

Extended Summary

Examining Internet Addiction in Gifted and Talented Students through Different Variables*

Ahmet Kurnaz¹
Necmettin Erbakan University

Aynur Tepe²
Gündüz Alp Primary School

Abstract

On the one hand, the Internet is an indispensable tool of today; on the other hand, it has become a main risk that causes addiction. This study aims to examine the relationship of Internet addiction in gifted and talented students with their gender; having smartphones, computers, and Internet access; purpose for using the Internet; the frequency of Internet use; and time spent on it. This study has been conducted using the causal-comparative and correlational research designs; 421 gifted and talented students studying at the Science and Art Centers in Ankara, Kırıkkale, Kırşehir, and Siirt participated in the study. The Internet Addiction Scale has been used to identify participants' Internet addiction levels. Data were collected in May, 2015. The results reveal that gender doesn't have a significant effect on gifted students' Internet addiction and that deprivation, control difficulty; general Internet addiction is high for students with smartphones; and students with computers and smartphones with access to the Internet are more addicted to the Internet. Internet addiction levels are higher for students who use the Internet for chatting, playing games, and social media than for students who use the Internet for doing research. The more frequently a student uses the Internet and the more time spent on it increases the addiction level.

Keywords

Internet addiction • Gifted and talented students • Purpose for Internet use • Smartphone usage • Internet addiction level

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1 **Correspondence to:** Ahmet Kurnaz (PhD), Department of Special Education, Ahmet Keleşoğlu Faculty of Education, Necmettin Erbakan University, Meram, Konya 42080 Turkey. Email: ahkurnaz@hotmail.com

2 Ministry of National Education Gündüz Alp Primary School, Special Education Class, Gölbaşı Ankara Turkey. Email: denizlimani56@hotmail.com

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The Internet is an important communication tool that enables people to access all kinds of information quickly and contributes significantly to human life by allowing them to communicate easily (Ceyhan, 2008). The use of Internet technologies, therefore, has become a must in every aspect of daily life. Technology makes life more convenient but brings along some problems that can affect daily life negatively. One of these is Internet addiction.

Addiction is often used to describe chemical substance addictions such as alcohol and heroin (Beyazyürek & Şatır, 2000). The term Internet addiction was used for the first time in 2004 by psychiatrist Dr. Ivan Goldberg to identify pathological Internet use. Young (2004) defined the criteria for Internet addiction using pathological gambling criteria as the base. Moreover, through Internet addiction, some symptoms such as deprivation, control difficulty, functional disorders, and social isolation arise.

Because the Internet is a part of daily life with technological devices such as smartphones, computers, and tablets, one must admit that there is no such thing as not using the Internet. Therefore, like eating disorders, Internet addiction must also be kept under control. In this technological era, living without the Internet is difficult. Restrained Internet use is the best method for curing addiction (Ögel, 2012). Problematic Internet use affects all individuals psychologically, physically, and socially.

Although Internet addiction is a significant problem for every child, it becomes more important in gifted and talented students when considering their characteristics. While gifted and talented students become a great gain for humanity when supported with sufficient developmental environments and suitable educational circumstances, they can be a great loss and even a danger when their presence isn't taken seriously (Hökelekli & Gündüz, 2004). Because they can learn technology use quickly and use it in their studies and products, examining gifted and talented students' Internet use is important.

No study regarding Internet addiction in gifted and talented students is found in the literature. The studies about Internet addiction suggest that it has become widespread swiftly. Much international research which has been conducted after defining the identification criteria revealed that Internet addiction levels have changed from 6% to 14% (Arısoy, 2009). Defining gifted and talented students' Internet addiction levels and determining the measures are of great importance. Thus, the present study aims to examine the relationship of Internet addiction in gifted and talented students with their gender; having smartphones, computers, and Internet access; their purpose for Internet use; the frequency of Internet use; and time spent on the Internet.

Method

This study aims to examine gifted and talented students' perceived Internet addiction in terms of their having smartphones, computers, and Internet access and their use of the Internet for chatting, social media, and gaming using the causal-comparative design in the survey model.

Study Group

In the study, 421 gifted and talented students studying at Science and Art Centers in Ankara, Kırıkkale, Kırşehir, and Siirt participated. The percentage of the participants from each of these cities is 34.7%, 24.9%, 17.6%, and 22.8%, respectively; 39.4% of the participants are male and 60.6% are female.

Data Collection Tool

Data have been obtained using the Internet Addiction Scale developed by Günüç (2009). The scale has 35 items and is composed of four sub-scales. These sub-scales are deprivation, control difficulty, functional disorder, and social isolation.

Data Collection

The data were collected in the second semester of the 2014-2015 school year. After getting the necessary permissions, the scales were implemented on the students from the Art and Science Center. Students were informed about the study, and participation was stated to be on a volunteer basis. The researcher visited the institutions herself and encouraged the participants to fill in the forms willingly. The implementation process lasted between 10-15 minutes.

Data Analysis

Before data analysis, the obtained data were examined for normal distribution and in terms of kurtosis and Skewness values. After determining that the data have normal distribution, parametric statistics were used in the analysis process.

Findings

After the analysis the following results were found.

Gifted and talented students' deprivation, control difficulty, functional disorder, social isolation, and general Internet addiction scores differ according to gender and using the Internet for chatting and gaming ($p < .05$). Moreover, Internet addiction for male students is higher in all subscales than females. In addition, the students who stated using the Internet for chatting and gaming are more addicted to the Internet for all sub-scales.

No relationship is found between having smartphones and a computer with scores for functional disorder and social isolation ($p > .05$). On the other hand, a significant relationship is found between deprivation, control difficulty, and general Internet addiction with having smartphones and computers ($p < .05$). Students' perceived deprivation, control difficulty, and general Internet addiction are higher for students with smartphones and computers.

Results, Discussions, and Suggestions

According to the study data, Internet addiction for male students has been found higher than females in the subscales of deprivation, control difficulty, functional disorder, and social isolation. In the studies from [Morahan-Martin and Schumacher \(2000\)](#), [Wang \(2001\)](#), [Günüç \(2009\)](#), [Gökçearsan and Günbatar \(2012\)](#), and [Bölükbaş \(2003\)](#), males were found to be more addicted to the Internet than females. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute's Household Information Technologies Usage Research results, Internet usage rates were found at 68.6% and 80.4% for males between 16-74, and 50.6% and 65.5% for females in the same age group ([Turkish Statistical Institute, 2018](#)). However, [Bayraktar \(2001\)](#) found no relationship between gender and Internet addiction. When taking studies in the literature into consideration, male students can be suggested to tend to spend more time on the Internet than females.

The Internet addiction scores for gifted and talented students who use the Internet for chatting and playing games is higher for the subscales of deprivation, control difficulty, functional disorder, and social isolation. According to [Hawi \(2012\)](#), research conducted in Lebanon has found 84.2% of participants use the Internet for communication; 65.7% for finding information, doing research, and mailing; 51.2% for entertainment, listening to music, watching films, and playing games; and 4.6% for other purposes. [Young \(1996\)](#) revealed that Internet addicts use it for communication and playing games while people not addicted to the Internet use it for getting information. Therefore, enabling the gifted and talented students to chat in real situations lessens their Internet addiction.

According to the results, gifted and talented students' perceived deprivation, control difficulty, functional disorder, and social isolation increase with increases in the frequency of connecting to the Internet and time spent on it. [Young \(1996\)](#), [Hawi \(2012\)](#), and [Morahan-Martin and Schumacher \(2000\)](#) found that individuals addicted to the Internet spend 38.5 hours on the Internet per week and individuals not addicted to the Internet spend 4.9 hours on the Internet per week. [Chou and Hsiao \(2000\)](#) revealed that individuals addicted to the Internet spend three times more on the Internet and spare more time on services such as instant messaging, e-mail, and games. On this point, the role of parents and students' self-control ability must be improved.

According to the results of the Household Information Technologies Usage Research done in the first half of 2012, 47.2% of the houses in Turkey have Internet access (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2012). The Internet and computer-use rates for individuals in the 16-74 age group was found respectively at 56.6% and 66.8% for 2017 and 59.6% and 72.9% for 2018 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2018). The number of families that get together through the Internet increases each passing day. Family factor has great significance in moderate and proper Internet use. Studies suggest that families with neglectful Internet attitudes are a great factor in their children's becoming addicted to the Internet (Tuncay & Horzum, 2013). In this respect, both families and students must be informed on proper and effective Internet use. Informing children about Internet use at an early age is extremely important.

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Kaynakça/References

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