

THE RELATIONSHIP OF PARENTAL BONDING AND INTERNET ADDICTION

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to study internet addiction in relation to parental bonding. For this purpose, a sample of 200 students was taken and they were administered the Internet Addiction Test (Young, 1998) and Parental Bonding Instrument (Parker et. al, 1979) for measuring internet addiction and the four dimensions of parental bonding viz. maternal care, maternal overprotection, paternal care and paternal overprotection. The study revealed significant correlation of internet addiction with all four the dimensions of parental bonding.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Internet is a modern communication tool, which basically can change and makes easier the ways of communication between people, it eliminates geographical barriers and shortens real distances. It serves as an inexhaustible source of information and knowledge about everything that people can look for. It represents an extremely rich source of information of various kinds, forms, content, veracity, prices and quality. It can be considered as the biggest market of goods, information and services. (Žáčok, and Žáčková, 2008). However, the potential for misuse and inappropriate and excessive use of certain computer applications has led to the expressions of concerns related to the psychological and behavioral impact of the Internet on individuals.

With the number of Internet users increasing, more and more studies had been conducted with regards to the excessive use of the Internet. A small percentage of the online population have reported problems such as neglect of academic responsibility, work, domestic responsibilities, disruption of relationships, social isolation, and financial problems due to their Internet use (e.g., Young 1996a; Griffiths 2000; Neimz et al. 2005).

Currently, there is no standardized definition of Internet abuse. In fact, a discussion has arisen regarding whether Internet "addiction" exists and, if it does, how it should be viewed in relation to other disorders (Shaffer, 2002). Various nomenclatures include: Internet addiction (Young, 1999), Internet addiction disorder (Goldberg, 1996), Internet dependency (Wang, 2001), problematic Internet use (Caplan, 2002), pathological Internet use (Davis, 2001), and Internet abuse (Fortson et al., 2007). In the recent years, Young (2011) has defined Internet addiction as any online-related, compulsive behavior which interferes with normal living and causes

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severe stress on family, friends, loved ones, and one's work environment.

Terminology remains a problem, however. Some refer to particular Internet-related behaviors as Internet addiction (e.g., Chou and Hsiao, 2000; Young, 1996b), whereas others prefer Internet Addiction Disorder (Goldberg, 1996), Internet pathological use (e.g., Davis, 2001; Morahan- Martin and Schumacker, 2000), or Internet dependency (e.g., Scherer, 1997).

Whatever the terminology, the fact remains that Internet Addiction is related to neglect of other life areas, and is known to result in decreased work productivity and family time, strained relationships, decreased communication within the family, decreased sleeping time, reduced quality of meals, a narrowing range of interests, and the development or exacerbation of mental health problems (Nalwa & Anand, 2003; Young, 1998; Beard, 2005; Kraut et al., 1998). When students' grades drop because of an excessive amount of time spent surfing the web or when students avoid early morning classes because they have not gotten enough sleep, Internet Addiction can lead to failure in academic areas (Chou et al., 2005).

Related physical impairments are mostly mild to moderate, including dry eyes, blurred vision, sleep deprivation, fatigue, and musculoskeletal discomfort or pain (Chou, 2001). A "marathon" online-gaming session was implicated in the death of a 28-year-old man (BBC News, 2005).

Parental bonding is the emotional and physical attachment occurring between a parent or parent figure and offspring that usually begins at birth and is the basis for further emotional affiliation. According to Lezin et al. (2004), parental bonding is characterized by a positive, stable, emotional bond. It is measured by acceptance, spending time together, the parent's availability to the child and enjoyment of being with the child.

Relationships with parents are known to be related to Internet use among adolescents. Parental attitude and parental involvement can be a psychological distress factor associated with adolescents' demographic backgrounds. Orleans and Laney (2000) found that minimal parental involvement would result in the most socially positive effect on children's computer use. Parental rules such as time limits or checking up also affects children's use of the Internet negatively (Lenhart et al., 2001). Some researchers found that the increase in family conflicts is associated with more frequent time and use in adolescents' Internet use (Mesch, 2006).

HYPOTHESES

In the present study, the following hypotheses were framed –

H1: It is expected that internet addiction would be negatively related to maternal care and paternal care.

H2: It is expected that internet addiction would be positively related to maternal overprotection and paternal overprotection.

METHOD

Sample

The present study comprised of 200 adolescents (100 males and 100 females) in the age range of 16 – 18 years, selected from the tricity of Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula. In order to control the influence of the working status of the mothers on parental bonding and internet usage, equal number of adolescents, having working mothers and non-working mothers, were included in the sample i.e. 50 males having working mothers, 50 males having non-working mothers, 50 females having working mothers, 50 females having non-working mothers.

Inclusion criteria

- a) Only those adolescents who belonged to nuclear families were included in the sample.
- b) They belonged to the middle income group.

Tests and Tools

Keeping in view the main objective of the study, the following tools were employed:

1. Internet Addiction Test (Young, 1999)
2. Parental Bonding Instrument (Parker et. al, 1979)

Statistical Analysis

On the basis of the formulated hypotheses, the data was analyzed by using the Pearson's formula for correlation. The correlation was calculated for internet addiction in relation to the various dimensions of the Parental Bonding Instrument viz. Maternal Care, Maternal Overprotection, Paternal Care and Paternal Overprotection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Means, SDs and Correlations were calculated to test the hypotheses. The results are shown in Table 1 and 2.

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Table 1: Means and Sds of the total sample

S.NO.	VARIABLES	MEAN	S.D.
1	Internet Addiction	64.84	14.66
2	Maternal Care	19.63	4.90
3	Maternal Overprotection	21.00	6.44
4	Paternal Care	19.06	4.08
5	Paternal Overprotection	21.16	5.45

Table 2: Intercorrelation Matrix

S.NO.	VARIABLES	1	2	3	4	5
1	Internet Addiction	1.00	-0.22	0.30	-0.17	0.15
2	Maternal Care		1.00	-0.57	0.67	-0.40
3	Maternal Overprotection			1.00	-0.38	0.75
4	Paternal Care				1.00	-0.36
5	Paternal Overprotection					1.00

Correlation significant at .05 level =0.181

Correlation significant at .01 level =0.138

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the total sample. The mean and standard deviation values for Internet Addiction, Maternal Care, Maternal Overprotection, Paternal Care and Paternal Overprotection were 64.84 and 14.66, 19.63 and 4.90, 21.00 and 6.44, 19.06 and 4.08, and, 21.16 and 5.45, respectively.

Table 2 shows the values of correlation of Internet Addiction with the various dimensions of Parental Bonding. The results indicate that Internet Addiction has a significant negative relationship with Maternal Care ($r = -0.22, p < .01$) and Paternal Care ($r = -0.17, p < .05$). Thus, the hypothesis (H1) which stated that there would be a significant negative relationship of Internet Addiction with Maternal Care and

Paternal Care has been supported by the results obtained. The results also show that Internet Addiction has a significant positive relationship with Maternal Overprotection ($r = 0.30, p < .01$) and Paternal Overprotection ($r = 0.15, p < .05$). Thus, the second hypothesis (H2) has also been substantiated by the results obtained.

The results obtained, are in line with various previous researches conducted in this area. Leung and Lee (2005) reported that among the social interaction motives, parental emotional support is found to be consistently related to internet usage. The more emotional support from the parents an adolescent feels, the less likely they are to use the Internet. Knowing this, this makes sense that those who are more stable secure and sure with parents and/or family, will spend more time doing different activities, instead of Internet use. Again this reveals that the relationship with parents and/or is an important issue for adolescents because interactive activities with parents promote cognitive, physical, and social development. Lacking support from parents, those adolescent seek social support from the experiences of interacting on the Internet (Rixhon and Shapiro, 2003; Yen and Yen, 2007).

Psychological security and social interactive support may be the motives for adolescents with low parental support to use the Internet more than those who have high parental support. As has been pointed out by Lam et. al (2009) that students who were very dissatisfied with their family were nearly 2.5 times more likely than those who were satisfied with their family, to be addicted to the Internet. It has also been reported by various researches that adolescents with Internet Addiction consistently rated parental rearing practices as being over intrusive, punitive, and lacking in responsiveness. These findings suggest that the influences of parenting style and family function are important factors in the development of Internet Dependency (Huang et. al, 2010).

These findings indicate that parental bonding plays an important role in an individual's life as it is the first bond that a child forms and this also sets the stage for the future relationships the child has. Bowlby's theory (1969, 1973, 1980) emphasizes the importance of early experience with early attachment relationships, as laying the foundation for later functioning throughout childhood, adolescence, adulthood. He stressed the importance of the quality of parental care to the development of secure attachments. These findings are important as internet addiction has been reported to be rising among the adolescents. This vulnerability of the students to Internet addiction is attributed mainly to their unlimited free access to the internet, large amounts unstructured of time on campus, newly found freedom from parental control, unrestricted access to do or say what they wish online and academia's encouragement to use the internet as a means of research (Young, 2004)

Those who work at home are also vulnerable to Internet addictions due to their unrestricted access to the Internet with relatively large amounts of private time at home. Interestingly, those whose jobs involve computers exclusively are much less likely to engage in excessive amounts of inappropriate Internet usage (Cooper et al., 2002).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

All the facts discussed so far provide evidence of the significant relationship between parental bonding and internet addiction. These findings suggest that the healthy home environment and secure attachments with parents play a key role in the development of internet addiction. Further, the findings are important for parents and as well as mental health professionals since they reflect the vital role of parent- child relationship in the development of this new disorder, which if not controlled well in time might become a major problem to encounter with.

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