

## The views of university students regarding Internet addiction

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### Abstract

In this study, it is aimed to determine the views of university students regarding Internet addiction. The study group consisted of 64 fourth year students studying at Kirikkale University Faculty of Arts and Sciences' Department of Philosophy and Kirikkale University Faculty of Health Sciences' Department of Child Development in Spring 2013–2014 academic year. In this study, university students' views regarding Internet Addiction Form, which consists of nine open-ended questions, were developed by the researcher in order to determine the university students' views about Internet addiction. According the findings of this research; not being able to fulfil the requirements of friendship, which are communication, sharing and responsibility; trying to overcome those via social media; being lonely, they have scarcely any family ties, the adolescent considers entering the courses and doing literature review in the library as a waste of time, and therefore, obtains insufficient academic information solely from the Internet.

**Keywords:** University students, Internet addiction, student views.

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## 1. Introduction

According to Hall as well, the personality of a person starts to gain its hallmark of precision in puberty and it takes shape as late as the adolescence period (Hall & Lindzey, 1957). The sense of identity could become established in the individual, under the influence of the following developmental tasks (Kilicci, 2000): (1) Establishment of the sense of being independent of the family, (2) Learning to be able to accept emotional dilemmas, (3) Being able to manage relationships with the authority, (4) Growing to sexual maturity, (5) Finding confidence in self-sufficiency and self-respect and (6) Gaining mature standards and values. The healthy progression of these phases is desired and expected in developmental terms.

On the other side, the ever-increasing use of the Internet with the advance of technology brings along the risk of addiction. Currently, the modern Internet has been presented as a combination of all previous communication technologies (Bargh & McKenna, 2004). Such interactions can potentially address many concerns of adolescence and emerging adulthood, such as the need for friendship and peer feedback (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009). Another reason is the characteristics of adolescence and emerging adulthood. Individuals start to develop a sense of identity and form close relations in the period of adolescence and emerging adulthood (Erikson, 1968; Schwartz, Cote & Arnett, 2005). Today, adolescents are intertwined with technology. Thanks to social networking as one of these technologies, adolescent finds the opportunity to externalise themselves not only in real life but also in a virtual environment (Deniz, 2012). Thompson (2007) states that social networking sites, especially Facebook, have great effects on the lives of millions of students. For example, it is known that there are many people spending most of their day using social networking sites. Therefore, it is thought that addiction to social networking sites causes Internet addiction. In literature, personality characteristics such as introversion and extraversion have been found to play a significant role in other online communication experiences (Butt & Phillips, 2008; Kraut et al., 2002). And this situation might be influential on the formation of the individual's personality within this period. To that end, this study aims to determine the views of university students regarding Internet addiction.

## 2. Method

The studies aiming to define a situation, which already exists or existed in the past, are studies designed according to the scanning model (Karasar, 2003). In this study, an existing situation was analysed since the study aims to determine the views of university students on Internet addiction. Therefore, this study is a patterned research designed according to the scanning model.

### 2.1. Participants

The sampling group consisted of 64 fourth year students studying at Kirikkale University Faculty of Arts and Science's Department of Philosophy and Faculty of Health Sciences' Department of Child Development during the spring 2013–2014 academic year. The number of female students participating in the study was 54 (84.38%, mean age = 21.407, SD = 0.83595) and the number of male students participating in the study was 10 (15.62%, mean age = 21.700, SD = 1.05935).

### 2.2. Research instrument

To examine university students' perceptions of Internet addiction, researchers developed the 'Student Views Regarding Internet Addiction Form', which consists of nine open-ended questions. Similar responses to the open-ended questions on 'What Internet addiction refers to, and future expectations, social relations, academic skills, family lives, professional expectations and personality traits of Internet addicts' were grouped together under common headings.

### 2.3. Limitations

The study was conducted with the participation of the fourth year students attending two separate departments at Kirikkale University, and thus results are generalisable only to universities with similar characteristics. Views of students examined in the study are limited to their responses to the ‘Questionnaire for Student Views on Internet Addiction’ used.

### 2.4. The analysis of the data

The answers given to the nine open-ended questions in the form were combined and gathered under common headings. Frequencies and percentages will be calculated later on.

## 3. Results (Findings)

### 3.1. Results regarding university students’ perception of Internet addiction

In this section, you can see the frequency and percentage distributions according to the answers given to the items in the ‘Student Views about Internet Addiction Form’.

**Table 1. Frequencies and percentage distributions of student views regarding what is meant by Internet addiction**

Opinions	n	%
The individual makes a mass medium, the computer, centre of his/her life and consequently, detaches himself/herself from the society and therefore, problems occur.	33	51.56
The excessive, inaccurate use and misuse of the Internet.	19	29.69
It is a type of addiction which makes one spend almost all of the day online and which creates uneasiness and anxiety.	8	12.50
It creates a ‘second’ self within oneself.	4	6.25

As seen in Table 1, 33% of the students mentioned ‘the individual makes a mass medium, the computer, centre of his/her life and consequently, detaches himself/herself from the society and therefore, problems occur’ as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 4% of the students mentioned ‘it creates a ‘second’ self within oneself’ as the least important characteristics.

**Table 2. Frequencies and percentage distributions of student views regarding the future expectations of Internet addicts**

Opinions	n	%
The adolescent spends most of his/her time online and reduces his/her chances of seeing life from a different perspective.	30	46.88
It paves the way for not being able to actualise present and prospective dreams about the future.	13	20.31
Having expectations about the future so as not to bring about physical exhaustion, to allow for increased use of the Internet and less social interaction.	13	20.31
Since addiction affects one negatively in terms of thinking and behaving in a healthy way, it causes expectations about any matter to go up or down.	7	10.94
Having egocentric future expectations.	1	1.56

As seen in Table 2, 30% of the students mentioned ‘the adolescent spends most of his/her time online and reduces his/her chances of seeing life through a different perspective’ as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 1% of the students mentioned ‘having egocentric future expectations’ as the least important characteristics.

**Table 3. Frequencies and percentage distributions of student views regarding the social interactions of Internet addicts**

<b>Opinions</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Having friends from social networking sites.	23	35.94
They have limited and problematic social interactions.	22	34.37
There happens to be problems with self-realisation in social life, encountering different social spheres and people, and having relationships with these people.	12	18.75
An addicted psychological state prevents one from an active socialisation.	7	10.94

As seen in Table 3, 23% of the students mentioned ‘having friends from social networking sites’ as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 7% of the students mentioned ‘an addicted psychological state prevents one from an active socialisation’ as the least important characteristics.

**Table 4. Frequencies and percentage distributions of student views regarding the friendship of Internet addicts**

<b>Opinions</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Not being able to fulfil the requirements of friendship, which are communication, sharing and responsibility; trying to overcome those via social media; being lonely.	59	92.18
The qualitative decrease in the number of friends, due to being uneasy and anxious, as well as not being able to have enough pleasure from friendly relationships.	3	4.69
The existent lack of experiences, social life and sense of identity that the university student should have gained in this particular period of his/her life.	2	3.13

As seen in Table 4, 59% of the students mentioned ‘not being able to fulfil the requirements of friendship, which are communication, sharing and responsibility; trying to overcome those via social media; being lonely’ as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 2% of the students mentioned ‘the existent lack of experiences, social life and sense of identity that the university student should have gained in this particular period of his/her life’ as the least important characteristics.

**Table 5. Frequencies and percentage distributions of student views regarding the academic skills of Internet addicts**

<b>Opinions</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
The adolescent considers entering the courses and doing literature review in the library as a waste of time, and therefore, obtains insufficient academic information solely from the Internet.	38	59.37
Since the addicted university student does not regularly go to school and follow the courses, it results in a fall in the interest for exams, as well as in academic success.	24	37.50
If Internet addiction is utilised for one’s self-realisation in his/her academic career, this happens to be a reference for the person.	2	3.13

As seen in Table 5, 38% of the students mentioned ‘the adolescent considers entering the courses and doing literature review in the library as a waste of time, and therefore, obtains insufficient academic information solely from the Internet’ as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 2% of the students mentioned ‘if Internet addiction is utilised for one’s self-realisation in his/her academic career, this happens to be a reference for the person’ as the least important characteristics.

**Table 6. Frequencies and percentage distributions of student views regarding the family life of Internet addicts**

<b>Opinions</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
They have scarcely any family ties.	40	62.50
The university student with Internet addiction cannot share his/her experiences, problems, desires, emotions and thoughts, and therefore, has conflicts with the family members.	12	18.75
They cannot fulfil familial duties because of spending time online and this paves the way for interfamilial conflicts.	9	14.06
The family members come together only on specific time periods.	3	4.69

As seen in Table 6, 40% of the students mentioned ‘they have scarcely any family ties’ as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 3% of the students mentioned ‘the family members come together only on specific time periods’ as the least important characteristics.

**Table 7. Frequencies and percentage distributions of student views regarding the vocational expectations of Internet addicts**

<b>Opinions</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Having a preference for jobs that require less one-to-one interaction and use of the Internet.	32	50.00
Not having many vocational expectations due to Internet addiction; preferring to postpone dreams; having problems with the allocation of time and possible future vocational roles to be attained.	16	25.00
Not being able to realise the requirements for actualising the dreamt job.	10	15.62
Not having any concern whatsoever for the future.	6	9.38

As seen in Table 7, 32% of the students mentioned ‘having a preference for jobs that require less one-to-one interaction and use of the Internet’ as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 6% of the students mentioned ‘not having any concern whatsoever for the future’ as the least important characteristics.

**Table 8. Frequencies and percentage distributions of student views regarding the personality traits of Internet addicts**

<b>Opinions</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
They are introverted, anti-social and underdeveloped in terms of looking from different perspectives; problematic in terms of how to behave in social environments.	30	46.88
They are detached from life and regard cyberspace as their world.	23	35.93
They are not able to set objectives for life; not aware of their own necessities; do not care for others’ values; not aware of social problems.	7	10.94
A depressed or overjoyed psychological state.	4	6.25

As seen in Table 8, 30% of the students mentioned ‘they are introverted, anti-social and underdeveloped in terms of looking from different perspectives; problematic in terms of how to behave in social environments’ as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 4% of the students mentioned ‘a depressed or overjoyed psychological state’ as the least important characteristics.

**Table 9. Frequencies and percentage distributions of student views regarding making use of leisure time of Internet addicts**

<b>Opinions</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Spending leisure time with the computer.	61	95.31
Spending leisure time in sleeping and resting in order to relieve physical pain due to time spent online.	2	3.13
Not participating in social activities such as going on trips, going to the gym; nor reading, researching and learning.	1	1.56

As seen in Table 9, 61% of the students mentioned ‘spending leisure time with the computer’ as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 1% of the students mentioned ‘not participating in social activities such as going on trips, going to the gym; nor reading, researching and learning’ as the least important characteristics.

#### **4. Discussion**

The views of university final grade students regarding Internet addiction, which are on the first rank according to preference frequencies, are as follows: The individual makes a mass medium, the computer, centre of his/her life and consequently, detaches himself/herself from the society and therefore, problems occur (33); the adolescent spends most of his/her time online and reduces his/her chances of seeing life from a different perspective (30); having friends from social networking sites (23); not being able to fulfil the requirements of friendship, which are communication, sharing and responsibility; trying to overcome those via social media; being lonely (59); the adolescent considers entering the courses and doing literature review in the library as a waste of time, and therefore, obtains insufficient academic information solely from the Internet (38); having scarcely any family ties (40); having a preference for jobs that require less one-to-one interaction and use of Internet (32); being introverted, anti-social, underdeveloped in terms of looking from different perspectives; problematic in terms of how to behave in social environments (30) and spending leisure time with the computer (61). In other words, the Internet can create addiction when it is the main tool of communication through which one shares their loneliness and which increases the number of online rather than face-to-face friends, diminishes interest in things other than the Internet and consumes most of a person’s time. Findings of the present study are parallel to those of Bargh and McKenna (2004), Pempek et al. (2009), Deniz (2012), Thompson (2007), Butt and Phillips (2008) and Kraut et al. (2002). Therefore, it can be argued that Internet use can turn into an addiction whether the person involved notices it or not.

#### **5. Result and suggestions**

As a result, it is seen that according to university students, Internet addiction causes the individual to put Internet at the centre of his/her life and be detached from the society; prevents his/her perspective to be developed; to have problems with both his/her family and friends in terms of sharing, as well as the continuity and development of their relationships; to develop academic skills mostly via Internet; to prefer jobs that make use of Internet a lot and to spend time on computer. The following suggestions might be made in line with these results: By identifying the university students’ reasons behind their uses of the Internet throughout their education and by providing psychological

counselling, their awareness might be raised and behaviours might be changed accordingly. Moreover, research might be done on the families and environments of the addicts and it could be evaluated if the outcomes support the results of this study or not. Finally, this research might be done on students from different universities, different classes and seen if the outcomes support the results of this study or not.

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