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Investigation of High School Students' Internet Parental Styles in Relation with Several Variables

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate internet parental styles of high school students in terms of gender, grade and parental warning. The sample of the study consists of high school students, who were selected through convenience sampling method, studying in the city of Sakarya. In this study, Ayas and Horzum (2013), the Turkish version of ''Internet Parental Style Scale'', was used. The scale was developed in Dutch by Rooij and Eijden (2007) and translated into English by Valcke et al. (2010). The scale has two sub-dimensions: family control and family intimacy. The findings of the study revealed that internet parental styles of high school students differed according to gender and grade, but it did not show a significant difference according to the parental warning.

1. Introduction

In today's world, the use of internet is rapidly increasing and becoming widespread. Internet has become indispensable in the lives of individuals due to the means and facilities it provides to access communication and information (Ayas and Horzum, 2013). The number of internet users is increasing day by day as a result of the widespread use of it in daily life. According to the report "Digital in 2018" prepared by "We Are Social" and "Hootsuite" in January 2018, the number of internet users worldwide has increased by 9.1% and reached 4.38 billion people.

The number of people who use the Internet throughout Turkey has reached 59.36 million people with an increase by 9.3% when compared to last year. According to the data, 72% of Turkey's population uses the internet (We Are Social, 2018). The Internet addresses people from different backgrounds with different age groups and it is used by individuals for different purposes. Bujala (2012) has determined that the most performed activities in internet use for girls and boys are checking e-mails, surfing on the web and following the news. In addition, it is concluded that the internet is used for visiting social networks, doing research, instant messaging, sending e-mails, downloading or listening music, visiting video sharing sites, health issues and entertainment. A research study, in which the criteria for problematic internet use with high school students were determined, found that the girls used the internet for chatting and social networks and the boys used it for online games or online purchases. In the same study, it was concluded that girls spent more time on the internet than men (Fernandez-Villa et al., 2015). The Internet is generally used for communication, quick access to information, following up-to-date developments, shopping and bank affairs (Balcı and Ayhan, 2007).

As a result of the rapid development of information technologies, the Internet is used in all subject areas of life, and when it is used correctly, it provides important skills such as access to information, problem solving and self-learning (Ayas and Horzum, 2013). However, when the internet is misused and over-used, it may cause some problems. Excessive use of the Internet may cause negative effects such as loneliness, communication anxiety and popularity anxiety in individuals (Odacı and Kalkan, 2010). In addition, Çuhadar (2012) notes that the use of internet may cause social interaction anxiety. Furthermore, uncontrolled use of internet may cause psychosocial dissonance by increasing the likelihood of hyperactivity and behavior problems in individuals, especially in adolescents (Kormas, Critselis, Janikian, Kafetzis & Tsitsika, 2015). However, the increase in the time spent on the Internet may lead to consequences such as substance use, aggression and depression (Liu, Desai, Krishnan-Sarin, Cavallo and Potenza, 2011). When the internet is misused and used uncontrollably, it may result in behavior problems, hyperactivity and depression, and may cause weakened physical health and effected daily life activities (Asam, Samara and Terry, 2019).

Baumrind (1971, 1991) describes parental styles through parental control and parental warmth, which are two different aspects of parenting behavior. Parental control includes family guidance, stopping certain behavior related to the internet, and setting rules for internet use (Uysal, Çakıroğlu, & Horzum, 2017). Parental warmth, on the other hand, explains child support and the degree of communication with the child (Valcke et al., 2010). Parental style plays an important role in determining the behavior of children and adolescents, parent support strongly influences their development (Wilmshurst, 2008).

Families must be very cautious in order to protect children and adolescents from psychological and sociological negative effects of excessive internet use. In a study examining the relationship between the child and the family for the use of the Internet, it was concluded that the parents did not control enough about the children while they were on the Internet and they did not take enough precautions to protect their children from the negative effects of the internet (Kırık, 2014). One of the reasons for individuals' orientation to the Internet is the lack of good relations with the family (Bayraktutan, 2005). In a study which parents' style and behaviors towards their parents were investigated, it was revealed that families did not have enough knowledge about how to control their children on the internet, they could not control them, they used the internet for reward or punishment and they could not spend quality time with their children (İnan, 2014). It has been concluded that having a sufficient level of knowledge about the use of the internet is very important for the protection of children. Park, Kim and Cho (2008) concluded that parents' attitudes, communication within the family, family harmony and family violence and internet addiction were related. Doğan (2013) remarked that the individuals who used the internet at home, had parents using cigarettes and alcohol and who had working mothers were at a higher risk of internet addiction.

Altıntaş and Öztabak (2016) found a positive relationship between overuse and problematic internet use of individuals and protective and demanding and authoritarian style of families and found a low negative relationship with democratic family style. Ayas and Horzum (2013) concluded that parents who showed laissez faire family style played an important role in internet addiction. Çevik and Çelikkaleli (2010) found that families with a laissez faire style were more likely to have higher levels of internet addiction compared to individuals with permissive, authoritarian and authoritative parental style.

It is seen that internet parental style is associated with the internet use and duration (Eastin, Greenberg & Hofschire, 2006; Ihmeideh and Shawareb, 2014; Lee, 2013; Livingstone and Helsper, 2008; Valcke et al., 2010), educational use of internet (Horzum and Bektaş, 2014; Lee and Chae , 2007), problematic internet use and internet addiction (Ayas and Horzum, 2013; Cheung, Yue & Wong, 2015; Leung and Lee, 2012; Moazedian, Taqavi, HosseiniAlmadani, Mohammadyfar, & Sabetimani, 2014), parental style in everyday life (Deniz, Ayas, Horzum & Koç, 2016); online information research strategies (Uysal, Çakıroğlu, & Horzum, 2017); and attitudes towards internet and self-efficacy (Alpaslan, 2014) in the research studies. In addition, there are studies which have investigated internet parental style in relation to gender (Ayas and Horzum, 2013; Horzum, Duman and Uysal, In press) and age (Deniz et al., 2016; Gutman et al., 2011; Horzum, Duman & Uysal, In press; Özgür, 2016; Rosen, Cheever, & Carrier, 2008). When the literature is examined, it is seen that the family internet parental style has an effect on the internet usage of individuals. It has been identified that the research about internet parental style is rare in Turkey. Due to the fact that the studies about the subject matter are inadequate and the studies which have been conducted with high school students about the internet parental style are even more scarce and internet parental style has a role in individuals' use of

internet and therefore it becomes necessary to investigate internet parental style of high school students in Turkey. The aim of this study is, to this end, to examine whether the high school students' internet parental styles differ in gender, grade, and the parental warning when they receive the internet for a long time or not.

2. Method

The research was carried out in accordance with the cross-sectional survey design. Cross-sectional studies are generally defined as research involving a community which includes a large and diverse sample (Büyüköztürk, 2013).

2.1. Participants

The study participants consisted of 722 high school students in Sakarya, which were selected by convenience sampling method. Information on the demographic characteristics of the study group is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the sample group by gender, parent and grade

Variables		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	357	49,4
	Male	365	50,6
Parent	Mother	511	70,8
	Father	211	29,2
Grade	9th Grade	166	23
	10th Grade	222	30,7
	11th Grade	179	24,8
	12th Grade	155	21,5
	Total	722	

2.2. Instruments

In this study Turkish version of ''Internet Parental Style Scale'' was used. The scale was developed in Dutch by Rooij and Eijden (2007) and translated into English by Valcke et al. (2010) and translated to the Turkish Ayas and Horzum (2013). The scale consists of 25 items which are 5-Likert items and consists of 2 factors. The scale has two sub-dimensions: parental control and warmth. The Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient of the Internet Parental Style Scale is 0.94. The score of sub-dimensions is between 11 and 55 in family control and 14 to 70 in family warmth.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The scales were distributed by hand to high school students who studied in Sakarya, Turkey on a voluntary basis. SPSS 21 was used for the analysis of the data. Since the collected data met the normal distribution hypothesis, parametric tests were performed. In the analysis of the data, t-tests were used to analyze gender and the parental warning differences for internet parental styles; one-way ANOVA was used to analyze the grade differences for internet parental styles. A statistical significance level of .05 was used.

3. Results

Findings of the research were presented with sub-groups as gender, grade, and parental warning. Firstly, independent samples t-test was conducted for gender and the data obtained from the analysis are given in Table 2.

Table 2. T-Test Results of Internet Parental Style Levels According to the Gender of High School Students

Internet Parental Style Factors	Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t	p
Parental Control	Female	357	19,85	8,08	720	2,44	,015
	Male	365	18,36	8,17			
Parental Warmth	Female	357	36,63	13,49	720	8,14	,000
	Male	365	28,28	14,07			

When the results of Table 2 were examined, it was found that there was a significant difference in terms of internet parental style, parental control (t = 2,44) and warmth (t = 8,14) according to gender (p <.05). According to the results of the analysis, the parental control of the female students ($\bar{x}$= 19.85) were found to be higher than the parental control of the male students ($\bar{x}$ = 18.36), the family warmth of female students ($\bar{x}$= 36.63) were found to be higher than the family warmth of male students ($\bar{x}$= 28.28).

In the research, it was examined whether the internet parental styles differed according to the grades of the students. As the data covered 4 different grade levels, internet parental style was examined by one-way ANOVA according to grade. The data obtained from the analysis are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The Difference in internet parental style of the High School Students According to the Grade Level One-Way ANOVA.

Factors	Grade	N	$\bar{x}$	S		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	p	Post-Hoc (Bonferroni adjustment)
Parental Control	9	166	20,09	7,99	Between Groups	704,67	3	243,89	3,568	,014	9-12, 10-12
	10	222	19,81	8,65							
	11	179	18,70	7,61	Within Groups	47271,74	718	65,83			
	12	155	17,49	7,99							
	Total	722	19,10	8,15	Total	47976,41	721				
Parental Warmth	9	166	33,52	13,12	Between Groups	3949,22	3	1316,40	6,492	,000	9-12, 10-12
	10	222	34,95	14,72							
	11	179	31,46	14,49	Within Groups	145581,94	718	202,76			
	12	155	28,68	14,37							
	Total	722	32,41	14,40	Total	149531,17	721				

Parental control ($F_{(3, 718)}$ = 3.56) and warmth ($F_{(3, 718)}$ = 6.41) were found to be significantly different (p <.05) among high school students according to their grade. Bonferroni multiple comparison tests were used to determine which grade was the source of the difference in the factors determined. As a result of the multiple comparison test, it was determined that the students in the 12th grade had significantly lower internet parental control levels ($\bar{x}$= 17.49) than those of 9th grade ($\bar{x}$= 20.09) and 10th grade ($\bar{x}$= 19.81) students. Likewise, it was found that the students in the 12th grade had significantly lower internet parental warmth levels ($\bar{x}$= 28,68) than those of 9th grade ($\bar{x}$ = 33,52) and 10th grade ($\bar{x}$ = 34,95) students according to the multiple comparison test.

As the third variable in the study, when high school students used the Internet for a long time, they received warnings from their parents, and in this respect, whether the internet parental style according to the parental warning differed or not was examined. Independent samples t-test was performed in order to analyze the differences about internet parental styles depending on from whom the students received warnings when they used the internet for a long time and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. T-Test Results for Internet Parental Style Levels According to the Parental Warning of High School Students

Internet Parental Style Factors	Warning	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t	p
Parental Control	Mother	511	19,33	8,25	720	1,18	,238
	Father	211	18,54	7,91			
Parental Warmth	Mother	511	32,56	14,27	720	0,43	,660
	Father	211	32,04	14,72			

Table 4 showed that internet parental styles of the participating students did not yield statistically significant differences (p >.05) in terms of parental control (t = 2,44) and warmth (t = 8,14) when analyzed according to the variable of parental warning. In other words, the fact that the high school students received warnings from their mothers or fathers when they used the internet for a long time did not show a statistically significant difference for internet parental styles.

4. Discussion

The aim of this current study is to investigate whether the internet parental styles of secondary school students vary according to gender, grade level, and from whom they receive warnings when they spend too much time on the Internet. In line with this aim, the scarcity of the studies conducted on secondary school students' internet parental styles in Turkey increases the importance of this study. The fact that the internet parental style has a great effect on individual's use of internet as reported in the literature increases the importance of the present study.

The current research has showed that the female students' families have higher control over their internet use and higher warmth when compared to male students' families. This finding suggests that families are more democratic for their daughters and they are laissez-faire or permissive for their sons. The results are consistent with the findings of Ayas and Horzum (2013) and Deniz, Horzum, Ayas and Koç (2016), which were conducted with secondary school students, in that gender is significantly associated with internet parental style and laissez faire internet parental style is higher for male students. Moreover, Horzum, Duman and Uysal (In press) found that there was a gender difference in terms of family control and warmth. In the study, it was found that the families of female participants aged 10-17 were more attentive than the families of male participants in terms of both control and warmth. Accordingly, families may be more permissive or laissez faire about boys. The reason for more permissive or laissez faire of the families of male children may be that computers, internet and other technological tools are seen as male toys by the families (Horzum, 2011).

In the present research, it was found that the family control and warmth of 12th Grade students for internet parental styles were lower than the other grades and the scores were significantly lower than 9th and 10th Grades. This finding was consistent with other studies in the literature examining the relationship between Internet parental style and grade. In other studies in the literature (Ayas and Horzum, 2013; Deniz, Horzum, Ayas and Koç, 2016), it was found that there was a significant relationship between the grade and the internet parental style, and it was found that laissez faire parental style was higher in the upper classes while the authoritative parental style was higher in the lower classes. Additionally, the findings may be supported with the findings of studies in which internet parental styles and age variable were investigated and parental control and warmth were found to decrease as the age increased (Gutman et al., 2010; Horzum, Duman and Uysal, In press; Özgür, 2016; Rosen, Cheever, & Carrier, 2008). Since advancing to a higher grade brings an increase in students' age, the results may be evaluated in a similar vein for grade level. The decrease in the family warmth and control with the increase of the grade level might be denoted as an expected finding by the reason of that towards the end of high school education, students approach the age of 18 at which

students start to develop their own free behaviors and move to independent decision-making stages whereby parental control and warmth decrease.

Lastly, in the present study, it was found that parental warning differences when they used the internet for a long time did not yield statistically significant differences for the high school students. The results were in line with Deniz, Horzum, Ayas and Koç (2016) who conducted a study with secondary school students. It was found that the level of education of the parents, whether there was internet at home or not, the levels of internet use of parents, the help they received when they encountered a problem related to the net and from whom they received warnings in case of a long period of internet use were not significant for internet parental styles. This finding indicates that the parent who gives the warning may impose his/her own parental style for the internet use. In addition, this situation may be interpreted as the fact that parents show a family style in a similar way.

The study has some limitations. Firstly, internet parental style data were obtained through the scales given to the students. The parental styles perceived by the students and the actual parental styles may differ. For this reason, in future research studies, students' perceptions and the parental styles reflected by the parents may be investigated or studies can be conducted with parent reflections about internet parental styles. The data were collected from high schools in only one city. In order to reach more generalizable results, future research studies can be carried out by collecting data from cities in Turkey in accordance with three different levels of Turkey Statistical Regional Units Classification .In the study, internet parental style was examined in terms of some demographic variables such as gender, grade and parental warning. The following studies may investigate the demographic variables such as the school type (being private or public), the official status of the environment of the school (city or district), the environment in which students live (urban or rural areas), age, socio-economic situation or technologic facilities. In addition, studies associating personality traits, student's chronotype, sleep time, sleep quality, technology and the duration of the use of technology with internet parental style can be carried out.

In conclusion, it was revealed that family control and warmth in male students' families were low and as the grade increased, family control and warmth decreased. In this respect, it is recommended that the parents should take the responsibility in order for boys to use right technological tools and learn to use internet safely at young ages. In addition, it is expected that the authorities and officers of the schools should have the task of informing and warning the families about this issue and also providing the children with knowledge and skills about safe internet and right technological tools. Public announcements, informative messages, infographics, posters and brochures can be prepared about the issue and a large number of people may be informed through radio, television and social media.

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