups of Permissive (Low Control/High Kindness) and Authoritative (High Control/High Kindness) is significantly differs from PIU in Authoritarian (High Control/Low Kindness) group. The other pairwise comparisons show no significant difference between groups.

Since Permissive and Authoritative groups have the lowest PIU, while Authoritarian and Neglectful groups have higher PIU mean, it is suggestive to test the effects of Control, Kindness and their interaction in a two-way analysis of variance. The results of the two-way ANOVA are displayed in table 3.

Table 2. Means differences for IU and the Tukey's test for pairwise comparison of the groups

		groups(J)			
Groups (I)		Neglectful	Permissive	Authoritarian	Authoritative
Neglectful	Mean diff. (I-J)		5.233	-4.205	5.886
	sig.(p)		0.318	0.767	0.182
Permissive	Mean diff. (I-J)	-5.233		-9.437*	0.653
	sig.(p)	0.318		0.044	0.977
Authoritarian	Mean diff. (I-J)	4.205	9.437*		10.091*
	sig.(p)	0.767	0.044		0.020
Authoritative	Mean diff. (I-J)	-5.886	-0.653	-10.091*	
	sig.(p)	0.182	0.977	0.020	

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3. Two-way ANOVA tests for the effects of Control, Kindness and their interaction on the Problematic Internet Use

Source		df1	df2	Sig.(P)	η^2
Corrected Model	3.912	3	375	0.009	0.030
Control	0.590	1	375	0.443	0.002
Kindness	10.977	1	375	0.001	0.028
Control * Kindness	1.103	1	375	0.294	0.003

As seen in the table 3, the Kindness significantly affects the Problematic Internet Use (P=0.001<0.05). This shows that the Problematic Internet Use significantly differs between two groups of high kindness and low kindness. On the other hand, the control does not affect the Problematic Internet Use (P=0.443>0.05) which means that there is no significant difference in Problematic Internet Use between those with Low-Control and High-Control. Moreover the effect of interaction between two factors of kindness and control is not significant (P=0.294>0.05).

Consequently, regarding the effect of parent styles on the Problematic Internet Use, the effect of Kindness is significant, while the effect of Control (and its interaction with Kindness) is not. The comparison of means indicates that increasing the kindness in the parent style leads to decreasing Problematic Internet Use.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of parenting styles on the Problematic Internet Use. Research findings indicate that university students' Problematic Internet Use differs significantly with the parenting styles. These results showed that the highest level of Problematic Internet Use (M=41.76) was significantly associated with the authoritarian parents' style. In addition, permissive and authoritative parents' styles were associated with the low levels of Problematic Internet Use (M=32.33 and M=31.67, respectively). The Tucky's post hoc test revealed that the Problematic Internet Use differs significantly between authoritarian and permissive styles as well as between authoritarian and authoritative styles. No other significant difference was found between parenting styles .

These results match with recent research that has shown how authoritative parenting makes a child more receptive to parental influence because the parents do not force their beliefs on their children but instead provide them with reasons and explanations for adopting certain behaviors, actions, and values [31, 32]. These results also support the findings that children of authoritative parents were less likely to use illicit substances, tobacco, alcohol and other drugs than those of neglectful parents [33].

The parenting style is one of the factors in childhood and adolescence that can have a great deal with the life stylish habitual behaviors in the life spans. Indeed, those parents low in kindness while being highly controlling (authoritarian), provided little supportive and appropriate structure. This result is consistent with the findings of [34] and also supports the self-determination theory, which states that in autonomy-supportive families, children are more self-determined and motivated than those in controlling families [12] .

Following the analysis, the parenting styles were considered as the effects of two independent factors of Control and Kindness. Then the Problematic Internet Use was compared between different levels of control and kindness including their interaction. Results show that the effect of different levels of control was not significant on the Problematic Internet Use .

This finding do not seem to be parallel to Lin which showed that parental monitoring had significantly negative effects on Internet addiction. However, there could be various reasons why the present study has revealed such research findings [15]. First of all, the concept of control-freedom, like the other cognitive social concepts, is sensitive to cultures and it differs in different cultures. The Second difference is the mean age of participants. This research was conducted on youth with age mean 23.5 years who were less controllable than those adolescents with age mean 17 in [15]. Finally, several personality factors and individual differences rather than the controlling parents of participants might have played a significant role in the findings .

On the other hand the Problematic Internet Use differed significantly between different levels of parents' kindness. Those high in the kindness style had low level of Problematic Internet Use. Moreover, the interaction of control and kindness styles does not significantly affect the Problematic Internet Use. The results imply that warm

relationship in family decreases the level of Problematic Internet Use, while low kindness in the family structure raise the level of addiction. This is in accordance to findings of that low social support predicts the pathological Internet use .

In families with low kindness and support, children may be motivated to seek another alternative, the Internet. Parents can play an important role in managing the adolescence leisure activities to avoid the Internet addiction. Parents can alter maladaptive behaviors of adolescents; parents can play a central role in family management [16, 23].

Families with low kindness may not provide a pleasant environment that raises the loneliness feeling in adolescents. This causes increasing use of Internet to seek relationship with unfamiliar people. The use of the internet for entertainment and social interaction constitutes an important risk factor for the emergence of the Problematic Internet Use symptoms [5]. Findings of indicate that those addicted to the Internet face financial, interpersonal and family problems and they have more tendency to escape from the realities of life than those with no Internet addiction [5]. Hence theory and research suggest that autonomy-supportive parenting is more beneficial for enhancing children's and adolescent's well-being and intrinsic motivation than controlling parenting. At a situation-specific level, Holt found that parents' verbal reactions during soccer games changed in response to aspects of their children's performances et al. [12, 13].

A combination of parental attachment, individual encouraging and independence in family is one of the crucial elements of the developmental identity [35]. Generically, individuals with healthy developmental identity are more likely from families with warm relationships. Family environment has an essential effect on ability of adolescent problem solving and on his/her developmental identity. Those with healthy identity have fewer tendencies to the Problematic Internet Use while, young adults who have been unable to overcome the identity disorder during their adolescence are likely to use the Internet to do identity experiments [5].

Thus parents should provide a supportive and appropriate structure in family to prevent youth and adolescents from the Internet addiction.

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