Examining the Anxiety and Internet Addiction Levels of Divorced and Married Individuals

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced and married individuals. In this study, a statistically significant difference was found between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of married and divorced individuals, where the divorced persons had higher levels of anxiety and internet addiction than the married ones. No statistically significant difference was found between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced and married individuals by gender. However, a statistically significant difference was determined between the anxiety levels of married individuals with respect to gender, where the females had higher anxiety levels than the males. In addition, no statistically significant difference was found between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced individuals with respect to status of having children, whereas the level of internet addiction in married individuals varied statistically significantly according to this variable. It was noteworthy that individuals without children had significantly higher levels of internet addiction than those with children.

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1. Introduction

By using pathological gambling model, internet addiction is defined as an impulse-control disorder similar to intoxication which does not involve any substance intake (Young, 1996). Young (1996) introduces an eight-item scale for internet addiction, where individuals who mark 5 items and above are considered to have internet addiction. These items are explained as follows;

1. Do you feel preoccupied with the Internet (think about previous on-line activity or anticipate next on-line 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 on-line longer than originally intended?

6. Have you jeopardized or risked the loss of significant relationship, job, educational or career opportunity because of the Internet?

7. Have you lied to family members, therapist, or others to conceal the extent of involvement with the Internet (e.g., time and amount of Internet use)?

8. Do you use the Internet as a way of escaping from problems or of relieving a dysphoric mood? (Young, 1996).

The root of the word anxiety is "anxietas" in ancient Greek and this concept means worry, fear, and curiosity (Köknel, 1988:138). The relationship between anxiety and internet addiction is one of the popular topics in our

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today's modern society. Field studies have found a relationship between internet addiction and emotional disorder, depression, generalized anxiety disorder, gaming disorder and social anxiety disorder (Cole and Griffiths, 2007, Lehenbauer-Baum et al., 2015; Weinstein and Lejoyeux, 2010; Morahan-Martin and Schumacher, 2003; Taş, 2019; Odacı & Çikrıkci, 2017). As individuals' depression, anxiety and stress levels increase, they display problematic internet usage behaviors. Studies have reported that university students significantly differentiated by problematic internet usage depending on their depression, anxiety and stress levels (Odacı and Çikrıkci, 2017). A study on the generalized anxiety disorder and internet gaming disorder in young adults found that those with internet gaming disorder had higher anxiety, depression and behavior inhibition scores. Another study determined that participants with internet gaming disorder had more generalized anxiety disorders (Chao-Yang-Wang et al., 2017). Individuals who experience the divorce process are observed to have higher anxiety than married ones. A study found that both internet addiction and depression levels were higher in divorced individuals than married ones, and that divorced individuals with primary school degree had higher level of internet addiction than those with high school and bachelor's degree (Tas and İme, 2919). Another study reported that males had higher level of internet addiction than females, and concluded that secure attachment, one of the attachment styles, negatively predicted internet addiction, whereas indifferent and obsessive attachment styles, which are characterized by anxiety and avoidance, positively affected it. Regarding the relationship between personality traits and internet addiction, the study also determined that responsibility and extraversion negatively affected internet addiction, whereas emotional imbalance positively affected it (Morsünbül, 2014). University students in the medium/high internet addiction group were found to have higher anxiety than others. The same results were obtained for those in the psychotism and depression group (Dalbudak et al., 2013).

One study about the internet addiction, psychological problems and coping responses found a positive relationship between internet addiction, depression, anxiety and stress. A positive correlation was also found between the shyness and emotional coping strategies from the maladaptive coping strategies of adult participants (McNocol and Thorsteinsson 2017). One study on the relationship between pathological internet addiction and loneliness, depression and social anxiety in university students determined that pathological internet addiction was used as a maladaptive behavior to reduce negative feelings such as loneliness, depression, and social anxiety (Yao & Zhong, 2014). Another study about the relationship between internet addiction, depression and anxiety found a strong relationship between internet addiction and anxiety, and a moderate relationship between internet addiction and depression (Santos et al., 2017).

In the light of the above-mentioned information, individuals may have adaptation problems in terms of reintegration into society after divorce. They may experience anxiety in this process. In addition, the increased anxiety levels of divorced individuals may increase their internet addiction levels. For this reason, this study mainly aimed to compare the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced and married individuals. For this purpose, the answers for the following questions were sought in the study.

1- "Is there any difference between anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced and married individuals?"

2- "Is the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced and married individuals differ by gender, age, marital age, status of having children, number of children, length of marriage, reasons for divorce, education status, education status of spouse, average monthly family income, social media, daily social media usage, and education style?"

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

Since this study aims to examine the anxiety and internet addiction levels of individuals with divorced and married parents by using different parameters, it has used descriptive research model. This research model is used in studies aiming to present the situation as it is

2.2. Study sample

The study sample consisted of a total of 310 people including 149 people who were married and 161 people who were not divorced participated in the study in Istanbul province between 2018 and 2019. Of them 28.1% were male, 71.3% were female and 2 persons did not express their gender. In addition, 48.1% of the individuals were married, 51.9% were divorced; 9% were married at the age of 18 and under, 26.5% at the age of 19-21,

25.5% at the age of 22-24, 23.5% at the age of 25-27, and 15.5% at the age of 28 and above. While 57.7% of them had children, 42.3% had no children.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

Data were collected using a personal information form, the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), and the Internet Addiction Scale (IAS).

2.3.1 *Personal Information Form:* The form consists of questions about the participants' demographic characteristics including gender, marital status, perceived economic status, educational status and internet usage times.

2.3.2. Beck Anxiety Inventory

The scale was developed by Beck, Epstein, Brown and Steer (1988) and adapted to Turkish culture by Ulusoy, Şahin and Erkmen (1996). It consists of 21 items and two sub-scales. This is a Likert-type scale scored between 0-3. The construct validity of the scale was tested using factor analysis. In addition, its criterion-related validity was tested, and found to be positively correlated with the Automatic Thoughts Scale, the Beck Depression Scale, the State Anxiety Scale, and the Continuous Anxiety Inventory. The reliability of the scale was measured using the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient and test-retest reliability, where the Cronbach Alpha's internal consistency coefficient was found to be .93, and the test-retest reliability to be .57. In this study, the internal consistency coefficient was found as .91.

3.2.3. Internet Addiction Scale

The scale was developed by Taş, Bilgin (2018). An expert opinion was received within the scope of scope its validity. Factor analysis was performed to determine its construct validity, where it consisted of 9 items and one factor. This one factor explained 39.607% of the total variance of the scale. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of the scale was found to be .836, and the Barlett's Sphericity test result to be $\chi^2 = 758.899$, p = .000. The common variances of the items ranged between .22 and .67, the item factor load values between .45 and .74, and the item total correlations between .35 and .61. The confirmatory factor analysis revealed that the fit indices were within the acceptable limits (X2 / df = 2.38, RMR = .06, GFI = .94, AGFI = .90, CFI = .90, RMSEA = .08). The test-retest correlation coefficient was determined as r = .90 and the Cronbach Alpha's coefficient as .78.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients, multiple regression analysis, t-test, and one-way analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA). One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to calculate the significance of the difference between three or more independent means in a normally distributed series. ANOVA alone compares the arithmetic means of three or more groups cumulatively; where the ANOVA result is considered significant when at least one of these comparisons is significant.

3. Results

Table 1 presents the results of independent samples t-test performed to solve the sub-problem of *"Is there a difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced and married individuals?"*.

Table 1. t-test results by marital status

	Parents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	sd	p
Anxiety	**Married**	149	13.5839	11.39648	-10.810	308	.000
	Divorced	161	25.0435	6.87600			
Internet Addiction	**Married**	149	14.8725	5.53647	-13.711	308	.000
	Divorced	161	22.5404	4.27053			

Accordingly, there was a statistically significant difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of married and divorced individuals (p <0.05), where the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced individuals were higher than that of levels of married ones.

The results of one-way ANOVA test performed to solve the sub-problem of *"Is there a difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced individuals by marriage age?"*.

Accordingly, there was no statistically significant difference between the anxiety levels of divorced individuals by marriage age ($p>0.05$), whereas a statistically significant difference was found between their internet addiction levels ($p<0.05$). This was because of the difference between individuals aged 18 years and below and those who are married at 22-24 years old, where the latter group had statistically significantly higher internet addiction levels than the first group.

Table 2 presents the results of independent samples t-test performed to solve the sub-problem of *"Is there a difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced individuals by type of social media used?"*.

Table 2. Independent samples t-test results of divorced individuals by type of social media used

Social Media			N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	sd	p
Facebook	Anxiety	No	56	24.8393	6.71437	-.283	158	.778
		Yes	104	25.1635	7.02300			
	Internet Addiction	No	56	21.9821	4.65341	-1.219	158	.225
		Yes	104	22.8462	4.06207			
Twitter	Anxiety	No	91	25.0000	7.42967	-.091	159	.927
		Yes	70	25.1000	6.13413			
	Internet Addiction	No	91	22.0330	4.47326	-1.730	159	.086
		Yes	70	23.2000	3.92539			
WhatsApp	Anxiety	No	40	25.5750	6.29565	.563	159	.574
		Yes	121	24.8678	7.07336			
	Internet Addiction	No	40	23.4750	4.09495	1.604	159	.111
		Yes	121	22.2314	4.29876			
YouTube	Anxiety	No	67	26.6567	6.40206	2.556	159	.012
		Yes	94	23.8936	7.00302			
	Internet Addiction	No	67	23.2985	4.54278	1.918	159	.057
		Yes	94	22.0000	4.00269			
Swarm	Anxiety	No	156	25.0897	6.81400	.476	159	.635
		Yes	5	23.6000	9.44987			
	Internet Addiction	No	156	22.4551	4.23708	-1.419	159	.158
		Yes	5	25.2000	4.96991			
Periscope	Anxiety	No	148	24.9122	6.99750	-.817	159	.415
		Yes	13	26.5385	5.28544			
	Internet Addiction	No	148	22.6081	4.41339	.678	159	.499
		Yes	13	21.7692	1.96443			
Instagram	Anxiety	No	46	24.7826	6.65303	-.304	159	.762
		Yes	115	25.1478	6.98902			
	Internet Addiction	No	46	22.4783	4.36012	-.116	159	.908
		Yes	115	22.5652	4.25323			
Blogger	Anxiety	No	156	24.9936	6.95005	-.513	159	.609
		Yes	5	26.6000	4.03733			
	Internet Addiction	No	156	22.4936	4.31725	-.775	159	.439
		Yes	5	24.0000	2.12132			
LinkedIn	Anxiety	No	157	24.9490	6.91598	-1.092	159	.276
		Yes	4	28.7500	3.94757			
	Internet Addiction	No	157	22.5478	4.31819	.137	159	.891
		Yes	4	22.2500	1.70783			

Accordingly, there was a statistically significant difference between the anxiety levels of divorced individuals using and not using YouTube (p>0.05), where those using YouTube had significantly higher anxiety levels. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced individuals by other types of social media used.

Table 3 presents the results of one-way ANOVA test performed to solve the sub-problem of *"Is there a difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced individuals by average daily time spent on social media?".*

Table 3. One-way ANOVA test results of divorced individuals by average daily time spent on social media

		Sum of Squares	sd	Mean of Squares	f	p
Anxiety	**Intergroup**	193.639	5	38.728	.816	.540
	Intragroup	7305.955	154	47.441		
	Total	7499.594	159			
Internet Addiction	**Intergroup**	122.179	5	24.436	1.347	.248
	Intragroup	2793.665	154	18.141		
	Total	2915.844	159			

Accordingly, there was no statistically significant difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced individuals by average daily time spent on social media (p>0.05).

Table 4 presents the results of one-way ANOVA test performed to solve the sub-problem of *"Is there a difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced individuals by average daily time spent on the internet?".*

Table 4. One-way ANOVA test results of divorced individuals by average daily time spent on the internet

		Sum of Squares	sd	Mean of Squares	f	p
Anxiety	**Intergroup**	324.806	5	64.961	1.391	.231
	Intragroup	7239.889	155	46.709		
	Total	7564.696	160			
Internet Addiction	**Intergroup**	170.087	5	34.017	1.919	.094
	Intragroup	2747.901	155	17.728		
	Total	2917.988	160			

Accordingly, there was no statistically significant difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced individuals by average daily time spent on the internet (p>0.05).

Table 5 presents the results of one-way ANOVA test performed to solve the sub-problem of *"Is there a difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced individuals by educational style?".*

Table 5. One-way ANOVA test results of divorced individuals by educational behavior

		Sum of Squares	sd	Mean of Squares	f	p
Anxiety	**Intergroup**	22.268	2	11.134	.232	.793
	Intragroup	7538.226	157	48.014		
	Total	7560.494	159			
Internet Addiction	**Intergroup**	28.322	2	14.161	.773	.464
	Intragroup	2877.622	157	18.329		
	Total	2905.944	159			

Accordingly, there was no statistically significant difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced individuals by educational behavior (p>0.05).

Table 6 presents the results of independent samples t-test performed to solve the sub-problem of *"Is there a difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of married individuals by type of social media used?"*.

Table 6. Independent samples t-test results of married individuals by type of social media used

Social Media			N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	sd	p
Facebook	**Anxiety**	No	68	12.5735	9.80910	-.991	147	.323
		Yes	81	14.4321	12.57372			
	Internet Addiction	No	68	14.2206	5.48497	-1.320	147	.189
		Yes	81	15.4198	5.55397			
Twitter	**Anxiety**	No	120	13.0167	10.59965	-1.238	147	.218
		Yes	29	15.9310	14.20998			
	Internet Addiction	No	120	14.2583	5.27001	-2.818	147	.005
		Yes	29	17.4138	5.97326			
WhatsApp	**Anxiety**	No	22	15.2273	15.45787	.731	147	.466
		Yes	127	13.2992	10.59149			
	Internet Addiction	No	22	14.4545	7.63281	-.382	147	.703
		Yes	127	14.9449	5.12434			
YouTube	**Anxiety**	No	74	13.5946	12.07615	.011	147	.991
		Yes	75	13.5733	10.76553			
	Internet Addiction	No	74	13.8378	5.21596	-2.298	147	.023
		Yes	75	15.8933	5.68681			
Instagram	**Anxiety**	No	53	12.7170	9.93126	-.689	147	.492
		Yes	96	14.0625	12.15324			
	Internet Addiction	No	53	13.7547	5.48742	-1.846	147	.067
		Yes	96	15.4896	5.49448			
LinkedIn	**Anxiety**	No	139	13.2014	11.51003	-1.534	147	.127
		Yes	10	18.9000	8.41229			
	Internet Addiction	No	139	14.6259	5.46964	-2.049	147	.042
		Yes	10	18.3000	5.59861			

Accordingly, there was no statistically significant difference between the internet addiction levels of married individuals using and not using YouTube and Twitter (p>0.05), where those using YouTube and Twitter had significantly higher internet addiction levels. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of married individuals by other types of social media used.

Table 7 presents the results of one-way ANOVA test performed to solve the sub-problem of *"Is there a difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of married individuals by average daily time spent on social media?"*.

Table 7. One-way ANOVA test results of married individuals by average daily time spent on social media

		Sum of Squares	sd	Mean of Squares	f	p	Difference
	Intergroup	611.824	5	122.365	.946	.453	
Anxiety	Intragroup	18371.116	142	129.374			
	Total	18982.939	147				
	Intergroup	497.878	5	99.576	3.522	.005	None-3 hours
Internet Addiction	Intragroup	4014.798	142	28.273			
	Total	4512.676	147				

Accordingly, there was no statistically significant difference between the anxiety levels of married individuals by average daily time spent on social media (p>0.05). However, there was a statistically significant difference between their internet addiction levels by average daily time spent on social media (p<0.05). This difference was between those who do not use social media and those who spend 3 hours on social media, where the latter had higher internet addiction levels.

Table 8 presents the results of one-way ANOVA test performed to solve the sub-problem of *"Is there a difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of married individuals by average daily time spent on the internet?"*.

Table 8. One-way ANOVA test results of married individuals by average daily time spent on the internet

		Sum of Squares	sd	Mean of Squares	f	p	Difference
	Intergroup	1705.185	5	341.037	2.784	.020	3 hours-5 hours and above
Anxiety	Intragroup	17517.016	143	122.497			
	Total	19222.201	148				
	Intergroup	688.997	5	137.799	5.121	.000	None -5 hours and above
Internet Addiction	Intragroup	3847.581	143	26.906			1 hour - 5 hours and above
	Total	4536.577	148				

Accordingly, there was a statistically significant difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of married individuals by average daily time spent on the internet (p<0.05). This difference was between those using 3 hours and those using 5 hours and above for anxiety levels, and between those not using internet and those using 5 hours and above for internet addiction levels.

Table 9 presents the results of one-way ANOVA test performed to solve the sub-problem of *"Is there a difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of married individuals by educational style?"*.

Table 9. One-way ANOVA test results of married individuals by educational style

		Sum of Squares	sd	Mean of Squares	f	p
	Intergroup	56.933	2	28.467	.215	.806
Anxiety	Intragroup	19162.743	145	132.157		
	Total	19219.676	147			
	Intergroup	80.072	2	40.036	1.304	.275
Internet Addiction	Intragroup	4452.976	145	30.710		
	Total	4533.047	147			

Accordingly, there was no statistically significant difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of married individuals by educational style and another variables. (p>0.05).

5. Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

This study found a statistically significant difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of married and divorced individuals, where the divorced ones had higher anxiety and internet addiction levels. There are no similar studies of divorced and married individuals conducted in Turkey. There is a limited number of studies examining the relationship between divorce and social media usage. Öngider (2011) conducted a study of the anxiety levels in divorced and married mothers, where she found that divorced mothers had higher anxiety levels than married ones, and that children with divorced parents had higher anxiety levels than those with married parents. In line with this result, she concluded that mothers who experienced divorce process could reflect their concerns to their children. There are studies investigating the relation of some different variables with problematic internet use in individuals with anxiety disorder. Odacı and Çıkrıkcı (2017) found that depression, anxiety and stress levels were associated with problematic internet use, and concluded that depression, anxiety and stress were among the psychological structures leading individuals to overuse the internet. Chao-Yang-Wang et al. (2017) studied on common anxiety and internet gaming disorders, and found that the prevalence of anxiety disorder was higher in participants with internet gaming disorder. The result of this present study showing that divorced individuals had higher anxiety and internet addiction levels than married ones suggests that divorced individuals are risky groups in terms of internet addiction. This may be because they prefer to spend time on the internet to get rid of their loneliness or problems after divorce, but are addicted to the internet after a while without noticing. In fact, there are studies reporting that lonely people spend a lot of time on the internet. Yao and Zhong (2014) have examined the relationship between loneliness, depression, social anxiety and pathological internet addiction in university students, and found that pathological internet addiction was used as a non-compliant behavior aimed at reducing negative emotions such as loneliness, depression, social anxiety. Santos et al. (2017) found a strong relationship between anxiety and internet addiction, and a moderate relationship between internet addiction and depression. Taş, İme (2919) found that divorced individuals had higher levels of internet addiction and depression than married ones, concluding that divorced individuals were considered more risky groups than married one. This present study also concluded that divorced individuals constituted a risky group in terms of anxiety and internet addiction. This study found no statistically significant difference between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced and married individuals by gender, but determined a statistically significant difference between the anxiety levels of married individuals according to gender, where the females had higher anxiety levels than the males. On the other hand, this present study found no statistically significant difference between the internet addiction levels of married individuals by gender. Morsünbül (2014) reached different results suggesting that males had higher levels of internet addiction than females. McNocol and Thorsteinsson (2017) have examined the relationship between internet addiction, psychological issues and coping strategies, and found that internet addiction had a positive relationship with depression, anxiety and stress. As an important result, they determined that the anxiety levels of married individuals did not statistically significantly varied according to status of having children, whereas their internet addiction levels statistically significantly differed by this variable. It was noteworthy

that individuals without children had higher levels of internet addiction than those with children. However, the levels of anxiety and internet addiction in divorced individuals did not statistically significantly varied according to status of having children.

This study found a significant relationship between the anxiety and internet addiction levels of divorced and married individuals. In particular, divorced individuals were considered risky groups in this area. Divorced individuals had higher anxiety and internet addiction levels than married ones. In this respect, both groups should receive relevant expert support. In fact, when the studies of divorce experts were examined, Wallerstein, Blakeslee (1989), Fthenakis, Niesel, Kunze (1982) Schmidt-Denter, Beelmann (1995), and Figdor (1998) emphasize that divorce and subsequent process are very difficult transition period for both adults and children, in which they should receive expert support. In particular, divorced individuals should receive psychological counseling, so that they can better cope with anxiety and problematic internet use. This study is limited to a total of 310 people, including 149 married and 161 divorced individuals, who were living in Istanbul between 2018 and 2019. There is a limited number of studies on divorce in Turkey, so academicians should study in this field. In fact, there are cultural differences between the studies carried out in other countries. In particular, there is no longitudinal studies in this field in Turkey, therefore conducting relevant studies becomes more of an issue in this regard.

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