

The Predictive Role of Happiness and Life Satisfaction on Internet Addiction among Teacher Candidates

Mehmet Enes SAĞAR¹

Süleyman SAĞAR²

Abstract

This study examined how much the variables of happiness and life satisfaction predicted the internet addiction levels of teacher candidates. The research was conducted based on the relational screening model. The research group of the study consisted of a total of 391 teacher candidates, 187 (%47.8) male and 204 (%52.2) female, studying at different universities in Turkey in the 2024-2025 academic year. The average age of the research group was 21.44. Young Internet Addiction Test-Short Form, Oxford Happiness Scale, Life Satisfaction Scale and Personal Information Form were used as data collection tools in the study. The data obtained in the study were analyzed by multiple linear regression analysis (stepwise). As a result of the research, it was determined that internet addiction was significantly predicted by the variables of "happiness" in the first place and "life satisfaction" in the second place.

Keywords: Happiness, life satisfaction, teacher candidate.

Introduction

With the rapid development of technology and the widespread use of the internet in this century, access to information has become much faster and easier than before. Thanks to the internet, people can access information on almost every subject instantly, which provides a great advantage in many areas from education to health, from the business world to personal development. However, this rapid access to information and constant connection can also lead to some negative effects. Internet addiction stands out as one of these effects (Ateş & Sağar, 2021; George, 2024; Sağar & Sağar, 2022; Shirvani Moghaddam, 2024; Wang & Zeng, 2024).

The concept of internet addiction was first defined in the literature by Young in 1996. Young (1996) suggested that excessive use of the internet could lead to psychological and social problems in individuals and classified it as a type of addiction. This concept proposed by Young emphasizes that excessive use of the internet, as in alcohol or drug addiction, can have significant negative effects on individuals' academic, business and social lives. He also considered internet addiction as a type of impulse control disorder and stated that this behavior resembles pathological gambling (Young, 1996; 2010). Internet addiction is a condition in which a person loses control over their internet use and experiences negative effects in social, professional and personal areas as a result of excessive and impulsive internet use. This addiction can cause an individual's internet use to decrease their quality of

¹ Assoc. Prof. Dr., Afyon Kocatepe University, Faculty of Education, Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance, Turkey, mehmetenes15@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0941-5301>

² School Principal, Ministry of National Education, Bucak-Burdur, Turkey, suleymann15@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5073-465X>

life over time and cause them to have difficulty in performing their daily functions. Internet addiction can create problems and inefficiencies in areas such as education, business life, social relationships and healthy living habits (Beard & Wolf, 2001; Ko et al., 2005; Tao et al., 2010). In other words, internet addiction can be expressed as a problem area in which individuals have problems in monitoring or controlling their internet use and experience functional loss in different areas of life (personal, social, educational or professional) due to continuous and intensive internet use (Caplan, 2002, 2005; Shapira et al., 2003). Although some important researchers working in this field have presented diagnostic and criterion studies on internet addiction in the literature (Beard and Wolf, 2001; Ko et al., 2005; Shapira et al., 2003; Shaw and Black, 2008; Tao et al., 2010; Young 1996), there is no diagnosis regarding internet addiction in the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). Despite this, the inclusion of diagnostic and criterion studies on internet gaming addiction in this book makes important contributions to the studies to be conducted in the field of internet addiction (Sağar & Sağar, 2022).

The widespread use of the internet among the young population, which is highly popular among people of all age groups, has become a major source of concern, especially regarding internet addiction (Aldea-Parra et al., 2024). The widespread use of the internet among the young population, which is highly popular among people of all age groups, has become a major source of concern, especially regarding internet addiction (Brouzos et al., 2024). Among the young population, the university student group is seen as one of the most susceptible groups to developing internet addiction compared to other internet using groups (Zewude et al., 2024). University students' inability to manage their time well, their unlimited and free access to the internet, their lack of censorship in internet activities, the ease of online friendships, their lack of parental control, and their opportunities to easily become popular on the internet trigger their internet addiction (Young, 2004).

When the literature was examined, it was seen that internet addiction was examined more frequently with negative variables such as anxiety (Alzayyat et al., 2024), loneliness (Wang & Zeng, 2024), stress (Ismail, 2024), depression (Karabel et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024). On the other hand, it was seen that there was a need for studies examining the relationships between internet addiction and positive variables in the literature. In this context, it was thought that the variables of happiness and life satisfaction in teacher candidates could be related to the internet addiction variable and that these two variables could be significant predictors of internet addiction.

The first variable examined in this research with internet addiction is happiness. Happiness, which has always attracted attention since the early ages, has attracted intense interest, especially since the 1800s, with the increase in scientific research (Pavot et al., 1990). The concept of happiness used in positive and humanistic psychology is expressed as subjective well-being or a state of subjective well-being (Jacobsen, 2007). At the heart of the word happiness is being happy or satisfied (Griffin, 2007). Happiness is defined as a state in which a person's positive feelings and thoughts about their life outweigh the negative ones. It reveals the satisfaction a person gets from their life and the superiority of positive feelings in general. Therefore, happiness emphasizes personal satisfaction and emotional balance (Myers & Diener, 1995). In other words, happiness or subjective well-being is defined as a life experience in which positive emotions are dominant and negative emotions are minimal. Happiness can also be expressed as an indicator of how satisfied a person is with their life and how positive their emotional state is (Diener, 1984; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Myers & Diener, 1995). In general, happiness

reveals a level of well-being that occurs as a result of an individual's subjective evaluation of his or her life (Diener & Ryan, 2009). Based on this information, happiness can be expressed as a person evaluating their life at a high level and with positive satisfaction. When the subject is considered in the context of this research, the fact that teacher candidates cannot be satisfied with their lives, cannot evaluate their lives with positive eyes and therefore experience negative emotions may lead them to want to spend more time on the internet and obtain positive emotions from the internet. For this reason, there may be an increase in the internet addiction levels of teacher candidates. Therefore, it is thought that internet addiction may be related to happiness.

Another variable examined with internet addiction in this research is life satisfaction. Life satisfaction, which was first mentioned in the literature by Neugarten et al. (1961), is defined as the situation or result that occurs as a result of comparing the individual's expectations from life and what they currently have. Life satisfaction is expressed as a concept that includes the subjective evaluations of the person regarding their entire life and reveals the satisfaction they obtain as a result of comparing their current situation with their expectations (Diener & Lucas, 1999; Shin & Johnson, 1978). Life satisfaction is related to the subjective well-being of a person in terms of cognitive and emotional aspects as well as feeling positive. Life satisfaction constitutes a cognitive component of subjective well-being and includes cognitive judgments about life (Diener, 1984; Pavot et al., 1991). In general, life satisfaction is defined as individuals' evaluation of their entire life positively based on the criteria they set for themselves (Diener et al., 1985). When the subject is taken into consideration in the context of this research, it can be seen that the fact that teacher candidates cannot evaluate their lives positively in all aspects, that they are not satisfied with their lives and that they experience negative emotions for this reason may lead to a desire to spend more time on the internet and get satisfaction from the internet. For this reason, there may be an increase in the internet addiction levels of teacher candidates. Therefore, it is thought that internet addiction may be related to life satisfaction.

Internet addiction presents a situation that can seriously affect individuals' daily lives and mental health. It mostly manifests itself with symptoms such as distancing from social relationships and physical activities due to spending excessive time in the virtual world, and experiencing a decrease in work and school performance. This situation can negatively affect individuals' life satisfaction and quality and can also lead to various psychological problems. Therefore, it can be said that internet addiction is a problem that should be carefully considered for teacher candidates, as it can concern people from all walks of life. In this context, it is thought that determining the variables that may be related to internet addiction in teacher candidates will contribute to a better understanding of the internet addiction problem in detail and to preventive and curative mental health studies to be carried out in this addiction area. In the literature review conducted on internet addiction, it was seen that there were studies examining many different variables together with internet addiction. However, it was not found that the studies examining the internet addiction variable together with happiness and life satisfaction variables were limited. Therefore, the study conducted is considered valuable in terms of making significant contributions to the field. In this context, the aim of this study was to examine to what extent the happiness and life satisfaction variables predict the internet addiction levels of teacher candidates. In this research conducted for this purpose, the answer to the question "Do happiness and life satisfaction variables significantly predict the internet addiction levels of teacher candidates?" was sought.

Method

Research Model

This research was conducted based on the relational screening model. This model is a research model aimed at determining the existence or degree of co-variation between two or more variables (Karasar, 2016).

Research Group

The research group of this study consisted of a total of 391 teacher candidates, 187 (47.8%) male and 204 (52.2%) female, studying at different universities in Turkey in the 2024-2025 academic year. The distribution of the research group in terms of gender is given in Table 1. The age range of the research group is between 18-28; the average age is 21.44.

Data Collection Tools

Young Internet Addiction Test - Short Form

It was developed by Young (1998) and converted into a short form by Pawlikowski, Altstötter-Gleich, and Brand (2013), and its Turkish adaptation was made by Kutlu, Savcı, Demir, and Aysan (2016). The reliability coefficient of this scale, which is 12 items and a five-point Likert type, is 0.91 on university students. The high scores obtained from the scale indicate an increase in internet addiction. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the total scores of the scale was determined as .85 within the framework of this research.

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire

It was developed by Hills and Argyle (2002) and adapted into Turkish by Doğan and Çötök (2011: 165-172). The reliability coefficient of this scale, which has 7 items and a five-point Likert type, is .74. The high number of points obtained from the scale indicates an increase in happiness. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the total scores of the scale was determined as .75 within the framework of this research.

Life Satisfaction Scale

It was developed by Diener et al. (1985) and adapted into Turkish by Köker (1991). The reliability coefficient of this scale, which is a 5 and 7-point Likert type, is .85. The high number of points obtained from the scale indicates an increase in life satisfaction. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the total scores of the scale was determined as .85 within the framework of this research.

Personal Information Form

This form was prepared to learn the age and gender information of the teacher candidates who constitute the research group.

Data Collection

In the study, firstly, ethics committee approval was obtained from Afyon Kocatepe University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee (Decision Date: 20.03.2024; Meeting: 03; Document Number: 259317). After obtaining the necessary permission, research data were collected online via Google Form. In this direction, data collection tools prepared via Google Form were

sent to teacher candidates via e-mail and they were invited to the research. Voluntary individuals were taken into account in the study and informed consent was obtained from individuals before participating in the study. In addition, the principle of confidentiality was taken into account during the data collection process and individuals were informed about this issue. The online data collection process lasted approximately one month.

Data Analysis

In the study, firstly, the normality and linearity of the data sets were evaluated to determine whether the data were suitable for multiple linear regression analysis. The presence of extreme values that made the assumptions of normality (multivariate) and linearity difficult was examined according to the Mahalanobis distance (13.82), Cook's (Cook'<1) and leverage values (.000 - .020) values. In addition, the data sets were examined in terms of kurtosis, skewness values (+1/-1), scatter and histogram graphics. As a result of these examinations, the data belonging to 6 people were removed from the data set because they had extreme values that would affect the data analysis. In addition to providing the linearity and normality conditions of the data sets, it was seen that the sample size was also appropriate when the number of predictive variables was taken into account. In the examinations made regarding the absence of a high correlation coefficient between predictor variables, which is another assumption of multiple linear regression analysis, it was determined that there was no correlation value above .80, which could be defined as multiple connectivity between predictor variables (Table 2), tolerance values were higher than .20, VIF values were lower than 10 and CI values were lower than 30. In order to examine the condition of independence of errors, Durbin-Watson value was examined; it was seen that the value was between 1-3 (DW=1.96) and did not pose a problem. Based on the examinations made, it was determined that the obtained data were suitable for multiple linear regression analysis. The data obtained in the study were analyzed with the multiple linear regression analysis (stepwise) method. .05 significance level was taken as basis in the study (Akbulut, 2010; Büyüköztürk, 2011).

Findings

In the findings section of the study, firstly, the arithmetic mean and standard deviation values regarding the internet addiction, happiness and life satisfaction scores of the research group, then the simple correlation analysis coefficients related to the variables and finally the multiple linear regression analysis (stepwise) results regarding the prediction of internet addiction are given.

The arithmetic means and standard deviation values regarding internet addiction, happiness and life satisfaction scores of the research group are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation Values

Variable	N	\bar{X}	SS
Internet Addiction (I.A.)	391	26.91	7.57
Happiness (H.)	391	23.35	4.36
Life Satisfaction (L.S.)	391	22.39	7.65

When Table 1 is examined, the arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of the research group were determined as internet addiction (\bar{X} =26.91; SS= 7.57), happiness (\bar{X} =23.35; SS=4.36) and life satisfaction (\bar{X} =22.39; SS=7.65). The relationships between the internet addiction, happiness and life satisfaction of the teacher candidates were examined with the simple correlation analysis method and the obtained results are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Simple Correlation Analysis Coefficients for Variables

Variable	I.A.	H.	L.S.
Internet Addiction (I.A.)	1		
Happiness (H.)	-.335**	1	
Life Satisfaction (L.S.)	-.298**	.516**	1

** $P < .01$

When Table 2 is examined, it is determined that there is a negative significant relationship between internet addiction and happiness ($r = -.335$, $p < .01$) and life satisfaction ($r = -.298$, $p < .01$). Based on this finding, it can be said that as the happiness and life satisfaction levels of teacher candidates increase, the level of internet addiction decreases. In addition, when Table 2 is examined, it is seen that there is no correlation value over .80, which can be defined as multiple connectivity between the predictor variables.

In the next step, when the ANOVA table, which tests the relationship between the predictor variables and the predicted variable and therefore the significance of the degree of explaining the change in the predicted variable regarding the multiple linear regression analysis, was examined, it was determined that the explained variance or the regression model was statistically significant ($F_{1/389} = 49.084$; $F_{2/388} = 29.855$, $p < .01$). Accordingly, the predictor variables successfully performed the prediction process on the model.

Table 3

Multiple linear regression analysis (stepwise) results for the prediction of internet addiction

Model	U.C.		S.C.		Correlations					
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	β	<i>t</i>	Zero Order	Partial	<i>R</i>	R^2	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>
1. (C.)	40.48	1.96		20.55**						
H.	-.581	.083	-.335	-7.00**	-.335	-.335	.335 ^a	.112	49.084**	1/389
2. (C.)	40.69	1.94		20.87**			.365 ^b	.133	29.855**	2/388

H.	-.428	.096	-.247	-4.47**	-.335	-.221
L.S.	-.169	.055	-.170	-3.09*	-.298	-.155

** $P < .01$; * $P < .05$ C (Constant), UC (Unstandardized Coefficients), SC (Standardized Coefficients)

When Table 3 is examined, it is determined that the variables happiness and life satisfaction were included in the multiple linear regression analysis (stepwise) process because they significantly predicted internet addiction. When both beta and correlation (binary/partial) values are examined, it is determined that there is a negative significant relationship between the internet addiction variable and the variables happiness and life satisfaction. The happiness and life satisfaction variables together explain approximately 13% ($R = .365$; $R^2 = .133$, $p < .01$) of the total variance regarding the internet addiction of teacher candidates.

In the first step of the multiple linear regression analysis, the beta coefficient of the happiness variable examined in predicting internet addiction is $-.335$. The t-test result regarding the significance of the beta coefficient was determined to be at a significant level ($t = -7.00$, $p < .01$). The happiness variable alone explains 11% of internet addiction ($R = .355$; $R^2 = .112$).

In the second step of the multiple linear regression analysis, the life satisfaction variable was entered into the model in addition to the happiness variable. Happiness and life satisfaction variables together explain approximately 13% of internet addiction ($R = .365$; $R^2 = .133$, $p < .01$). The beta coefficient of the happiness variable is $-.247$; the beta coefficient of the life satisfaction variable is $-.170$. The t test results regarding the significance of the beta coefficient were determined to be at a significant level ($t_H = -4.47$, $p < .01$; $t_{L.S.} = -3.09$, $p < .05$). As a result of the multiple linear regression analysis, it was seen that the happiness and life satisfaction variables significantly predicted internet addiction. When the beta values related to the variables in the model were taken into consideration, it was determined that the "happiness" variable was the first to predict the internet addiction of teacher candidates, and the "life satisfaction" variable was the second to predict it at a significant level.

Discussion

As a result of the research, it was determined that there is a negative and significant relationship between internet addiction and happiness and life satisfaction. In addition, as a result of this study, it was seen that happiness and life satisfaction variables are significant predictors of internet addiction variable. Happiness and life satisfaction variables together explained approximately 13% of internet addiction. It was determined that "happiness" and "life satisfaction" variables were the first and second most significant predictors of internet addiction of teacher candidates.

For teacher candidates, the university period is a critical life stage in which they complete their development in many aspects and lay the foundation stones for their future. During this period, students have the opportunity to discover and develop their professional orientations in addition to increasing their academic knowledge and skills. It is extremely important for teacher candidates to keep up with

the opportunities of the age and to be aware of technological developments. Today, technology is advancing rapidly and these developments offer important opportunities in many areas. For this reason, teacher candidates' mastery of technology and being aware of these developments can provide a great advantage for their future careers and personal development. At this point, teacher candidates are expected to consciously benefit from the conveniences offered by the internet. In other words, among the behaviors expected from teacher candidates, providing development in educational, professional and social aspects has an important place. In this development process, using technology and the internet effectively and efficiently is also among the behaviors expected from teacher candidates. However, excessive and uncontrolled use of the internet can lead to undesirable results, especially for teacher candidates. Reaching the point of addiction to the internet can prevent their other vital activities and negatively affect their lives. Therefore, it is extremely important for teacher candidates to develop at a moderate level in all aspects and not to experience problems such as internet addiction in order to progress healthily. Internet addiction can negatively affect students' academic success, social relationships, professional development and their general well-being in life. In this context, it is of critical importance for teacher candidates not to experience a problem such as internet addiction. Raising awareness about internet addiction and determining the variables related to addiction are of great importance in terms of preventive and curative mental health studies. Internet addiction is a condition that has negative effects on mental health, and therefore, since raising awareness on this issue and developing effective intervention strategies are of vital importance, determining the variables related to internet addiction is considered useful.

In this study conducted with teacher candidates, it was determined that the happiness variable significantly predicted the internet addiction of teacher candidates in the first place and that there was a negative significant relationship between them. In other words, it can be said that as the happiness level of teacher candidates increases, the internet addiction level decreases. When the literature was examined based on this result, it was concluded that as the happiness level of students increases, the internet addiction levels decrease in the studies conducted by Akbaş and Gökbulut (2023); Ashari et al. (2022); Bandani Tarashoki et al. (2017); Rastegarian et al. (2022). Tomlinson et al. (2017) emphasize that happiness levels are characterized by individuals' better self-confidence and extroversion. In addition, the concept of "happiness" in the literature is also used as a form of high level of satisfaction with life with intense positive emotions and fewer negative emotions (Diener, 1984; Diener & Ryan, 2009). When the literature was examined in this context, it was seen that the results of this study were consistent with the research results indicating a negative relationship between internet addiction and subjective well-being (Oliveira et al., 2024). In this context, when the results of this study and other existing research are evaluated as a whole, it can be said that the higher the happiness level of individuals, the lower their internet addiction will be. From another perspective, having a high level of happiness can help reduce internet addiction. Therefore, it can be said that a high level of happiness has an important function in reducing the internet addiction of teacher candidates. It can be stated that teacher candidates with a high level of happiness can effectively cope with other problems they encounter, especially internet addiction, thanks to their ability to evaluate life positively, look at life with positive eyes, and see the positive aspects of life. At this point, it is thought that the high level of happiness of teacher candidates has a functional role in keeping them away from a problem such as internet addiction.

In this study conducted with prospective teachers, it was determined that the life satisfaction variable significantly predicted the internet addiction of prospective teachers in the second place and that there was a significant negative relationship between them. In other words, it can be said that as the life satisfaction level of prospective teachers increases, the level of internet addiction decreases. When the literature was examined based on this result, the studies conducted by Luo et al. (2024); Shi and Wang (2023); Sağar and Sağar (2022); it was concluded that as the life satisfaction level of students increases, their internet addiction levels decrease. When the literature was continued to be examined, it was seen that the results of this study were consistent with other research results such as Agaj (2023); Garvanova (2022); Mahamid et al. (2022) indicating a negative relationship between internet addiction and life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is one of the most important factors affecting the mental health of an individual and social relations (Neugarten et al., 1961); It is described as being satisfied with life, accepting the living conditions, being happy with life, or fulfilling all the needs and desires related to life (Sousa & Lyubomirsky, 2001). In addition, life satisfaction constitutes the cognitive component of subjective well-being (Diener et al., 1999). At this point, it has been observed that the research results in the literature indicating a negative relationship between internet addiction and subjective well-being are consistent with the results of this study (Suresh et al., 2018; Wang & Fu, 2024). As a matter of fact, Sağar and Sağar (2022) emphasize that people who exhibit internet addiction take refuge in the internet and use it intensively in order to avoid such negativities, to relax and to increase their life satisfaction. At this point, it can be stated that individuals who prefer the internet environment to get away from real life and achieve life satisfaction may have a high level of internet addiction. When the results of these studies and the results obtained from the study are evaluated as a whole, it can be said that increasing the life satisfaction levels of teacher candidates has an important function in reducing their internet

addiction levels. In this context, it is thought that studies to be carried out on increasing the life satisfaction levels of teacher candidates can help them reduce their internet addiction levels. The following suggestions have been made in the context of the results obtained within the scope of this study:

- The research group in this study was limited to teacher candidates. In this context, another study can be conducted with different research groups (adolescents, adults, etc.).
- This study is limited to examining the predictive role of happiness and life satisfaction variables on the internet addiction levels of teacher candidates. Accordingly, the predictive role of different variables on internet addiction can be examined in another study.
- Based on the results of this study, it was concluded that as the happiness and life satisfaction levels of teacher candidates increase, the level of internet addiction decreases. At this point, studies that can increase the happiness and life satisfaction levels of teacher candidates in preventing or reducing internet addiction can be included.
- Since this study is a cross-sectional study, it cannot reveal cause-effect relationships. In future studies, different methods can be used for the variables used in this study (happiness and life satisfaction) and the cause-effect relationships between them and internet addiction.

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