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### **Perceived Parenting Styles as Predictor of Internet Addiction in Adolescence**

**Huseyin Dogan<sup>1</sup>, Hasan Bozgeyikli<sup>2</sup> Canan Bozdas<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Meliksah University, Turkey, hdogan@meliksah.edu.tr

<sup>2</sup>Erciyes University, Turkey, hbozgeyikli@erciyes.edu.tr

<sup>1</sup>Meliksah University, Turkey, cbozdas@meliksah.edu.tr

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## Perceived Parenting Styles as Predictor of Internet Addiction in Adolescence

Huseyin Dogan<sup>\*1</sup>, Hasan Bozgeyikli<sup>2</sup>, Canan Bozdas<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Meliksah University, Turkey, <sup>2</sup>Erciyes University, Turkey

### Abstract

This study examined the perceived parenting styles as predictors of Internet addiction in adolescence. The participants of the study were a total of 419 high school students including 238 girl and 181 boy students whose mean age was 16.5. Personal information form, "Internet Addiction Test" and "Perceived Parenting Style Scale" was used for the collection of research data. In data analysis, techniques of t test, F-test, simple correlation, and regression analysis was utilized. The results revealed that perceived parenting style varies significantly depending on Internet addiction level. Adolescents with partial Internet addiction perceived more democratic their parenting style than non-addictive adolescents; while adolescents with partial symptoms and pathological Internet addicts have perceived their parents more protective-demanding and authoritarian compared to non-addictive adolescents. Moreover, Internet addiction level differs according to gender of adolescence that male adolescents were found to suffer more from problematic Internet addiction than girls. Based on the findings, implication was discussed.

**Key words:** Internet Addiction; Parenting Styles; Adolescence

### Introduction

As it's known, the use of the Internet has increased considerably and brings a great matter about Internet addiction or problematic Internet use in recent years. Problematic Internet Use (PIU) can be defined as a multidimensional construct consisting of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral symptoms associated with excessive Internet usage that results in difficulties with managing everyday life (Caplan, 2002, 2003, 2005; Ceyhan, 2008; Davis, 2001). There are many studies related to different aspects of Internet addiction. Researchers have found that psychological traits such as low self-esteem, shyness (Davis, 2001; Kim, & Davis, 2009; Niemz, Griffiths, & Banyard, 2005), poorly adapted person: introvert (Cao & Su, 2006; Griffiths & Dancaster, 1995; Huang et al., 2010), sadness, anxiety (Huang et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2006; Young, 1998), neuroticism (Cao & Su, 2006; Kim, Namkoong, Ku, & Kim, 2008; Ehrenberg, Juckes, White, & Walsh, 2008), a high sense of loneliness and sadness (Kim & Davis, 2009; Nicpon et al., 2006; Pawlak, 2002), social retreat (Griffiths & Dancaster, 1995), having maladaptive self-regulatory strategy (Spada, Langston, Nikčević, & Moneta, 2008), predisposition to social disinhibition (Niemz, Griffiths, & Banyard, 2005) are all significantly correlated with problematic Internet use.

However, although the effect of psychological traits is demonstrated on studies, little is known about the parenting influence on Internet addiction in adolescence. It is assumed that personality formation during adolescence and other critical transitional periods is profoundly influenced by the dyadic parent-child relationship (Pedersen & Reynolds, 1998); when parenting is dysfunctional, internalization and continuity of parenting values become problematic, and risks of severe psychopathology increase (Ryan & Lynch, 1989). Many concerns in adolescence, such as substance use, maladaptive and dysfunctional risky behavior, precocious sexual intercourse, and Internet addiction have been associated with lower levels of parenting monitoring, lack of discipline in the family, family violence, and/or ineffective parenting style (Park, Kim & Cho, 2008). Several studies have reported that there are links between the quality of parent-child relationship and problematic Internet use. According to Lorente (2002), adolescents need family members' empathy and protection and if parents could not supply these essential requirements, adolescents might try to compensate it by using another ways like: quartering to friends and peers and extending communications with Internet, computer and mobile. Moreover, in the China Youth Internet Addiction Report (CNNIC, 2010), the results showed that a higher percentage of adolescents who were Internet addicts came from a less-educated compared to non addicts, or single-parent family, or were not living with their parents. Internet-addicted adolescents also tend to

\* Corresponding Author: *Huseyin Dogan, hdogan@meliksah.edu.tr*

have less communication with their parents and enjoy family harmony less. It is found that Internet-addicted adolescents were more likely to come from families that imposing stricter discipline on them. The researchers explained that adolescents from these families might see the Internet as a haven to relieve pressure and escape from strict parenting supervision, thus they could easily become addicts (CNNIC, 2010).

The parenting warmth and parenting control are also found as predictor of Internet addiction. Parenting warmth is referred to as responsiveness or support. It is related to positive affiliation, communication regard or unconditional love expressed by the parent toward the child (Zhang, Li, & Li, 2014). Davis (2001) indicated that a lack of parental support was likely to be linked in problematic Internet use by the children. Adolescents who perceive their parents as warmer, loving, nurturing, and non-rejecting are less likely to exhibit negative or problematic psychosocial behaviors (Yu & Gamble, 2010). Another research showed that Internet-addicted adolescents consistently rated parental rearing behaviors as being over-intrusive, punitive, and lacking in responsiveness (Huang et al., 2010). Huang and his colleagues (2010) found that lack of love from the family was associated significantly with Internet addiction. Moreover, Xiuqin and his colleagues (2010) reported that Internet addictive adolescents reported more low emotional warmth, higher rejection, and higher punishment from mothers and perceived their parents as emotionally distant, intrusive, rejecting, and punitive. In contrast, participative and supportive parental monitoring can substantially decrease the probability of adolescents' becoming addicted to the Internet (Lin, Lin & Wu, 2009). In the study of Liu and Kuo (2007), it is revealed from a group of Taiwanese students that healthy parent-child relationships and interpersonal relationships correlated negatively with Internet addiction whereas parent-child conflict was founded as positively associated with Internet addiction (Yen et al., 2007). These studies suggest that parenting styles, which are based on two parameters of parenting warmth and control, are important factors for affecting adolescents' Internet addiction.

According to Baumrid (1991) there are four classical types of parenting styles: authoritarian (high demandingness, low responsiveness), authoritative (high demandingness, high responsiveness), permissive-indulgent (low demandingness, high responsiveness), and neglectful or uninvolved (low demandingness, low responsiveness). These are defined as follows: authoritarian-the expression of both warmth and discipline; authoritative-the display of less warmth, while stern control and discipline are enforced; permissive-the display of indulgence and warmth with no control of behavior; and neglectful-the display of no warmth or control. In one study (Tao et al., 2007), it is pointed out that authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful parenting styles were all likely linked to Internet addiction, while an authoritative parenting style could be effective in preventing adolescents from Internet addiction. Another research conducted by Moazedian and his colleagues (2014) found that parenting style is significantly predictor of problematic Internet use and authoritarian parents' style was associated with problematic Internet use. All these results suggest that less than optimal parenting behaviors can increase the probability of adolescents' problematic Internet use. Thus, the objectives of this study were to evaluate the perceived parenting styles of adolescence with Internet addiction problem and to determine whether Internet addiction level associated with specific parenting styles.

## Method

A survey method model was used in this study aimed to determine the level of Internet addiction and perceived parenting styles of adolescence between 14-19 years of age

## Participants

A total of 419 adolescence studying at secondary schools in the 2014-2015 academic year participated in the study. 56.8% of participants were girls (238), 43.2% boys (181). Mean age of participants was 16.5.

## Materials

"Parental Attitude Scale", "Internet Addiction Test", and "Demographic Information Form" were used to collect research data.

*Parental Attitude Scale:* "Parental Attitude Scale" is developed by Kuzgun (1972). Parental Attitude Scale consist 15 items for each Democratic, and Protective-Demanding subscales, and 10 items for the Authoritarian subscale, total of 40 items. The internal consistency of the inventory is found .89 for the Democratic subscale, .78 for the Authoritarian subscale, .82 for the Protective-Demanding subscale (as cited in Eftekin, 2015).

Responses of the items in the scale is arranged to be graded on a five-step Likert-type scale. Answer for each item is graded from 1 to 5. In this study, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the democratic subscale as .89, protective demanding subscale as .85, and authoritarian subscale as .78.

*Internet Addiction Scale:* "Internet Addiction Scale" consisting of 20 questions is created by Young (1998) by developing "Diagnostic Questionnaire" adopted from the DSM-IV measure of the 'Pathological Gambling'. Participants are supposed to mark one of the options which are Not Appropriate, Rarely, Occasionally, Frequently, Often, and Always on a type of Likert Scale. 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 points are given respectively to those options. Participants getting 80 point and above are defined as Internet Addicted. The ones getting between 50-79 points are defined as the group of " Partial Symptoms", 50 points and below defined as the group of "No symptoms" (Bayraktar, 2001). The scale, which is translated from English to Turkish during the research of Bayraktar (2001), is examined by five lecturers at Psychology Department of Ege University, and items of the scale is adapted in a way that 12- 17 age group could understand without compromising the integrity of the meaning. Standardized reliability coefficient of the translated scale is .91 in terms of Alpha, .87 in terms of Spearman – Brown. These results suggest that the scale is reliable (Bayraktar, 2001). In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated as .89 for the reliability of the scale.

*Personal Information Form:* The personal information form developed by the researchers was used to determine the various demographic characteristics of the participants. In the form, closed-ended questions about sex and etc. variables were asked and the participants were required to pick the option that was appropriate for them.

## Procedure

*Data Collection and Analysis:* The tools used to collect research data were distributed to total of 450 high school students, and collected from them in November 2014. Considering collected form, incomplete information was identified on 31 forms. By leaving these forms out of assessment, data collected from a total of 419 people was analyzed. On the collected data, t test was used for independent groups to demonstrate the differentiation of perceived parenting styles and Internet addiction level according to gender variable. Participants were grouped into three; Internet Addicted, Partial Symptoms, and Not Symptoms according to Internet addiction levels. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to reveal the differentiation of perceived parenting styles of these groups. Tukey test as an advanced statistical technique was utilized in order to determine the source of the difference resulted from the ANOVA test. With the aim of revealing the relationship between perceived parenting styles and Internet addiction level, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used. Moreover, the linear regression analysis technique was used to determine the level of perceived parenting styles as predictor of Internet addiction. Significance level was taken as .05 in this study

## Results and Discussion

This section involved the findings obtained from the statistical analysis of the collected data in research. *t*-test analysis was performed for independent groups to demonstrate the differentiation level of perceived parenting styles and Internet addiction level depending on gender variable. The findings are given in Table 1.

**Table 1. t-Test Results Related to the Differentiation of Perceived Parenting Styles and Internet Addiction Depending on Gender**

Variables	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
Internet Addiction	Girls	238	48.72	18.97	2.271*	.001
	Boys	181	54.85	19.03		
Democratic Parenting Style	Girls	238	45.25	8.72	.223	.823
	Boys	181	44.94	19.04		
Protective-Demanding Parenting Style	Girls	238	39.08	9.63	.360	.719
	Boys	181	39.42	8.95		
Authoritarian Parenting Style	Girls	238	22.86	7.39	1.717	.087
	Boys	181	24.18	8.32		

\*p<.05

As seen in Table 1, the mean scores of girls on Internet addiction scale was  $M = 48.72$ , while the mean score of boys was  $M = 54.85$ .  $t$  value ( $t=2.271$ ,  $p<.05$ ), which was calculated to test the significance of the difference between the groups, showed that there was a significant difference between the groups. According to these findings, level of Internet addiction of the girls was significantly higher than the boys'. On the other hand, the  $t$  values calculated for the differentiation of the scores from the three subscales of perceived parenting styles based on the gender indicated that there was no significant difference between the gender groups in all three subscales.

Participants getting 80 point and above were defined as Internet Addicted. The ones getting between 50-79 points were defined as the group of "Partial Symptoms", 50 points and below defined as "No symptoms". One way F test (ANOVA) was performed to determine whether perceived parenting styles of students differed according to the groups of Internet addiction. Findings regarding the analysis are given in Table 2.

**Table 2. F Test Results Related to Perceived Parenting Style of Students Depending on the Internet Addiction Levels**

Variables	Internet Addiction Level	N	M	SD	F	p
Democratic Parenting Style	No Symptoms	231	46.59	8.25		
	Partial Symptoms	141	42.32	9.25	4.261*	.015
	Internet Addict	47	46.29	34.26		
Protective-Demanding Parenting Style	No Symptoms	231	36.44	8.12		
	Partial Symptoms	141	40.00	8.79	58.510*	.001
	Internet Addict	47	50.64	7.29		
Authoritarian Parenting Style	No Symptoms	231	20.75	5.75		
	Partial Symptoms	141	24.46	6.14	72.706*	.001
	Internet Addict	47	33.55	11.49		

\* $p<.05$

As seen in Table 2, the highest mean score ( $M=46.59$ ) on democratic parenting style subscale belonged to the adolescences not showing symptoms, while the lowest mean ( $M=42.32$ ) belonged to the adolescences showing partial symptoms. On protective-demanding parenting style subscale, pathological Internet addicted had the highest mean score ( $M=50.64$ ), while students not showing symptoms had the lowest mean score ( $M=36.44$ ). A similar result was found in the authoritative parenting style subscale. F value calculated to test the significance of the difference between the mean scores of the groups showed that there was a significant difference (.05) between the groups on all three subscales. The Tukey's test results are given in Table 3.

**Table 3. Tukey's Test Results Regarding Differentiation of Perceived Parenting Style of Adolescence Depending on the Internet Addiction Levels**

Dependent variable	(I)	(J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	p
Democratic Parenting Style	No symptoms	Partial symptoms	4.27392*	.013
		Internet addict	.29520	.990
	Partial symptoms	Internet addict	-3.97872	.212
Protective-Demanding Parenting Style	No symptoms	Partial symptoms	-3.55844*	.001
		Internet addict	-14.19674*	.001
	Partial symptoms	Internet addict	-10.63830*	.001
Authoritarian Parenting Style	No symptoms	Partial symptoms	-3.71917*	.001
		Internet addict	-12.80427*	.001
	Partial symptoms	Internet addict	-9.08511*	.001

\* $p<.05$

As seen in Table 3, there was a significant difference, which was in favor of students not showing symptoms, between students not showing symptoms and showing partial symptoms on democratic parenting style subscale. A significant difference, which was in favor of students showing partial symptoms and pathologic Internet addicted, was also found between adolescence showing partial symptoms and pathologic Internet addicts, and

between adolescences not showing symptoms on the protective- demanding subscale and authoritarian subscale. Based on this finding, adolescence showing partial symptoms and pathological Internet addicts perceived their parents more protective-demanding and authoritarian compared to adolescence not showing symptoms. In Table 4, the results of Pearson correlation technique applied to the scores to determine the relationship between the scores of participants on the Internet addiction scale and on perceived parenting styles scale are given.

**Table 4.** The Relation between Internet Addiction Level and Perceived Parenting Styles of Adolescence

	1	2	3	4
1. Internet addiction	-			
2. Democratic Parenting Style	-.08	-		
3. Protective-Demanding Parenting Style	.45**	-.07	-	
4. Authoritarian Parenting Style	.436**	-.196**	.566**	-

\*p<.05

As seen in Table 4, there was no significant difference between the scores from Internet addiction scale and democratic parenting styles subscale. However, a significant positive correlation was identified between Internet addiction and protective-demanding parenting style and authoritarian parenting style. These findings suggested that the higher scores on the subscales of protective-demanding and authoritarian parenting style, the higher scores on the scale of Internet addiction.

The results of multiple linear regression analysis in order to determine the predictive power of the perceived parenting style scale to the Internet addiction scale are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** The Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Regarding to Prediction of Perceived Parenting Style to Internet Addiction

Variable	B	Standardized Coefficients $\beta$	$\beta$	t	p
Constant	12.390	4.692		2.641	.009
Democratic PS	-.010	.059	-.008	-.175	.862
Protective-Demanding PS	.617	.106	.300	5.814	.000
Authoritarian PS	.650	.129	.265	5.043	.000
<b>R=.501</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup>=.251</b>	<b>F(3-415)=46.325</b>		<b>p=.05</b>	

As seen in Table 5, perceived parenting style with three subscales as an independent variable predicted significantly the Internet addiction level ( $R=.50$ ,  $R^2=.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ) These findings showed that perceived parenting style explained 25.1% of the total variance in the Internet addiction. According to the standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ), the most powerful predictor of *Internet addiction* was the protective-demanding parenting style ( $\beta=.30$ ), after that authoritarian parenting style ( $\beta=.25$ ) followed. On the other hand, democratic parenting style ( $\beta=-.008$ ) could not reach the level of significance ( $p < .05$ ) as a predictor of Internet addiction. Considering this finding, it was revealed that protective-demanding and authoritarian parenting styles were found as significant predictors explaining 25% of total variance in the Internet addiction.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate about the predictive role of the parenting styles on the adolescents' Internet addiction. The present findings of this study indicated that adolescents' Internet Addiction differed significantly with the parenting styles. It was found that there was a negative relation between Internet addiction and democratic parenting style. On the other hand, protective-demanding parenting style and authoritarian parenting style were found as significantly positively correlated to Internet addiction while no significant difference was found between the Internet addiction and democratic parenting. In other words, these findings demonstrated that adolescents with partial Internet addiction perceived more democratic their parenting style than non-addictive adolescents; while adolescents with partial symptoms and pathological Internet addicts perceived their parents more protective-demanding and authoritarian compared to non-addictive adolescents. The most powerful predictor of Internet addiction was the protective-demanding parenting style ( $\beta=.30$ ), after

that authoritarian parenting style ( $\beta=.25$ ) followed. Protective-demanding and authoritarian parenting styles were found as significant predictors explaining 25% of variance on Internet Addiction. On the other hand, democratic parenting style ( $\beta=-.008$ ) was not a significant predictor in the Internet Addiction. These findings were consistent with the relevant literature (Darling, 1999; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Moazedian et al., 2014; Rosen, 2008; Xiuqin et al., 2010; Beard & Wolf, 2001; Davis, Flett, & Besser, 2002; Valcke et al., 2010). These results can be explained by the fact that these parenting styles may motivate adolescents to seek alternative self-actualization and social interactions via the Internet and, thus, lead to Internet Addiction (Xiuqin et al. 2010). Moreover, if parents' important role in managing the adolescence leisure activities to avoid the Internet addiction is taken into consideration, it can be said that protective-demanding and authoritarian parenting may tend to provide low regulation in a "laissez faire" style.

Another finding of the study was that male adolescents were found to suffer more from problematic Internet addiction than girls. This finding was also consistent with the relevant literature (Balta & Horzum, 2008; Cömert & Ögel, 2009; Frangos, Frangos & Kiohos, 2010; Ono & Zavodny, 2003; Uzun, Unal & Tokel; 2014). This result can be explained by that generally, adolescent boys are more likely than adolescent girls to perceive their parents as less affectionate and less supportive. This can be the result of that parents define more rules for daughters, and there is more communication with them. Moreover, because of differential socialization of boys and girls by their parents, boys are more likely than girls to develop psychological independence and behave in an emotionally detached manner, whereas girls are more likely than boys to develop a sense of intimacy and relatedness and seek closeness to their parents (Chodorow, 1989). Therefore, male adolescence may try to compensate the warm and support, which the parents do not show, via Internet. Another perspective is that with respect to the outward expression of emotions, there are differences between genders (Fisher et al., 2004). During their development, girls and boys receive highly dissimilar emotional approaches from their families (Brody & Hall, 1993). Compared to girls, boys receive less encouragement from their families to express their emotions (Tuğrul, 1999). As a part of social life, girls learn to hide their emotions, and learn to more freely express their emotions compared to boys because of social roles and stereotyped expectations that are imposed on girls and boys from an early age (Simon & Nath, 2004; Haugh, Hoffman, & Covan, 1980). Considering this difference of expression, it can be said that boys are more likely to become addicted to Internet since many substance addicts experience difficulties in being aware of their emotions and expressing them (Krystal, 1982).

The study also shows that inappropriate parenting rearing styles are closely related to adolescence's Internet addiction. This suggests that warm relationship in family decreases the level of Internet Addiction, while low kindness in the family structure raises the level of addiction. This is in accordance to findings of that low social support predicts the pathological Internet use. Families with low kindness may not provide a pleasant environment that decreases the loneliness feeling in adolescents. This causes increasing use of Internet to seek relationship with unfamiliar people. Family environment has also an essential effect on ability of adolescent's problem solving and on his/her identity development. Considering this fact, Ceyhan (2010) states that those who successfully achieve steps in their identity development have fewer tendencies to Problematic Internet Use. Whereas young adults being unable to overcome the identity development during their adolescence are likely to use the Internet to try different identities. Thus, this study suggests that parents should provide a supportive and appropriate structure in family to prevent adolescents from the Internet addiction. In this way, their children will grow up in a good environment and develop an identity, so that they may reduce the incidence of Internet addiction.

The study had some limitations. First of all, the sample consisted of adolescents who were recruited from the school setting. The study should be replicated with more representative samples from the general population and among adolescents in other settings. Moreover, the variables with qualitative research and longitudinal studies are needed to be examined.

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