Self-Disclosure and Internet Addiction

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ABSTRACT

The aim of study is to investigate the relationship between self-disclosure and internet addiction. Self- Disclosure Scale and Internet Addiction Scale were applied to students. Results indicated a negative correlation between self-disclosure and internet addiction. Self-disclosure was negative predicted by internet addiction in the structural equation model. Fit indices obtained from the structural equation model established to determine the level of clarification of internet addiction by the level of self-disclosure indicates that the model fits well.

Keywords: *Self- Disclosure, Disclosure, Internet Addiction.*

INTRODUCTION

Self- disclosure is a process in which the individual reveals his/ her own emotions, thoughts, beliefs and attitudes (Vogel & Wester, 2003). Emotional self- disclosure can be considered as an oral form of an emotional expression, and this emotional experience is put into words and then transmitted to other people through oral or written channels (Kahn & Garrison, 2009). Self- disclosure lessens prejudices. If the individual expresses his/ her thoughts and emotions, s/he can get more positive evaluations from the opponents and be approached with empathy (Turner, Hewstone & Voci, 2007). One of the determiner motivation factors in terms of emotional sharing may be the individual's personal attitudes, and this is a belief about a specific topic that includes affective and cognitive evaluations (Bergman, 1998). On the other hand, personal attitudes affect the individual's behavior differently depending on the features, status and manners of that individual and they are about certain beliefs in terms of agreeing with certain behaviors that are oriented toward an individual or situation (Horne & Johnson, 2017).

Self- disclosure is important in terms of three areas, namely personality, interpersonal relationships and counselling and psychotherapy. Researches considered self- disclosure as a personal trait, and shed light on the importance of individual differences. It is important in terms of developing, maintaining and resolving relationships as well as treatment of the psychological problems (Dindia & Allen, 1992). Expressing emotions and thoughts have a positive effect on mental health. Studies indicate that self- disclosure lessens depression and anxiety symptoms (Kahn & Garrison, 2009). Self- disclosure increases positive impact, lessens stress symptoms so that it provides benefit in individual and group counselling and psychotherapy process (Kahn, Achter, & Shambaugh, 2001). At the same time, in psychological counselling, the individual's decision of self-disclosure and even entering the seeking help process are regarded as important (Vogel & Wester, 2003).

Gender difference is a significant topic in self- disclosure researches. If men express themselves less than women they will be more prone to psychological problems. Nearly most of the therapy approaches

emphasize the importance of self- disclosure in the treatment of psychological problems. Hence if men express themselves less than women, counselling and psychotherapy could be less effective for men as compared to women. In this regard, gender differences are important in terms of self- disclosure because it may affect woman- man relationship differently (Jourard, 1971).

Self- disclosure desire is related to attachment styles (secure attachment) and personality traits (high self- respect). Indeed, people who attach securely and have high self- respect, have positive attitudes to both themselves and the person that they attach, and also, they value and trust both themselves and the person that they are in relationship. In this context people who attach securely and have high self- respect show more self- disclosure (Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991; Spreecher & Hendrick, 2004; Horne and Johnson, 2017). Self- disclosure is positively related to marital satisfaction (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Rovine, 2005), stable relationship (Marshall, 2008), love and intimacy feelings (Spreecher &Hendrick, 2004) and decreased stress (Ditzen, Hoppmann, & Klumb, 2008).

Lonely individuals are less likely to disclose themselves (Berg and Peplau, 1982). These people have weak social skills, they experience problems in terms of making friends, initiating social activities and participating to groups, and also their self- respect is low (Burger, 1997). Thus, self- enclosed individuals who do not express their feelings tend to have lots of bad habits. One of these bad habits is internet addiction. Researches show that lonely individuals who do not express their feelings use more internet (Morahan-Martin, 1999; Morahan, Martin & Schumacher, 2003). Internet provides an ideal social environment for those people to form an interaction. At the same time, even if it is partially, it can be considered as a means of escape in order to tolerate negative emotions (Morahan, Martin & Schumacher, 2003). As long as the time of internet use increases people, using the internet, communicate with others less in their social life and this leads to social isolation. Studies indicate that people who experience loneliness use internet to provide their loneliness and problematic internet use makes them isolated over time (Pratarelli, Browne & Jhonson, 1999; Davis,2001; Çağır & Gürgan, 2010). On the other hand, self- disclosure improves new friendships, affects communication positively, and decreases loneliness feeling and depression (Wei, Russell & Zakalik, 2005).

Internet Addiction

Internet addiction was regarded under the title of compulsive-impulsive spectrum disorders like alcohol and drug dependence by referring to social and academic researches (Block, 2008). People with internet addiction cannot manage their lives, and they are online users who lose their impulse control. Despite these problems, people with internet addiction cannot give up internet and they put the internet in the first place in their relationships. Young (1998) and Greenfield and Sutker (1999) describe internet addict people as users who spend 40 to 80 hours per week on the internet even sometimes in one sitting spend 20 hours on the internet per day. Researches point out that internet addiction is related to depression, anxiety, loneliness, shyness and low social support (Kutlu, Savcı,Demir & Aysan, 2016).

Young classified internet addiction in three headings. These are playing game, sexual occupation and texting. Playing game on the internet can be discriminated into two categories namely online gambling and online games. Both of them have progressively increased frequency of use. Among young users, online gaming is more common. 24 hours accessibility, the easiness of creating online account, and different kinds of websites from traditional betting to gambling and lottery make online gambling attractive (Petry, 2006). Excessive drive for playing game based on increased satisfaction, and computer game addiction are considered under the skin of negative effects that are caused by playing game (Horzum, Ayas and Balta, 2008). Computer game addiction can be described as user's being not able to get out the game, thinking about the game all the time and continuously being interested in the game (Horzum, 2011). Multiuser online role-playing games are one of the fastest- growing kind of internet addiction among children and youths. In fact, in 2016, online games were spent 99.6 billion dollars and the 37% of this payment was made to mobile games (Newzoo Web Site, 2016). Players can pioneer groups, guilds and wars and they can win a war in virtual world. In fact, many users regard it as an income resource; they fight on behalf of others or they can sell or rent a character to others online. Websites for adults address different kind of sexual domains and constitute the largest part of developed and electronic commerce. For those who were treated from a sexual addiction before, internet may become a different way of actualizing sexual harassment. Similarly, people

with sexual addiction can find a way to maintain their sexual behaviors without going to different kind of clubs. Internet addicted people detect the difference between online and offline feelings. When they are offline they may experience disappointment, anxiety, anger, concern and trouble (Young, 2009). On the other hand, when they are online, they feel themselves as excited, unobstructed, attractive, supported and more desirable. These strong positive emotions strengthen compulsive behaviors (Orzack, 1999, as cited as Young, 2009). Mobile devices, PDAs, smart phones and tablets have internet connection and this leads to problematic mobile phone use among youths and rising generation. (Bianchi and Phillips, 2005). Time spent for texting on the internet, e- mail, and instant messaging services (WhatsApp, snapchat etc.) may weaken social relationships. As long as the time spent for checking e- mail and messages increases the time spent with family and friends decreases (Young, 2009). For all this reason, the aim of study is to investigate the relationship between self-disclosure and internet addiction.

METHOD

Participants

Convenience sampling method was used in the selection of students. Research was conducted on 312 high school students. 312 students, of whom 174 (56 %) were female and 138 (44%) were male.

Measures

Distress Disclosure Index (DDI) developed by Kahn and Hessling (2001) consists of twelve items. DDI is a 5-point rating scale, with the end points labeled "Strongly disagree" and "Strongly agree". Factor loadings for the one-factor model were approximately. Analysis showed that model was well fit (x^2=116.05, sd=50, p=0.00, RMSEA=.063, NFI=.97, NNFI=.97, CFI=.98, IFI=.98, RFI=.95, GFI=.94, and SRMR=.45). Reliability of the Distress Disclosure Index was .86 (Arslan, 2017).

Young's Internet Addiction Test-Short Form Scale (YIAT-SF) developed by Young consists of twelve items (Pawlikowski, Altstötter-Gleich & Brand, 2013). YIAT-SF DDI is a 5-point rating scale, with the end points labeled "Never" and "Always". Factor loadings for the one-factor model were approximately. Analysis showed that model was well fit ($\chi2$=173.58, sd=53, CFI=0.95, SRMR=0.064 ve RMSEA=0.079). Reliability of the Distress Disclosure Index was .85 (Kutlu, Savcı,Demir & Aysan, 2016).

RESULTS

Table 1: Demonstrates the descriptive statistics of the variables used.

Variables	Distress Disclosure Index	Young's Internet Addiction Scale
Distress Disclosure Index	1	
Young's Internet Addiction Scale	-.25**	1
Mean (SD)	35.8(8.8)	27.05 (8.8)

**$p<.01$

Table 1 shows that there is negative significant a relation between the distress disclosure and internet addiction. Correlation coefficient was -.25** for distress disclosure and internet addiction.

Chi-Square=580.40, df=251, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.065
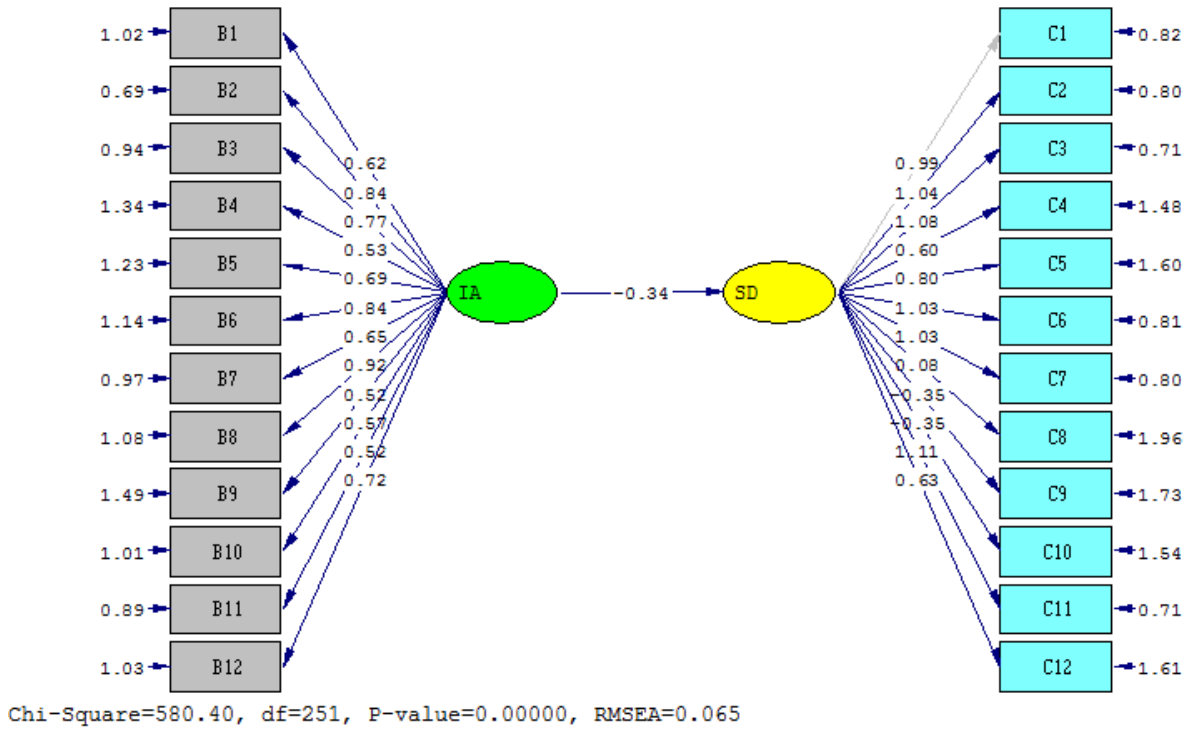
SEM was analyzed to determine whether the Internet addiction predict distress disclosure; χ^2=580.40, df =251, p=0.00, NFI=.90, NNFI=.93, CFI= .94, IFI= .94, SRMR= .063, RMSEA = 0.065. It can be seen that internet addiction has significant effects on self- disclosure.

DISCUSSION

Findings of the present study indicate that there is a negative correlation between self- disclosure level and internet addiction. In other words, as long as students' internet addiction level increases their self-disclosure level decreases. According to the information received from the literature there is no study which investigates to what extent internet addiction affects self- disclosure level. However, studies focused on to what extent individuals disclose themselves on the internet and to what extent they give information about themselves to other people. In addition, there are some studies which examine to what extent shyness and loneliness affect internet addiction and whether or not internet addiction causes loneliness. Researches indicate that individuals who have low self- disclosure level tend to loneliness and shyness and have low self-respect (Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991; Spreecher & Hendrick, 2004; Berg & Peplau, 1982). Self- disclosure increases social self- efficacy level, and decreases loneliness and depression symptoms. Furthermore, self-disclosure improves not only social skills but also interpersonal relationships (Wei, Russell & Zakalik, 2005). Studies show that as long as the loneliness level increases the internet addiction also increases (Morahan-Martin & Schumacher 2003; Pratarelli, Browne & Jhonson, 1999; Davis, 2001; Çağır & Gürgan, 2010; Engelberg and Sjöberg, 2004).

Some studies indicate that there is a positive relationship between internet addiction and shyness; and shyness predicts internet addiction significantly (Chak & Leung, 2004; Ebeling, Frank & Lester, 2007). Studies that examine the relationship between shyness and internet addiction point out that shy people are more prone to be internet addicted, and problematic internet use is related to shyness (Caplan 2002; Chak ve Leung 2004). It is thought that less social skills (Engelberg and Sjöberg 2004, Harman, Hansen, Cochran & Lindsey, 2005) and low self- respect (Niemz, Griffiths & Banyard, 2005; Young and Rodgers, 1998) which are seen among people who use internet more frequently may lead to an increase in shyness. Studies point out that

people can use the internet to decrease loneliness feeling, depression and stress symptoms. Introversion as a personality trait and neuroticism are related to internet addiction positively (Witte, Frank & Lester, 2007).

Internet addiction makes children be isolated from other people and causes antisocial behaviors. Moreover, excessive internet use affects communication negatively and weakens family bonds (Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukopadhyay & Scherlis, 1998; Tsai & Lin, 2003). It was found that excessive internet users are more sensitive to disappointments in their interpersonal relationships. When these people communicate with others their anxiety levels increase. Therefore, these people either less disclose themselves or do not disclose at all to other people (Whang, Lee & Chang, 2003). Such findings in the literature that show the positive relationship between internet addiction and shyness, loneliness and introversion support the results of the current study.

According to the findings of the current study, internet addiction poses a risk for self- disclosure level. In this regard, families and teachers should take precautions for students' internet use. Furthermore, school psychological counsellors should conduct group guidance activities that aim to prevent and intervene internet addiction. In fact, school psychological counsellors may address especially shy and lonely students, and should conduct individual or group psychological guidance activities. In addition, psychological counsellors should help students and families in terms of orienting students to social environments in which they are able to provide their social and emotional need especially at the beginning of adolescence period. Adolescents' spending more time in social environments may decrease their time on the internet.

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