A Study of the Relationship between Personality Traits and Internet Addiction among Secondary School Male Students in Torbat Heydarieh

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Abstract
The present descriptive-correlational study examines the relationship between personality traits and the tendency for internet addiction. The research population includes all the secondary school male students at the city of Torbat Heydarieh. The research sampling was first done by a one-step clustering method in a secondary high school and then the subjects were randomly selected from among these students. The data collection tools included two questionnaires: The NEO Personality Characteristics Questionnaire, which is one of the most recent questionnaires on the assessment of personality building based on factor analysis, 2. Young Drug Addiction Test, one of the most authoritative tests for online addiction testing, which was developed by Dr. Kimberly Young. The results of this study indicate that the F-value and its significance – lower than 0.05 – the fitted model has a 95% confidence. Moreover, the coefficient of determination shows that personality traits determine 85% of the variations of the variable of internet addiction.

Keywords: Addiction, Internet Addiction, Personality Traits
Statement of the problem

The internet is a complex matrix of networks that was created in the late 1960s with the aim of improving cooperation and multi-level access to computational resources and skills, and to create the possibility of interdisciplinary interaction in sciences and engineering. In the mid-1990s, it became a public global network.

Access to the internet has been growing. More and more people are by now becoming internet users. The internet is everywhere: at home, at school, at offices, and even at shopping centers. Among the internet users, young people and teenagers are more strongly inclined to use it. The results of a research done in the United States indicate that the use of internet is much more common among the youth and teenagers in comparison to other age groups (Bullen & Harré, 2000).

The family, as the smallest social unit, is the foundation of community formation and the preservation of human emotions. Any failure in family functioning produces undesirable effects in the normalization of children (Saroukhani, 1991).

The most disadvantaged and problematic individuals are dependent on affected families and children belonging to their high-risk families are subjected to maladaptive behaviors due to lack of mental relaxation, lack of concentration, and higher level of disturbance (Zare-Moqadam, 2006).

Along with the advancements and widespread access to the internet, we are witnessing a kind of dependence of the teenagers on the internet. Similar to other types of addiction, the internet addiction is associated with such symptoms as anxiety, depression, mood disorder, restlessness, obsessive thinking, isolation, emotional disturbances, and the disruption of social relations.

Moreover, while on one hand the social relations of people (especially children and teenagers) in increase in the virtual world of social networks, the Domain 1 of their relations decrease, and consequently, they become prone to educational failures (Samson & Keen, 2005).

The reports issues by the Ministry of Information and Technology (2008) state that in the last four years the number of internet users has increased by 25 times. According to this report, more than 64% of Iranians use the internet at home. This indicates the high popularity of the internet among its users. The growth in the internet use has been exponential around the world. Similar to other technological innovations, the increase in the internet use has been both advantageous and disadvantageous. Most sociologists believe that one of the most pressing concerns in the use of the internet is the distribution of obscene images and immoral messages, known as pornography (Hosseini, 2004).

There have been different reports about the spread of internet addiction in various societies. In general, it is estimated that for every 50 million users, 2 to 5 million are addicted to the internet. In other words, 5 to 10 percent of the users are addicted to the internet (Alavi et al., 2009).

Studies done in Iran show that most of the internet users are young people. According to these studies, 35% use chat rooms, 28% online games, 30% check email, and 25% surf the internet (Hosseini, 2004).
Moreover, studies show that 14% of the internet users are among vulnerable users who suffer from obsessive-compulsive behavior, mental disorders, and depression (Ferris, 2002).

Orzack (1999) argues that there are two types of symptoms for internet addiction:

1. Psychological symptoms, including, a kind of happiness when using the computer, the inability to stop the activity, spending a lot of time on the computer, neglecting your family and friends, feeling depressed, meaninglessness, depression, bad temperament when one cannot access the computer, and other problems at school or in the office.

2. Physical symptoms, including, bone marrow syndrome, drowsiness, migraine headaches, low backache, diet disorder, skipping main meals, not paying attention to personal hygiene, sleep disorders, and changes in sleep patterns. In addition to these symptoms, there are other problems such as spending a lot of money on hardware, software, magazines and computer-related activities, lack of attention to one’s work, school, and family duties.

Psychologists believe that any behavior that an individual shows is influenced by various factors such as environmental, emotional, and personality. The personality factors refer to a set of factors which determine the presentation of a certain behavior by a person. A different set of personality traits leads to different behaviors. Thus, personality traits are among the most important factors. These can help understand the complexities of human behavior in various contexts and therefore should not be underestimated by the researchers. Personality is one of the most important concepts in psychology. It is also one of the most complex ones. The concept of personality originates from different theoretical perspectives and abstractions. Each of these levels has a considerable role in our understanding of personal differences (Duran, 2003).

In 1936, the psychologist Gordon Allport found out that there are more than 4000 words to describe different personality traits in a single volume of English dictionary. He divided these traits into three groups:

- Main traits: characteristics that are dominant in one’s whole life to the point where the person is commonly known by these attributes. In fact, a person’s name is usually associated with these characteristics. To make a few examples one can refer to Freudian, Machiavellian, Don Juan, and Jesus-like. According to Allport, the main personality traits are rare and are constructed during one’s lifetime.

- Central traits: general characteristics which build one’s personality. While not as influential as the main traits, these are important traits which can be used to describe another person. Such expressions as intelligent, trustful, shy, and anxious are some examples of central traits.

- Secondary traits: characteristics which are sometimes related to attitudes or priorities, which often manifest themselves in specific situations. Examples include feeling anxious when talking in the crowd or impatience while waiting in a queue (Shamlou, 2003).

McCrea & Costa have identified five main personality traits among different ones: agreeableness, openness, extraversion, which includes neuroticism and conscientiousness, and believe that the general characteristics of a personality can be categorized by using these five factors (McCree & Costa, 1986).

According to this approach, the present study has tried to examine the relationship between these five factors and internet addiction among the teenagers.
Methodology

The present descriptive-correlational study examines the relationship between personality traits and the tendency for internet addiction. The research population includes all the secondary school male students at the city of Torbat Heydarieh. The research sampling was first done by a one-step clustering method in a secondary high school and then the subjects were randomly selected from among these students. The data collection tools included two questionnaires.

1. NEO Personality Characteristics Questionnaire, which is one of the most recent questionnaires on the assessment of personality building based on factor analysis. This questionnaire measures five main personality factors and 6 characteristics in each factor; in other words, 30 characteristics. This questionnaire provides a comprehensive assessment of the personality. The questionnaire has two forms, one (S) is designed to be used for personal reports and includes 240 five-scale questions, form totally agree to totally disagree, graded by the subject him/herself, and is suitable for men and women of all ages.

2. Young Internet Addiction Test, which is one of the most authoritative tests for testing online addiction. It was developed by Dr. Kimberly Young. The questionnaire has 20 questions and aims to measure the extent of addiction to the internet among different people. Its response range is Likert and it has five scales. This is a standard questionnaire and its validity and reliability have been reported in previous studies with the Cronbach’s alpha of 0.90. The Persian version of this scale has been used in Iran and its reliability has been confirmed by Cronbach’s alpha of 0.81; Qasemzadeh has confirmed it to be 0.88 (Bahri et al., 2011).

Research findings

There is a significant relationship between personality traits and internet addiction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Estimated coefficients</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t statistics</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Coherence factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>-34.837</td>
<td>15.781</td>
<td>-2.207</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>neuroticism</td>
<td>2.149</td>
<td>0.299</td>
<td>7.186</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>1.276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>openness</td>
<td>-1.485</td>
<td>0.309</td>
<td>-4.523</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>0.877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conscientiousness</td>
<td>-1.544</td>
<td>0.310</td>
<td>-4.987</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>0.787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agreeableness</td>
<td>-0.587</td>
<td>0.325</td>
<td>-3.587</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>0.874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibility</td>
<td>-1.603</td>
<td>0.229</td>
<td>-2.632</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>0.852</td>
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<tr>
<td>coefficient of model determination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Durbin &amp; Watson statistics</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1.64</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The results of the table show that the F statistics and its significance which is lower than 0.05 prove the fitness of the model with the confidence level of 95%, and the determination coefficient of 0.85. This means that 85% of one’s personality is determined by addiction to the internet.

According to the results presented in the above table, there is a significant relationship between all aspects of personality traits and addiction to the internet. Moreover, given the value and partial correlation coefficient, it can be stated that:

There is a significant positive relationship between neuroticism and internet addiction with the partial correlation coefficient of 0.46.

There is a significant negative relationship between extraversion and internet addiction with the partial correlation coefficient of -0.33.

There is a significant negative relationship between openness and internet addiction with the partial correlation coefficient of -0.34.

There is a significant negative relationship between agreeableness and internet addiction with the partial correlation coefficient of -0.20.

There is a significant negative relationship between responsibility and internet addiction with the partial correlation coefficient of -0.19.

**Discussion and conclusion**

The results of this study indicate that the F-value and its significance – lower than 0.05 – the fitted model has a 95% confidence. Moreover, the coefficient of determination shows that personality traits determine 85% of the variations of the variable of internet addiction.

The results of the analysis show that there is a negative relationship between extraversion and internet addiction; this means that when the scores of extraversion increase the level of internet addiction decreases, and vice versa.

There is a negative relationship between agreeableness and internet addiction; when the scores of agreeableness increase, the scores of internet addiction decrease; when the scores of agreeableness decrease, the scores of internet addiction decrease.

It seems that this factor can lead to positive social and psychological behaviors. Flexible and agreeable people are more popular than other people are. Thus, it can be said that the disagreeable people are attracted to the internet because of lack of flexibility and adaptability with to their surroundings.
There is a relationship between conscientiousness and internet addiction, it is a negative relationship. This means that when the scores of conscientiousness increase, the scores of internet addiction decrease, and vice versa.

Conscientiousness refers to two main characteristics: the ability to control impulses and tendencies, as well as having a plan and behaving according to the plan in order to achieve the desired goals. A responsible person has predetermined goals. These people are successful, accurate, punctual and reliable in the professional and academic fields. Nonetheless, non-conscientious people have characteristics such as crippling harassment and lack of commitment to ethics. These people usually do not pay enough attention to their responsibilities and duties, and they are not determined in reaching their goals. Thus, it is natural that such people are more likely to get addicted to the internet, because if the person does not have the necessary control, the internet can easily attract him.

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