

The Mediator Role of Authenticity in the Relation between Submissive Behaviors and Internet Addiction

[1] anligazanfer@gmail.com, Bursa Technical University, Department of Psychology, Bursa, Turkey

Gazanfer ANLI [1]

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to examine the mediator role of the authenticity in the relation between submissive behaviors and internet addiction. The research population was composed of 384 students in two secondary school located in İstanbul. The data were obtained by using the Authenticity Scale, Submissive Behavior Scale and Internet Addiction Scale. The frequency, arithmetical mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation coefficient, regression and sobel test were used in analysis of the data. Correlation analysis showed that submissive behaviors is correlated positively with internet addiction and negatively with authenticity. The first step of the multiple regression analysis results showed that internet addiction significantly influenced the authenticity ($\beta = -.26$, $t = -6.5$, $p < .00$). In regression analysis in the second step, authenticity was statistically significant in predicting submissive behaviors ($\beta = -.44$, $t = -14.43$, $p < .00$). Regression analysis performed in the third stage showed that internet addiction was a significant predictor of submissive behaviors ($\beta = .40$, $t = 8.66$, $p < .00$). Finally, authenticity was included in the last model to determine its' mediating role between internet addiction and submissive behaviors. In this model, internet addiction and authenticity both entered the equation and the effect of the internet addiction on submissive behaviors decreased ($\beta = .24$, $t = 5.75$, $p < .00$). The sobel test was calculated if this decrease was significant and it was found that the authenticity had a partial mediator role in the relationship between submissive behaviors and internet addiction ($z = 7.51$, $p < .001$).

Keywords: *submissive behaviors; authenticity; internet addiction; mediation; secondary school students.*

INTRODUCTION

In adolescence, individuals may be engaged in such issues as seeking identity, belonging to a group, spending time with the friends they love and gaining social status (Steinberg, 2013). They can suppress their own thoughts and feelings in order to see value and interest from significant others and the group they belong to (Compas, Orosan & Grant, 1993; Öngen, 2006). Adolescents with high levels of submissive behaviors are often seen as passive, quiet and having low participation in social activities (Parkhurst & Asher, 1992).

Submissive behaviors

Submissive individuals have the traits of being unable to express their ideas clearly, forced to say no, making a superior effort not to break someone else, not to reflect their anger to others, and trying to make other individuals happy by ignoring themselves. (Gilbert & Allan, 1994). Submissive people usually suppresses

their feelings, especially when they see themselves down from others, thinking that others are looking down on him, and doing what others say unconditionally (Gilbert et al., 2003). Other characteristics of people who exhibit submissive behavior are that they cannot be easily initiated, they have very low self-esteem, they have difficulty in taking serious responsibilities, avoiding changes, being a leader (Gilbert, Pehl & Allan, 1994). As a result of submissive behavior, they get less than they want while losing the respect of others. The individuals are likely to be exposed to a cycle of hostility, decreased self-esteem, and psychopathological issues (Allan & Gilbert, 1997).

Internet addiction

Internet addiction is a concept that one cannot control the use of the internet, which leads to negative outcomes in everyday life (Spada, 2014). Internet addiction or problematic internet usage has become an important issue for the whole world today. It is thought that adolescents and young adults are at high risk with a significant increase in overuse and problematic internet usage worldwide (Chatterjee, & Sinha B., 2012). Liu and Larose (2008) declared that Internet use among college students is an important indicator of psychological well-being. Higher online social activities were related to lower life satisfaction offline. Internet addiction can impact social functioning and academic performance (Young, 1999). Depression and obsessive-compulsive symptoms are directly correlated with internet addiction among adolescents (Ha et al., 2007) and adults (Young, 1999). Adolescents who report problematic internet use have been found to spend more time using the internet for multiplayer online games, chat rooms, multi-user domains (Morahan-Martin, 2005). Some studies showed that the internet may increase a person's level of loneliness and social isolation by taking time away from social activities, decrease family communication and reduce size of their local social circles (Sanders, Field, Diego, & Kaplan, 2000), and reduce romantic relationships and friendship quality (Blais, Craig, Pepler, & Connolly, 2008).

Authenticity

Authenticity is defined as "the unobstructed operations of one's true or core self in one's daily enterprise," and specifies four elements: awareness, action, unbiased processing and relational orientation (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 294). Authenticity includes having a consciousness of individual's beliefs, emotions, intentions and thoughts and accepting responsibility for choices and actions, as well as the limits of existence (AAMES, 2010). Authentic functioning extends back at least to the ancient Greek philosophers. These philosophers' phrases such as "Unexamined life is not worth living" and "Know thyself" are widely known (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Exploring one's internal processes and roles in society allows a deeper understanding of oneself, enabling one to live more authentically and provide meaning and purpose to his/her life. Aristotle stated the highest good is activity of the soul in agreement with the best and most complete virtue in a whole life (Wood et al., 2008). Renee Descartes furthered this self-inquiry, suggesting "*I think; therefore, I am*" for the first time. It is expressed that "what 'I am' means; a thing that doubts, realizes, confirms, refuses, willing, unwilling, ideates (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Heidegger (1995) declares that some individuals can experience a rapid awakening which is an invitation from the authentic section of oneself striving to rise, to come to life. Horney, Rogers, Winnicott and Yalom specified that "authenticity is not only a feature or sample to well-being, it's the core of health and total well-being (Wood et al., 2008, p. 386).

Wood et al. (2008) developed a model of authenticity which comprises three factors. *Self-alienation*, the first factor of authenticity, implicates disharmony between actual experience and mindfulness. The second factor of authenticity, *authentic living*, comprises one's behaviors and a way of express his/her emotions that is coherent with the awareness of emotions, cognitions, and beliefs. Authentic living comprises being honest to oneself in circumstances and living in agreement with his/her beliefs or morals. The last factor of authenticity, *accepting external influence*, contains the individual's level of accepting the influence of other people and feeling to have to comply with the expectations of others (Pinto, Maltby, & Wood, 2011; Pinto, Maltby, Wood, & Day, 2012).

Aim of the study

Specifically, authenticity is a concept that involves the constituents of awareness and unbiased processing. It

is likely that relationships also exist among these two components of authenticity and the eudaimonic concept of psychological well-being like personal growth, self-acceptance and actualization (Pisarik & Larson, 2011). Significantly, a group of studies showed that there was a positive correlation between authenticity and life satisfaction, subjective and psychological well-being (Kernis & Goldman, 2005a; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997; Wood et al., 2008) mindfulness (Lakey, Kernis, Heppner, & Lance, 2008), positive affect (Wood et al., 2008). Toor and Ofori's study (2009) demonstrated that, interpersonal relationships, psychological well-being, social skills and personal performance were significantly correlated with authenticity. Higher authenticity was negatively related to depression, anxiety, stress, self-alienation and positively related to self-esteem (Kernis & Goldman, 2005b; Wood et al., 2008). On the contrary, submissive behaviors and internet addiction were positively related to maladaptive constructs. Some studies indicated that submissive behavior was correlated positively with psychological symptoms (Anlı, 2018b; Sardoğan, Yılmaz, & Belliçi) and psychopathology (Allan & Gilbert, 1997). Internet addiction had a positive correlation with low life satisfaction (Cao et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2012), low well-being (Aa van der et al., 2009), loneliness (Ang, Chong, Chye & Huan, 2012) lack of confidence (Mythily, Qui & Winslow, 2008), low self-esteem (Wang et al., 2012), introversion (Aa van der et al., 2009), low emotional stability (Kuss et al., 2013), low social cohesion (Cao et al., 2011) and psychological symptoms (Taş, 2018). These studies clarified that submissive behaviors and internet addiction have common backgrounds. There is one study investigated the relationship between these concepts, and it was stated that internet addiction was positively correlated with submissive behaviors (Canan et al., 2010). In another study, authenticity had a predictive role on internet addiction (Anlı, 2018a). In the light of these studies, it's predicted that there's a significant, positive correlation between submissive behaviors and internet addiction levels and authenticity has a mediator role in this relationship.

Despite these findings, no study has investigated the mediator role of the authenticity in the relation between submissive behaviors and internet addiction. Based on the relationships mentioned above, the present study sought to answer the following questions:

- Is there a significant and positive correlation between middle school students' submissive behaviors and internet addiction levels?;
- Does authenticity have a mediator role in the relation between submissive behaviors and internet addiction?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Model

The aim of this study is to examine the correlation between submissive behavior and internet addiction, and the mediator role of the authenticity on this relationship. It is correlational research since the relationship between two or more variables is examined without intervention of variables (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012, Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012).

Participants

The study was conducted with 384 students (223 women, 161 men) who were in 5-8. grade of a secondary school. Students' ages ranged from 10 to 14 years ($M = 12.1$, $SD = 1.13$). The convenience sampling method was determined which enables the sample to be selected from easily accessible and practical units (Bryman, 2004).

Data Collection Tools

Authenticity Scale

This scale was developed by Wood et al. (2008). The scale is a 12-item self-report inventory. The scale is a Likert type which have values of 1,2,3...7 and include expressions between "it's definitely not right for

me” and “it's definitely right for me” The scale is a measurement tool consisting of 12 sub-items and three sub-scales. These sub-scales are self-alienation, accepting external influence and authentic living. The highest score from this scale is 84 and the lowest score is 12. The higher score obtained from each subscale indicates that the relevant subscale has the characteristics evaluated. As a result of factor analysis to determine the structure validity of the scale, it was observed that the scale has three sub-dimensions that are compatible with the original form. The factor loadings of the items range from .60 to .83. A Turkish adaptation of this scale was implemented by İlhan and Özdemir (2013) with 240 Turkish university students (161 women, 79 men) and results yielded three factors explaining 26% of the total variance. Confirmatory factor analysis provided good fit indexes ($\chi^2/df = 1.49$, RMSEA = .05, CFI = .95, IFI = .95, GFI = .92). Internal consistencies were .79 for self-alienation, .72 for accepting external influence, and .75 for authentic living. In the present research, the reliability coefficient acquired from the scale was .71.

Submissive Acts Scale (SAS)

Gilbert and Allan (1994) developed this scale in their study with adolescents. It's a 5-point scale consists of 16 items. The scale focuses on explaining submissive social behaviors and can be implemented to adults and adolescents (Savaşır & Şahin, 1997). The Cronbach alpha point of the scale was found as .89 and test-retest reliability coefficient as .84. The Turkish adaptation of this scale was carried out by Şahin and Şahin (1992). The Cronbach alpha internal consistency of the Turkish version of this scale was determined as .74. In the present research, the reliability coefficient acquired from the scale was .69.

Internet Addiction Scale (IAS)

It was developed by K. Young (1998) on the basis of the DSM-IV criteria (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition) for pathological gambling. It comprises 20 items rated in a five-point Likert scale (from 1 - not at all to 5 - always). On the basis of the total score obtained on the test, the individual is placed into one of three categories: average online user (from 20 to 39) who has a full control of his or her usage; experiences frequent problems because of Internet use (from 40 to 69); or has significant problems because of excessive Internet use (from 70 to 100). Turkish adaptation of the scale was done by Bayraktar (2001). The Cronbach alpha internal consistency value obtained from the scale has been reported by Bayraktar (2001) as .91 and Spearman-Brown value as .87. It was indicated that the model was statistically significant as a result of the regression analysis ($f(11,29) = 26.165$, $p < .01$). In the scope of this research, the reliability coefficient obtained from the scale was .84.

Data Analysis

Submissive Acts Scale, Internet Addiction Scale and Authenticity Scale were implemented to the students in class hours as groups. Students voluntarily participated in the study. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was used to investigate the correlations among submissive behaviors, authenticity and internet addiction. Stepwise multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to examine whether submissive behaviors could be predicted by internet addiction and authenticity. Baron and Kenny (1986) model, in which the independent variable is a significant predictor of both dependent and mediated variables, and the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable is reduced when the mediating variable is added, was used in the mediation test. The Sobel test was examined whether the mediator effect of the authenticity was statistically significant. Data was analyzed by using IBM SPSS 24.0 program with a significance levels of .05 and .01.

FINDINGS

The arithmetic means and standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis values, alphas and intercorrelations of the all variables in the study were shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Submissive Behaviors, Internet Addiction and Authenticity

Variables	1	2	3
1. Authenticity	—		
2. Internet Addiction	-.320**	—	
3. Submissive Behaviors	-.594**	.405**	—
Mean	6,07	33,30	37,92
Sd	11,30	13,88	8,49
Skewness	-,08	,36	,06
Kurtosis	-,65	-,29	-,38
Cronbach's α	.71	.84	.69

**p<.01 *p<.05

As seen in Table 1, correlation analysis indicated that authenticity was correlated negatively with internet addiction ($r = -.32$; $p < .01$) and submissive behaviors ($r = -.59$; $p < .01$). Internet addiction was found to be positively correlated with submissive behaviors ($r = .40$; $p < .01$).

Multiple regression analysis assumptions were carried out as checking the normality, linearity, and auto-correlation. For normality, skewness and kurtosis values were examined and all values were found to be less than 1.5. Values were between -.65 and -.29 for kurtosis and between -0.8 and .36 for skewness. These results showed that the data had a normal distribution (Tabachnick, & Fidell, 2001). The autocorrelation assumption has been tested since it can produce undesirable results when autocorrelation occurs. The results obtained using the Durbin-Watson test showed that the data were between 1.5 and 2.5 and there was no autocorrelation between residual values (Büyüköztürk, 2009).

After the multiple regression analysis assumptions were met, the stepwise regression method was used to determine the predictive and explanatory power of each independent variable separately on the dependent variable. After that three stepwise multiple regression analyses were implemented to determine whether the regression power of internet addiction on submissive behaviors was reduced when the authenticity entered on the equation.

Table 2. Internet Addiction and Authenticity

Predictor Variable	B	SE _B	β	t	p
Internet Addiction	-.260	.039	-.320	-6.59	.000

Dependent Variable: Authenticity; $R = .320$, $R^2 = .10$, Adjusted $R^2 = .09$ ($p < .001$)

When Table 2 is examined, linear regression analysis in the first step showed that internet addiction was a significant predictor of authenticity ($\beta = -.26$, $t = -6.5$, $p < .00$).

Table 3. Authenticity and Submissive Behaviors

Predictor Variable	B	SE _B	β	t	p
Authenticity	-.447	.031	-.594	-14.43	.000

Dependent Variable: Submissive Behaviors; $R = .594$, $R^2 = .353$, Adjusted $R^2 = .351$ ($p < .001$)

When Table 3 is examined regression analysis in the second step, authenticity was found statistically significant in predicting submissive behaviors ($\beta = -.44$, $t = -14.43$, $p < .00$).

Table 5. Regression Analysis of the Mediator role of Authenticity in the Relationship between Internet Addiction and Submissive Behaviors

Predictor Variables	B	SE _B	β	t	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²
1.Step							
Internet Addiction	.248	.029	.405	8.669**	405	164	162
2.Step							
Internet Addiction	.147	.026	.240	5.756**			
Authenticity	-.389	.031	-.517	-12.404**	636	405	402

Dependent Variable: Submissive Behaviors, ($p < .001$)

Regression analysis performed in the third stage showed that internet addiction was a significant predictor of submissive behaviors ($\beta = .40$, $t = 8.66$, $p < .00$). Finally, authenticity was included in the last model to determine its' mediating role between internet addiction and submissive behaviors. In this model, although internet addiction continued to predict submissive behaviors significantly, it was observed that its' effect decreased. ($\beta = .24$, $t = 5.75$, $p < .00$). As the results of the analysis, it can be said that authenticity is a partial mediator in the relationship between internet addiction and submissive behaviors (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Sobel test was performed to test whether the mediation was statistically significant. The z value calculated according to the results of the Sobel test was found to be 7.51 ($p < .001$). This result suggests that authenticity is a significant mediator variable in relation to internet addiction and submissive behaviors (Wiedermann & Von Eye, 2015).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this research is to examine the mediator role of the authenticity in the relation between submissive behaviors and internet addiction. Findings from this research show that there is a significant positive correlation between submissive behaviors and internet addiction. There is one study investigated the relationship between these concepts, and it stated that internet addiction is positively correlated with submissive behaviors (Canan et al., 2010). Adolescents who have internet addiction may lead an unauthentic life and it may result many negative outcomes. Avoiding social, romantic, friendship relations, reduced self-esteem and negative identity formation may cause unauthentic choices and accepting the others' influence.

It was also seen that internet addiction predicts authenticity, authenticity predicts submissive behaviors, internet addiction and authenticity both predicts submissive behaviors significantly. Authenticity has a mediator role in the relation between submissive behaviors and internet addiction. As results of the studies done, there is no study aims to examine the mediator role of the authenticity in the relation between submissive behaviors and internet addiction in the literature.

Firstly, internet addiction is related to authenticity in a negative way. Some studies show that internet addiction leads to anxiety (Lee et al., 2001), deterioration in mental health (Ciarrochi et al., 2015; Salmela-Aro et al., 2017) and substance use problems. As a result, it has been found that internet addiction lowers individuals' well-being. In a study negative relationship was found between internet addiction and school engagement (Taş, 2017). Social loneliness, family emotional loneliness, and lack of social self-confidence were positively related to internet addiction (İskender, 2018). Internet addiction can lead to undesirable consequences such as poor sleep, problems with eating meals, limited physical activity, deterioration of school and work life and other daily activities (Cao & Su, 2006). These results revealed that internet addiction leads individuals a passive, nonfunctional and unauthentic life.

Secondly, there are lots of studies show that submissive behaviors and authenticity have strong links each other. People who are submissive always stay on the good side of someone and apologize to avoid being excluded from the group (Gilbert, 2001). Submissive individuals often obey orders directed to him by others. They listen to others quietly without reacting to the negative things he is said about (Köktuna, 2007). These behaviors show that the concept of submissive behaviors include accepting external influence. Submissive individuals cannot freely express their thoughts and it is quite difficult to say no for them (Köktuna, 2007). They cannot defend themselves against another person's humiliation, accusation, or the overthrow of their right. They try to show affinity to others even if they don't want to do (Gilbert, Pehl & Allan, 1994). These studies indicate that submissive people cannot live an authentic life. Consequently, authenticity and submissive behaviors may share the same qualities and people who are high in submissive behaviors can behave less authentic.

Loneliness and shyness are positively correlated with internet addiction, and addicts avoid from social interactions and family relations (Sanders, Field, Diego, & Kaplan, 2000). That may force the individuals behave unassertive and asocial and eventually, they may begin to exhibit submissive behaviors. Wood et al. (2008) suggested that authenticity has three dimensions such as self-alienation, accepting external influence and authentic living. As aforementioned studies indicated, internet addiction may cause self-alienation, the individuals may be exposed to the external influence and accept the effects of other people and ultimately, these traits may generate submissive behaviors. As a summary, it can be said that internet addicts can get further away from an authentic life and this lifestyle may impact them behave submissively.

The results of this study are remarkable, but some limitations exist. Since participants are only in the middle school group, this research can be done in different sample groups such as high school or university levels to get better results. Thus, longitudinal and experimental studies which examine the effects of internet addiction and authenticity on submissive behaviors can also be implemented. Different studies can be done using authenticity, submissive behaviors, internet addiction and related variables and mediator or moderator roles of these variables can be examined. These relations may be analyzed via structural equation modeling because all relationships between variables can be represented by a single analysis and the error amount resulting from the measurement is eliminated. Internet addiction is a wide-ranged problem especially for adolescents. Educational programs to reduce submissive behaviors, internet addiction and enhance the level of authenticity can be planned and implemented in school environment. Individual and group psycho-education and psychological counselling programs with parental support can be implemented in this context.

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