

PROS AND CONS OF THE INTERNET AND ROLE OF PARENTS IN INTERNET ADDICTION

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ABSTRACT

Internet addiction among adolescents is an increasingly discussed social issue worldwide. Therefore, it is essential to deepen our understanding of its development to prevent both short- and long-term negative outcomes. The present study aimed to investigate the role of parents in the development of internet addiction in their children. The study sample consisted of 100 young individuals enrolled in colleges and universities, with participants aged between 16 and 28 years. The results of the analysis indicate that parents play a crucial role in determining their children's internet use. There was a strong correlation found between internet addiction and co-parenting behaviors, especially when combined with severe and rejecting parenting approaches. In addition, a powerful prediction of children's internet illnesses was a discordant style of co-parenting together with strictness and overprotection. The association between co-parenting and internet addiction was also influenced by gender.

Keywords: Parental Role, Gender, Internet Addiction, Teenagers.

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INTRODUCTION

Humans may experience and explore important problems like autonomy, identity, and sexuality through the Internet which is significant in youth [1, 2]. Information and communication technology, such as social media, cellphones, PCs, and other gadgets, have grown significantly during the past ten years [3]. The majority of users of these tools are adolescents and young adults [4,5], mostly for interpersonal communication and social engagement [6]. While these technologies serve as platforms

for teenagers to navigate their developmental responsibilities, research indicates that they can also hinder personal growth. Excessive Internet use, particularly as a means to cope with psychological distress and negative emotions stemming from challenging parental and peer relationships, can be detrimental [7-10]. Parents and their parenting styles significantly influence a child's personality development. Several behavioral problems during adolescence, including Internet addiction, are linked to parental role. The

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Internet, a technological tool with numerous advantages and disadvantages, has become an integral part of everyday life. While optimal use for knowledge and academic purposes, such as preparing assignments or projects, can be beneficial, excessive use especially for gaming can be harmful. Being a parent is both a blessing and a challenging task. Parents are a child's first and closest relationships, and the nature of this early bond, whether positive or negative, shapes the child's personality [11]. Among the various challenges of parenting, internet addiction has emerged as one of the most difficult issues for parents to address. The term "internet addiction" was initially used for scientific study with the goal of creating diagnostic standards akin to those for compulsive gambling addiction. The researcher made the case that the signs and symptoms of internet addiction are similar to those of substance addiction. The word "addiction" so fits the definition of using the internet [12]. The role of parents and families is crucial in influencing internet use and the development of addictive behaviors among adolescents. Parental role has been identified as a strong predictor of both internet addiction and depression in young people [13-15].

Parents play an essential role in the personality development of children and adolescents. In Parental Acceptance-Rejection (PAR) theory, researchers explained that parental acceptance and rejection exist on a continuum, with parental physical and psychological acceptance at one end and parental physical and psychological rejection at the other. The warmth dimension encompasses parental love, care, and support, all of which signify parental acceptance. In contrast, the absence of these qualities indicates parental rejection. Parents express warmth towards their children in various ways, including physical gestures such as hugging, kissing, smiling, and caressing, as well as verbal expressions like praising words, storytelling, and singing. When

children perceive themselves as unloved or experience a lack of parental warmth, they often develop a negative worldview, leading to feelings of insecurity, aggression, and inadequacy [16, 17]. Parental rejection is a root cause of numerous behavioral problems during adolescence, including depression, negative thoughts, substance abuse, and other antisocial behaviors. A weaker parent-child relationship, particularly characterized by a father's detachment and coldness, strongly correlates with internet addiction among adolescents.

The purpose of this study is to look into how parental role affects teenage internet addiction development. The results of this study will help parents create plans that will help them shield their teenagers from harmful internet use. The findings will also have consequences for educators, parents, and mental health providers.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The phase of adolescence brings various physical, social, and psychological changes and challenges, which are exacerbated by deficient coping skills for managing and understanding self-regulation. Prolonged internet use is increasingly common among adolescents, who represent the hope of the nation [18]. Spending excessive time online can hinder their future goals. The transition from childhood to adolescence introduces many changes, including influences from both internal and external factors within their social environment. Externally, adolescents face peer pressure in decision-making, while internally, their developmental requirements are largely shaped by their parents and teachers [19, 20].

There are various ecological structures in adolescents' surroundings that influence their behaviors. These structures operate at different levels: the immediate and direct communication environment refers to microsystems, while the interactions among these connections are called mesosystems, representing their broader social background. Continuous interaction

with these ecological structures also evolves individual behavior. Among these components, the family environment is often the most stressful and unpleasant for adolescents.

Addictive internet use can also adversely affect adolescents' mental well-being. The family environment plays a crucial role in excessive internet use among this age group. Many adolescents do not recognize that they are spending too much time online; they often believe they are using the internet appropriately [21]. Maladaptive behaviors, such as antisocial behavior and conduct disorders, often stem from the relationships adolescents have with their parents. Positive relationships with parents foster socially competent personalities. When children do not receive physical and verbal affection from their parents, they may attempt to conceal their feelings through other mental engagements, including excessive internet use. During adolescence, the level of love and affection received from parents can significantly impact behavior. Decreased parental acceptance often drives adolescents toward increased internet usage [22]. Continuous criticism from parents can create discomfort in adolescents' physical environments, leading them to seek acceptance and comfort in virtual spaces where they are not criticized. In families where parents are busy and spend little time with their children, the parent-child relationship may weaken, prompting adolescents to seek emotional support for their psychological insecurities online, ultimately resulting in internet addiction.

The parental role is strong predictors of uncontrollable internet use among adolescents. The success and development of a nation depend on the mental and physical well-being of its youth, highlighting the need to explore the physical and psychological challenges affecting the well-being of the next generation.

METHODOLOGY

The present research utilized a correlational research design to examine the role of parental acceptance or rejection in the addictive use of the internet among university students. A simple random sampling technique was employed for data collection. The study's participants consisted of 100 undergraduate students from colleges and universities, aged between 16 and 28 years [22-25]. The demographic information was collected through a Personal Information Questionnaire, which gathered data on variables such as parents' level of education, economic status, age, sex, and the participants' mother tongue. To measure internet addiction, the Internet Addiction Test developed by Kimberly Young was administered to the participants. This test includes 20 items designed to assess the duration of internet use and the presence of symptoms associated with internet addiction. The test categorizes internet addiction into three levels: Mild, Moderate, and Severe. Scores range from 20 to 100, with scores between 50 and 79 indicating addictive internet use. A score of 80 to 100 signifies severe internet addiction, while a score of 49 or lower is considered normal [26].

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to investigate the role of parental role in the development of internet addiction among adolescents. The results indicated that both maternal and paternal influences contribute to the development of internet addiction in adolescents; notably, paternal rejection was found to be a stronger predictor of internet addiction than maternal rejection. However, paternal rejection emerged as a stronger predictor of internet addiction compared to maternal rejection. The results show that, on average, males exhibit higher levels of internet addiction than females. The study's results indicated that both maternal and paternal roles are strong

indicators of internet addiction among adolescents.

Internet addiction has become a serious problem, especially among young adolescents who are particularly vulnerable to it [27]. These findings are not unexpected; parents play a crucial role in a child's life, serving as sources of love, support, and care. A lack of parent-child communication has a direct link to internet addiction, acting as a stronger predictor for children who feel rejected by their parents [28]. The results of the present study align with previous research with this relationship mediated by discrimination and lower academic engagement.

The nature of the relationship between a child and their parents plays a crucial role in determining behavioral and emotional issues as they transition into adolescence. The study's results indicate that father paternal rejection is a strong predictor of internet addiction among adolescents. Previous research has shown positive outcomes associated with fathers' involvement in their children's education, social relationships, and psychological well-being [29, 30]. Fathers play a crucial role in a child's personality development; a lack of paternal warmth or fatherly rejection can lead to various psychological and behavioral issues during adolescence. However, Pakistani research literature lacks extensive studies on this important topic. Strong bonds between adolescents and their fathers can mitigate the negative effects of paternal psychological control.

PARENTING STYLES

There is a lot of study on how parenting practices affect family members. Parents set guidelines for the family and make sure their kids follow the schedule and maintain order in the home. Parenting style has the biggest impact on teens' Internet addiction among all the components that make up the family dynamic. A number of parenting styles have been identified by earlier research [31, 32], including authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful. Warm and orderly, with high standards for

maturity set and high levels of responsiveness, control, and communication, authoritative parents give their kids a nurturing and disciplined home atmosphere.

Children raised by authoritarian parents usually feel secure and self-reliant, which helps them stay away from major behavioral and psychological problems. Authoritarian parents, on the other hand, emphasize stringent regulations and harsh penalties, expect obedience and compliance, and show poor levels of responsiveness and communication. Children of authoritarian parents frequently have low self-esteem, participate in criminal activities, look for social connections online, and use the Internet excessively [33].

Low control is a hallmark of permissive or indulgent parenting, when parents make great attempts to meet their children's needs and wants but seldom correct their incorrect behavior, children with permissive parents are more likely to exhibit deviant behaviors, abuse drugs, and become addicted to the Internet. Parents who are uncaring or rejecting frequently fail to notice their kids' emotional shifts, everyday needs, and inner thoughts. Usually, they don't attend to and fulfill the social, psychological, and physical requirements of their kids. Internet usage disorders are highly correlated with a neglectful or rejecting parenting style.

THE ROLE OF GENDER

Gender differences exist in various addictive behaviors. During the socialization process, girls are often taught to fulfill multiple roles at home. As a result, they tend to be busy with their responsibilities, and, alongside their educational pursuits, girls in Pakistan typically have less time available for internet usage. Gender is a key predictor of Internet addiction, according to earlier research. Patterns and applications of Internet usage are impacted by the gender gap. The women largely utilize the Internet for educational support and interpersonal communication, whereas men generally use

it for pleasure and leisure. Additional research indicates that men and women use social media for different purposes. Men are more likely to use it for dating and education, while women are more likely to exchange images and keep up with friends [34]. Males also exhibit higher degrees of Internet addiction and obsessive Internet use. Among heavy users, the proportion of males surpasses that of females, and they tend to score higher on the Internet addiction test [35].

PARENTS' PREVENTIVE ROLE

Teenagers spend almost all of their waking hours on the internet, making it their main preoccupation. Parental rejection exacerbates the problem of internet addiction. Parents are important people in a child's life and play a critical part in the development of their personalities. The development of habits, and the potential for those habits to evolve into addiction, can be moderated through parental warmth and affection [36, 37].

Parents should participate in training programs to learn how to effectively monitor and control their children's internet usage. Furthermore, parents should reduce their own internet usage in order to spend quality time with their children. Reducing the communication gap between adolescents and parents is also vital. Particularly, a positive child-father relationship can act as a moderator, enhancing the father's behavioral control and alleviating feelings of rejection [38].

Training programs for parents should emphasize the importance of both paternal and maternal involvement in their children's daily lives and effective parental control strategies. Such control includes the ability to monitor, limit, and block internet activities. Adolescents who experience emotional and psychological disturbances

may seek escape in the virtual world. Therefore, fostering a strong bond between children and parents, building mutual trust, maintaining healthy and open communication, and creating a comfortable environment are critical coping strategies to protect adolescents from internet addiction and their dependency on the virtual environment [39].

CONCLUSION

The internet has become an integral part of modern life. While it offers numerous benefits, excessive use can lead to addiction. When adolescents experience parental rejection or a lack of warmth and affection, they may turn to the internet for solace, especially when feeling depressed or lonely. This is significantly associated with various psychological issues among adolescents. Excessive use of the internet in the context of parental role is a serious concern, as it can lead to numerous behavioral, social, emotional, and psychological problems. Internet addiction is as harmful as gambling, alcohol, and drug addiction. Gender differences in problematic internet use reveal that males often exhibit higher levels of addiction than females, likely due to the better supervision that female adolescents receive from family members. The findings of this study are significant for developing prevention strategies and programs aimed at controlling internet addiction among adolescents.

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