Chapter 5
Psychological Maltreatment and Internet Addiction: Is Psychological Maltreatment a Risk Factor?

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ABSTRACT

Internet use enhances one’s quality of life; yet, excessive use may lead to various problems for their healthy development and wellbeing. Understanding the risk and protective factors in internet addiction has importance to promote individuals’ positive development and wellbeing. Therefore, the purpose of the present chapter is to explore the role of psychological maltreatment in the development of the internet addiction. Psychological maltreatment is a significant public health problems associated with a range of short and long–term undesirable mental health and wellbeing outcomes in childhood to adulthood. Considering the outcomes supporting the significant role of child maltreatment on the development of internet addiction, it is clear that maltreated individuals are at–risk to develop internet addiction, and psychological maltreatment, as a risk factor, has a crucial role in the development of internet addiction. However, evidences here are relatively limited, and there is need further research investigated long–term impacts of psychological maltreatment on internet addiction.

INTRODUCTION

Internet use has become a prominent part of individuals’ daily life, and people can solve many day-to-day problems and obtain knowledge using the internet (e.g. taking online courses, finding specific information, and talking with others; Tsai & Lin, 2001; 2003). Given these benefits of internet use, internet use enhances individuals’ quality–of–life; however, excessive use may lead to various problems for their healthy development and wellbeing (Arslan, 2017a). In recent years, a growing number research have demonstrated that internet addiction is associated with psychopathology, such as depression, anxiety, social adaptation problems, physiological dysfunction (e.g., Akın & Iskender, 2011; Arslan, 2017a; Cao, DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3477-8.ch005
Sun, Wan, Hao, & Tao, 2011; Şahin, 2014; Özdemir, Kuzucu, & Ak, 2014; Young & Rodgers, 1998), personality traits (Celik, Atak, & Basal, 2012; Kim, Namkoong, Ku, & Kim, 2008; Dong, Wang, Yang, & Zhou, 2013), psychosocial variables, including shyness, compassion, loneliness (Ayas, 2012; Iskender & Akin, 2011; Özdemir et al., 2014), and wellbeing indicators, such as psychological wellbeing, life satisfaction (Bozoglan, Demirer, & Sahin, 2013; Cardak, 2013; Cao et al., 2011; Çelik & Odacı, 2013; Odacı, & Çıkrıkçı, 2014; Telef, 2016). In addition, many other research aimed to explore the diagnostic criteria and treatment of internet addiction disorder (e.g., Beard, 2011; Beard & Wolf, 2001; Caldwell & Cunningham, 2010; Chrismore, Betzelberger, Bier, & Camacho, 2011; Griffiths, 2005; Shaw & Black, 2008; Şenormanci, Konkan, & Sungur, 2012; Toa et al., 2010; Young, 1998; 2007; 2011; 2015).

Despite this increasing literature of the internet addiction, there is no consensus on the definition and diagnostic criteria of internet addiction. Moreover, given the literature, many terms have been used to describe the internet addiction, such as excessive internet use, pathological internet use, problematic internet use, and compulsive internet use (Widyanto & Griffiths, 2006). Young (1998) has defined the internet addiction using the set of diagnostic criteria of pathological gambling, modeled them on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV), and she defined the internet addiction as “an impulse-control disorder which does not involve an intoxicant” (p. 238). In this regard, internet addiction is considered as an impulse-control disorder with no involvement of an intoxicant; thus, it is akin to pathological gambling (Young, 2004; Whang, Lee, & Chang, 2003). Another study by Griffiths (2005) has described a components model of the internet addiction within a biopsychosocial framework, and proposed that internet addiction consists of several distinct common components (i.e., salience, tolerance, mood modification, conflict, withdrawal, and relapse). Chrismore, Betzelberger, Bier, and Camacho (2011) have defined the internet addiction as, like chemical addictions, a primary, progressive disease. Therefore, individuals with internet addiction use the internet excessively that creates psychological, social, school, and/or work difficulties in their life (Beard & Wolf, 2001). Young (2011) has stated three subtypes (excessive gaming, sexual preoccupations, and e-mail/text messaging), four components (excessive use, withdrawal, tolerance, negative repercussions), and eight criteria (see Table 1) for defining internet addiction.

More recently, Toa et al. (2010) have identified several internet addiction disorder symptoms, and they proposed a diagnostic criterion for internet addiction as follows;

### Table 1. Young’s criteria for Internet Addiction Disorder

| 1. Do you feel preoccupied with the Internet (think about previous online activity or anticipate next online session)? |
| 2. Do you feel the need to use the Internet with increasing amounts of time in order to achieve satisfaction? |
| 3. Have you repeatedly made unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop Internet use? |
| 4. Do you feel restless, moody, depressed, or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop Internet use? |
| 5. Do you stay online longer than originally intended? |
| 6. Have you jeopardized or risked the loss of a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of the Internet? |
| 7. Have you lied to family members, therapists, or others to conceal the extent of involvement with the Internet? |
| 8. Do you use the Internet as a way of escaping from problems or of relieving a dysphoric mood (e.g., feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, depression)? |
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