The Relationship Between Internet Addiction and Life Satisfaction Among University Students

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ABSTRACT
This descriptive and cross-sectional study was conducted to examine the relationship between internet addiction and life satisfaction among 217 students studying at the Faculty of Health Sciences of a foundation university. Data were collected using a Personal Data Collection Form, the Internet Addiction Scale, and the Life Satisfaction Scale. The participants' mean score for internet addiction was 24.12 ±12.37, and the mean score for life satisfaction was 19.99 ± 6.91. A significant, moderate, and negative correlation was found between internet addiction and life satisfaction ($r = -0.305$, $p < 0.001$). Daily internet usage duration was found to have a significant effect on internet addiction scores ($p < 0.001$). It was also determined that income level, physical illness, mental illness, regular physical exercise, and academic achievement levels were significantly associated with life satisfaction scores ($p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that internet use among university students should be analyzed not only through the diagnosis of addiction but also through the quality of usage time and its indirect effects on quality of life.

Keywords: internet addiction, life satisfaction, university students.

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Üniversite Öğrencilerinde İnternet Bağımlılığı ve Yaşam Doyumu Arasındaki İlişki

ÖZ

Bu tanımlayıcı ve kesitsel çalışma, bir vakıf üniversitesinin Sağlık Bilimleri Fakültesi'nde öğrenim gören 217 öğrenci arasında internet bağımlılığı ile yaşam doyumu arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek amacıyla yürütülmüştür. Veriler; Kişisel Veri Toplama Formu, İnternet Bağımlılığı Ölçeği ve Yaşam Doyumu Ölçeği kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Katılımcıların internet bağımlılığı ölçeği puan ortalaması 24,12 ±12,37; yaşam doyumu ölçeği puan ortalaması ise 19,99 ±6,91 olarak belirlenmiştir. İnternet bağımlılığı ile yaşam doyumu arasında anlamlı, orta düzeyde ve negatif yönlü bir ilişki saptanmıştır ($r = -0,305$, $p < 0,001$). Günlük internet kullanım süresinin internet bağımlılığı puanları üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisi olduğu görülmüştür ($p < 0,001$). Gelir durumu, fiziksel hastalık, ruhsal hastalık, düzenli fiziksel egzersiz ve akademik başarı düzeylerinin yaşam doyumu puanları ile anlamlı derecede ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur ($p < 0,05$). Bu bulgular, üniversite öğrencilerindeki internet kullanımının sadece bağımlılık tanısı üzerinden değil, aynı zamanda kullanım süresinin kalitesi ve yaşam kalitesi üzerindeki dolaylı etkileri üzerinden de analiz edilmesi gerektiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: internet bağımlılığı, yaşam doyumu, üniversite öğrencileri.

INTRODUCTION

The university period represents a developmental stage in which individuals gain academic autonomy but are simultaneously exposed to intense psychosocial stressors. During this process, the dominant role of internet technologies in education and social interaction brings about the risk of internet use reaching pathological levels. According to 2025 data, 73.2% of the world's population (6.04 billion people) is online (DataReportal, 2025). Although the internet is a fundamental tool facilitating access to information in higher education, uncontrolled use has given rise to the phenomenon of "internet addiction" (IA), which impairs functionality in young adults. Defined by Young (1998) as a behavioral addiction characterized by loss of control and loss of psychosocial function, IA is also addressed in the literature through the concepts of "problematic" or "pathological" internet use (Kumari et al., 2022). For a long time, the concept of addiction was handled only within the scope of disorders related to alcohol and substance use; however, with the widespread integration of digital technologies into daily life, evaluating non-substance behavioral patterns within the framework of addiction has come to the fore. In this context, internet addiction exhibits similar characteristics to substance addictions in that it includes core components of addiction such as tolerance, withdrawal, loss of control, and the continuation of use despite negative consequences (Griffiths, 1996).

University students are identified among the groups carrying a high risk in terms of internet addiction. The university years represent a period in which academic demands increase, social circles are reconstructed, and time management becomes individualized. During this period, the internet can be used intensively for both academic requirements and social interaction and entertainment; for some students, this pattern of use may progress to a problematic level (Kumari et al., 2022). Current studies indicate that the prevalence of internet addiction in university samples is reported across a wide range due to methodological differences such as countries, measurement tools, and cut-off points (Kumari et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2022). This variability increases the importance of clearly reporting the measurement approach and sample characteristics when assessing the prevalence of internet addiction (Ibrahim et al., 2022).

The effects of internet addiction are not limited solely to the increase in time spent online; they can lead to multidimensional consequences on psychological symptoms, academic functionality and social relationships. Research reports that there are significant relationships between the level of internet addiction and depression, anxiety and stress; as the severity of internet addiction increases,

psychological distress may also escalate (Ahmad et al., 2025; Kumari et al., 2022). Studies conducted among medical student samples have reported that internet addiction is associated with depressive symptoms and that psychological symptoms may become more pronounced as the level of addiction increases (Ibrahim et al., 2022). These findings suggest that internet addiction can be both a risk area associated with psychological vulnerabilities and a behavioral pattern that can transform into a dysfunctional coping strategy for dealing with stress (Ahmad et al., 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2022).

Current meta-analysis data reveal that the global prevalence of internet addiction (IA) among university students is 41.84%, and this rate has shown a statistically significant increase in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period (Liu et al., 2025). Prevalence rates exhibit heterogeneity across geographical regions and academic disciplines; indeed, while high rates such as 67.7% among medical students in Pakistan (Ahmad et al., 2025) and 78.7% in professional college samples in India (Kumari et al., 2022) have been reported, this rate was found to be 35.2% in Ethiopia (Muche & Asrese, 2022) and 9.3% in Egypt (Ibrahim et al., 2022). In studies conducted in Turkey, it is observed that the prevalence of IA ranges between 16.1% and 18.3% (Sayili et al., 2023; Sayili et al., 2025; Ergün & Meriç, 2020).

Internet addiction leads to a multidimensional morbidity profile affecting an individual's mental health and physiological well-being. Research confirms a strong correlation between IA levels and depression, anxiety, and stress (Kumari et al., 2022). Ahmad et al. (2025) determined that the risk of stress increases by 4.71 times, and the risk of anxiety by 2.56 times in addicted individuals. From a psychopathological perspective, this situation causes individuals to use virtual platforms as a maladaptive behavior pattern to avoid low self-esteem, leading them into a cycle of social isolation (Wang & Zeng, 2024). On a physiological level, pathological use disrupts the circadian rhythm and reduces sleep quality, which paves the way for cognitive functional impairments (Mahamid et al., 2022). One of the fundamental variables associated with internet addiction is the concept of life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is the general level of contentment that an individual reaches as a result of a cognitive evaluation of their own life according to criteria they have determined (Diener et al., 1985; Diener & Lucas, 1999). Although life satisfaction in university students is influenced by many variables such as academic adjustment and social relationships, there is predominantly a negative relationship between IA and life satisfaction (Ergün & Meriç, 2020; Koç et al., 2022). While Mahamid et al. (2022) reported that problematic internet use

decreases as life satisfaction increases, Muche and Asrese (2022) determined that students with high academic achievement are 81% less likely to be exposed to the risk of IA.

Life satisfaction in university students is influenced by many variables such as academic adjustment, social relationships, psychological health, and future expectations (Dağlı & Baysal, 2016). Research conducted in Turkey indicates that mostly negative relationships are found between internet addiction and life satisfaction among university students, and as internet addiction increases, life satisfaction may decrease (Ergün & Meriç, 2020; Koç et al., 2022). Similarly, it has been reported that problematic internet use is associated with sleep problems and general well-being indicators, and a negative relationship can be found between life satisfaction and problematic use (Mahamid et al., 2022). However, in some studies, the relationship may be reported as weak or in different directions; this suggests that factors such as internet usage purposes, individual coping styles, and levels of social attachment may shape the relationship (Taşlıyan et al., 2018). Although prior research has extensively examined the associations between problematic internet use and psychosocial factors, individuals exhibiting at-risk internet use without meeting criteria for clinical addiction remain underrepresented in the literature. The present study addresses this gap by focusing on risky and problematic patterns of internet use and their relationships with relevant psychosocial variables, highlighting early risk indicators with implications for preventive mental health and psychoeducational interventions.This research aims to determine the correlational relationship between internet addiction levels and life satisfaction among Faculty of Health Sciences students, who are the health professionals of the future, and to identify the interaction between these two variables.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Study type

This study was conducted using a descriptive and cross-sectional design to examine the relationship between internet addiction and life satisfaction among university students.

Study group

The population of this study consists of students from the faculty of health sciences at a private university located in Gaziantep. In the study, where the population comprises 572 students, the minimum sample size was determined as 230 individuals based on the sample calculation for a known population. Furthermore,

in the a priori power analysis conducted with G*Power 3.1 ($\alpha = 0.05$, $1-\beta = 0.80$, $r = 0.20$), the required minimum sample size was calculated as 194. The study was completed with 217 students who volunteered to participate, and post-hoc power analysis indicated that the current sample has sufficient statistical power for the primary analyses (Faul et al., 2009). The students participating in the research were selected based on voluntariness using convenience sampling, one of the non-probability sampling approaches. Convenience sampling is a frequently preferred and widely used approach in the literature, especially in researches with time and cost constraints in accessible populations such as university students (Etikan et al., 2016). The inclusion criteria for the study were determined as being a student of the faculty of health sciences, being 18 years of age or older, and volunteering to participate in the study.

Data Collection

The data collection process of this study was conducted between April and May 2023. Following the acquisition of necessary ethical committee approvals and institutional permissions, the data collection phase was initiated. Research data were collected from 217 university students who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study, using an online survey technique. In the sample selection, students who consented to participate and completed the data collection tools in full were included in the study. Accordingly, the research was carried out using convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling method based on voluntariness. Convenience sampling is a frequently preferred and widely used approach in the literature, especially in research with time and cost constraints involving accessible populations such as university students (Etikan et al., 2016). Prior to the survey administration, an "Informed Consent Form" was presented to the participants, and commitments regarding data confidentiality, the principle of anonymity, and the use of data solely for scientific purposes were provided. The data collection process was finalized with students who agreed to participate and filled out the measurement tools completely.

Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected using a Personal Data Collection Form, the Internet Addiction Scale, and the Life Satisfaction Scale.

Personal Data Collection Form

The form, structured by the researchers to determine the demographic and personal characteristics of the participants as well as their internet usage profiles, includes descriptive variables such as age, gender, and educational status, in addition to

items questioning internet usage habits (Ergün & Meriç, 2020; Koç et al., 2022; Mahamid et al., 2022; Muche & Asrese, 2022).

The Internet Addiction Scale (IAS)

To determine the internet addiction levels of the participants, the measurement tool developed by Young (1998) based on pathological gambling criteria (DSM-IV) and adapted into Turkish by Bayraktar (2001) was utilized. The scale, which has been reported in the literature with internal consistency coefficients of alpha = 0.91 and a Spearman-Brown value of 0.87, consists of a 20-item five-point Likert-type structure (Young, 1998; Bayraktar, 2001). In the evaluation process, items are scored between 1 (Never) and 5 (Always), with a maximum total score of 100 points (Taşlıyan et al., 2018).

The Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS)

The scale, developed by Diener and colleagues (1985) to cognitively evaluate individuals' life satisfaction levels, was adapted into Turkish by Köker (1991); within the scope of validity and reliability studies, the internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) of the scale was reported as 0.85. This measurement tool, which has a five-item unidimensional structure, was evaluated using a 7-point Likert-type Life Satisfaction Scale. Scores obtained from the scale range from 5 to 35, with higher scores indicating higher life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985; Köker, 1991).

Statistical Analysis

Data obtained from the research were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 23.0. Within the scope of descriptive statistics, categorical variables were summarized as frequency (n) and percentage (%), while continuous variables were presented as mean and standard deviation (SD). The conformity of continuous variables to a normal distribution was evaluated using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test; additionally, the skewness and kurtosis coefficients of the data were checked to ensure they remained within the range of -1.5 to +1.5. In addition to numerical tests, histograms were utilized, and following these evaluations, parametric tests were employed for data meeting the assumption of normal distribution. For variables satisfying the normal distribution assumption, the independent samples t-test was used for comparisons between two groups, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for comparisons between more than two groups. In cases where a statistically significant difference was detected as a result of the one-way ANOVA, the Tukey post hoc test was applied to determine the source of the difference between groups.

Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between scale scores. The internal consistency reliability of the measurement tools used in the study was assessed by calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In all statistical analyses, a p-value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Ethical considerations

The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the SANKO University Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee prior to the implementation phase (Date: 03.06.2023, Decision No: 2023/02-02). In addition to ethical approval, necessary administrative and institutional permissions were obtained from the university where the application was conducted. Throughout the process, the ethical standards set forth in the Declaration of Helsinki were strictly adhered to. Detailed explanations regarding the scope of the study, data confidentiality, and the principle of voluntariness were provided to the participants, and "Informed Consent" was obtained from all participants in an online environment. The anonymity and confidentiality of the data were committed, ensuring that personal identification information would not be shared with third parties.

RESULTS

The mean age of the students participating in the study was 21.32±0.89, and according to the internet addiction scale, the rate of those showing limited symptoms is 3.7%. 77.4% were female, and the distribution across departments was 20.7% in Nutrition and Dietetics, 39.2% in Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation, and 40.1% in Nursing. Additionally, 29.0% were first-year students. The smoking rate was 23.5%, while the alcohol consumption rate was 13.8%. The proportion of those who engage in regular physical exercise was 20.3%. Those who rated their academic achievement as "good" accounted for 53.0%. Regarding daily internet usage, 48.4% of the participants reported using the internet between 3 and 6 hours per day (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of participants' personal characteristics (n=217)

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Age (Mean±SD) 21.32±0.89			
Internet Addiction Scale Scores	50 points and below / Asymptomatic	209	96.3
	50-79 points / Limited symptoms	8	3.7
	80 and above / Internet addiction	0	0.0
Gender	Female	168	77.4
	Male	49	22.6
Department	Nutrition and Dietetics	45	20.7
	Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation	85	39.2
	Nursing	87	40.1
Class	1st Grade	63	29.0
	2nd Grade	47	21.7
	3rd Grade	51	23.5
	4th Grade	56	25.8
People they live with	Alone	9	4.1
	With family	161	74.2
	With Friends	4	1.8
	In dormitory	40	18.4
	Other	3	1.4
Income level	Income less than expenses	42	19.4
	Income equal to expenses	125	57.6
	Income more than expenses	50	23.0
Daily internet usage time	Less than 1 hour	2	0.9
	1-3 hours	54	24.9
	3-6 hours	105	48.4
	6-8 hours	41	18.9
	8-10 hours	13	6.0
	More than 12 hours	2	0.9
Physical illness	Yes	7	3.2
	No	210	96.8
Mental illness	Yes	9	4.1
	No	208	95.9

Antidepressant use	Currently using	27	12.4
	Never used	181	83.4
	Used in the past	9	4.1
Smoking status	Yes	51	23.5
	No	166	76.5
Alcohol use status	Yes	30	13.8
	No	187	86.2
Regular exercise status	Yes	44	20.3
	No	173	79.7
Academic achievement	Very good	12	5.5
	Good	115	53.0
	Moderate	90	41.5

When the participants' purposes for using the internet were examined, it was observed that the most common purpose was social media use (82%). This was followed by listening to music (63.6%), conducting research (57.6%), following the news (57.6%), and watching TV series/movies (57.6%), respectively. It was determined that approximately half of the participants used the internet for shopping (47.5%). Lower rates were reported for chatting (32.7%), playing games (21.7%), and business-related use (17.5%) (Figure 1).

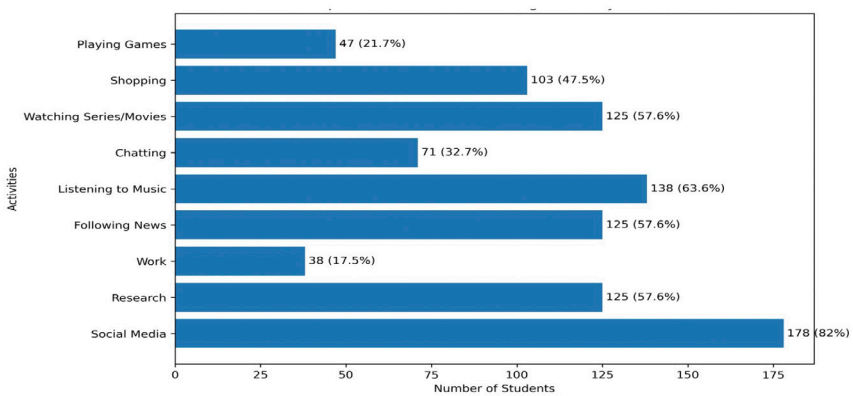

Figure 1. Purposes of internet usage among participants

When the social media platforms used by the participants were examined, it was observed that Instagram was the most widely used platform (89.4%). This was followed by YouTube (81.6%) and Snapchat (54.4%). It was determined that approximately half of the participants used Twitter/X (44.7%). In contrast, the usage rate of Facebook was found to be considerably low (6.5%). At more

limited rates, participants reported using TikTok (11.5%) and other social media platforms (10.1%) (Figure 2).

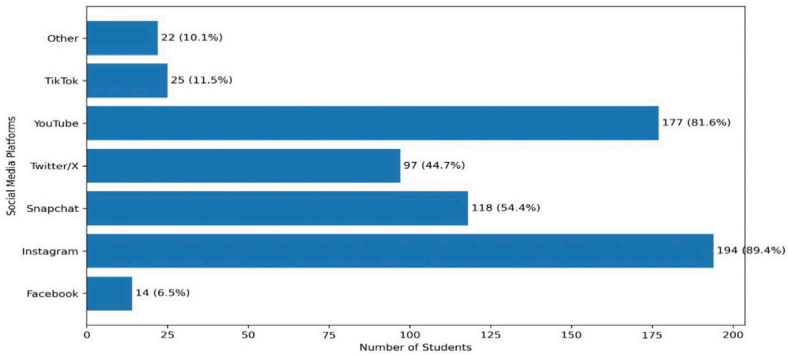

Figure 2. Social media platforms most frequently used by the participants on the internet The mean score for the internet addiction scale of the participants was determined to be 24.12±12.37, and the mean score for the life satisfaction scale was 19.99±6.91 (Table 2).

Table 2. Mean scores and cronbach's alpha values of the participants' ınternet addiction and life satisfaction scales

Scales	**Mean ± SD**	**Min - Max**	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Internet Addiction Scale	24.12±12.37	2.00 – 63.00	0.902
Life Satisfaction Scale	19.99±6.91	5.00 – 35.00	0.879

According to the analyses presented in Table 3, no significant difference was found between internet addiction and life satisfaction scores in terms of gender, department, grade level, living arrangement, smoking and alcohol consumption, or antidepressant use ($p > 0.05$). Daily internet usage time showed a significant effect on internet addiction scores ($p < 0.01$); internet addiction scores were found to be higher in students who used the internet for 3 hours or more per day. Income status, physical illness, mental illness, regular physical exercise, and academic achievement level were found to be significantly associated with life satisfaction scores ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3).

Table 3. Comparison of participants' mean scores on internet addiction and life satisfaction scales according to sociodemographic characteristics

Characteristics		**IAS**		**LSS**	
		Mean ± SD	**t/F-p**	**Mean ± SD**	**t/F-p**
Gender	Female	23.75±12.12	t=-0.835	20.07±6.85	t=-0.323
	Male	25.42±13.24	p=0.405	19.71±7.15	p=0.747
Department	Nutrition and Dietetics	25.91±13.18	F=0.603	19.82±7.55	F=1.566
	Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation	23.83±13.19	p=0.548	20.97±6.65	p=0.211
	Nursing	23.49±11.11		19.12±6.76	
Class	1st Grade	25.34±13.52	F=1.736	21.00±7.06	F=1.423
	2nd Grade	22.25±12.35	p=0.161	18.29±6.84	p=0.237
	3rd Grade	21.90±11.08		20.03±6.63	
	4th Grade	26.35±11.90		20.25±6.96	
People they live with	Alone	19.22±11.33	F=1.997	22.22±8.48	F=0.996
	With family	24.12±12.38	p=0.096	20.31±6.80	p=0.411
	With Friends	39.75±4.71		17.50±2.88	
	In dormitory	23.77±12.63		18.40±7.09	
	Other	23.00±4.35		21.00±8.88	
Income level	Income less than expenses	26.50±15.77	F=1.134	17.45±7.21	F=3.848
	Income equal to expenses	23.91±11.43	p=0.324	20.38±6.53	p=0.023*
	Income more than expenses	22.68±11.35		21.16±7.19	1<2 1<3
Daily internet usage time	Less than 1 hour	14.50±14.84	F=5.787	23.50±6.36	F=0.446
	1-3 hours	18.42±9.44	p=0.000**	20.75±6.70	p=0.816
	3-6 hours	24.23±10.40	3>2	19.68±7.09	
	6-8 hours	28.85±15.27	4>2	20.07±6.91	
	8-10 hours	31.07±16.92	5>2	18.30±7.20	
	More than 12 hours	40.00±11.31		21.50±3.53	
Physical illness	Yes	22.00±11.94	t=-0.462	14.42±7.74	t=-2.185
	No	24.20±12.41	p=0.645	20.18±6.82	p=0.030*
Mental illness	Yes	28.22±12.04	t=1.014	14.44±7.89	t=-2.490
	No	23.95±12.38	p=0.312	20.23±6.78	p=0.014*

Antidepressant use	Currently using	25.51±13.41	F=0.366	20.14±6.40	F=1.322
	Never used	24.04±12.27	p=0.694	20.15±6.98	p=0.269
	Used in the past	21.55±12.00		16.33±6.67	
Smoking status	Yes	23.23±13.50	t=-0.589	19.33±6.53	t=-0.781
	No	24.40±12.03	p=0.557	20.19±7.03	p=0.435
Alcohol use status	Yes	26.53±12.51	t=1.147	21.43±6.46	t=1.229
	No	23.74±12.34	p=0.253	19.76±6.96	p=0.220
Regular exercise status	Yes	21.47±10.92	t=-1.597	23.34±6.41	t=3.700
	No	24.80±12.65	p=0.112	19.14±6.79	p=0.000**
Academic achievement	Very good	22.08±13.43	F=2.049	21.25±8.12	F=3.896
	Good	22.85±10.32	p=0.108	21.09±6.89	p=0.010*
	Moderate	25.82±14.30		18.56±6.43	3<1 3<2

F: One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), **t:** independent sample t-test, **1, 2, 3, 4, 5:** Tukey test, *p<0.05,**p<0.01.

According to the results of the pearson correlation analysis, a significant weak negative relationship was found between internet addiction and life satisfaction ($r = -0.305$, $p < 0.001$) (Table 4).

Table 4. The relationship between participants' internet addiction and life satisfaction

		1. IAS	**2. LSS**
1. Internet Addiction Scale (IAS)	**r**	1	-.305**
2. Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS)	**r**	-.305**	1

r: Pearson correlation test, **p<0.01.

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to determine the relationship between internet addiction and life satisfaction among university students. The research findings indicate that there are no students at the level of internet addiction within the sample, and the proportion of those showing limited symptoms is 3.7%. The fact that approximately half of the participants' daily internet usage is concentrated in the 3–6 hour range, along with long screen times, suggests that a large group of individuals is at the threshold of "risky usage."

The descriptive and cross-sectional design of this study limits the interpretation of the findings in terms of causal relationships. Accordingly, the results are addressed within a descriptive framework reflecting associations between internet use and

life satisfaction and do not imply any cause–effect relationship. In interpreting the findings, possible explanations for the observed relationships between variables are discussed in relation to the existing literature.

Studies conducted in different countries reveal that the prevalence of internet addiction (IA) varies widely depending on cultural, socioeconomic, and methodological differences. While the prevalence of IA among high school students in Taiwan was reported as 17.4% (Lin et al., 2017), this rate reached 35.4% in a study involving university students in Croatia (Černja et al., 2019). Research conducted in South and Southeast Asian countries shows that the prevalence ranges between 20–27% (Chia et al., 2020; Hassan et al., 2020). Systematic reviews and meta-analyses involving larger samples point to even higher rates; while a meta-analysis covering 10 countries in Africa reported the prevalence of IA as 34.53% (Zewde et al., 2022), the prevalence of internet addiction among university students in Egypt was determined to be 38.5% (Sayed et al., 2022). Furthermore, a recent meta-analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between loneliness and internet addiction, emphasizing that the psychosocial dimension of internet addiction should not be overlooked (Wang & Zeng, 2024). When studies conducted in Turkey are examined, it is observed that the prevalence of IA ranges between 16.1% and 18.3% (Sayili et al., 2023; Sayili et al., 2025; Ergün & Meriç, 2020).

According to the findings of the current study, a moderate and significant negative correlation was identified between internet addiction (IA) and life satisfaction. This finding is in line with the literature indicating that subjective well-being decreases as pathological internet use increases (Şahin, 2016; Ergün & Meriç, 2020; Mahamid, Berte & Bdier, 2022). While Mahamid et al. (2022) emphasized the relationship between problematic internet use, low life satisfaction, and sleep disorders; Sayili et al. (2025) argued that psychological variables such as depression may play a more dominant role in this relationship, suggesting that the construct is more complex than previously thought. Furthermore, the mediating effects of emotional processes (experiential avoidance, anxiety, alexithymia) on IA demonstrate that the issue is not merely behavioral but possesses a deep psychosocial foundation (Yi et al., 2025). The significant association observed between internet use and life satisfaction in this study suggests that digital behaviors may be linked to subjective well-being among university students. However, due to the cross-sectional design, the direction and underlying mechanisms of this relationship cannot be determined. The findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that problematic internet use may be associated

with psychosocial adjustment, stress levels, and leisure activities. In this context, the relationship between internet use and life satisfaction may be shaped by indirect factors such as social interactions, academic demands and coping strategies. Rather than implying causality, the results highlight the importance of considering risk indicators related to internet use within the framework of life satisfaction among university students.

In the study, demographic variables such as gender, department and grade level were not found to have a decisive effect on IA (Internet Addiction) and life satisfaction. However, daily internet usage exceeding 3 hours significantly increases addiction scores; this aligns with the thesis that "pathological tendencies strengthen as screen time increases" (Zewde et al., 2022). The fact that participants use the internet primarily for social interaction and entertainment through visual-oriented platforms such as Instagram and YouTube suggests that digital socialization has shifted toward the axis of "visual identity construction" and "validation seeking." According to data from a study conducted with university students; academic achievement, self-esteem, and parental supervision were identified as protective factors, while peer pressure was found to be a significant risk factor increasing internet addiction (Muche and Asrese, 2022).

In the current study, it was determined that life satisfaction is directly influenced by socio-economic and health-oriented variables. The significant increase in life satisfaction due to factors such as high income level, maintenance of physical and mental health, regular physical activity and academic achievement suggests that individuals' perceptions of subjective happiness are nourished by both material resources and self-actualization elements such as health and success. Specifically, the positive effect of sports can be interpreted as physical activity functioning as a protective shield against internet addiction by increasing not only physical but also psychological resilience. The literature emphasizes that stress, educational burden, low income level, loneliness, and limited reading habits increase the risk of IA; conversely, regular physical activity, high life satisfaction, and book-reading habits serve as protective factors (Sayili et al., 2023; Wang & Zeng, 2024). The instruments used in this study assessed behavioral patterns of internet use rather than clinical diagnostic criteria. Accordingly, the findings should not be interpreted as indicating “internet addiction” in a clinical sense, but rather as reflecting problematic and at-risk levels of internet use. This distinction is critical for the interpretation of the results, as the observed associations represent behavioral tendencies related to internet use rather than a clinically defined addictive disorder. Framing internet use within a risk-based, subclinical context

allows for a more accurate understanding of the findings and underscores their relevance for early identification and preventive interventions.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates a significant negative association between internet addiction and life satisfaction among university students, indicating that increased pathological internet use is accompanied by reduced subjective well-being. Daily screen time emerged as the most critical risk factor, with usage exceeding three hours markedly intensifying addictive tendencies. In contrast, higher socioeconomic status, academic achievement, and regular physical activity served as protective factors by enhancing life satisfaction.

These findings underscore that internet addiction is a multidimensional phenomenon closely linked to individuals' psychosocial resources and quality of life. Accordingly, preventive strategies should extend beyond screen-time restriction and incorporate digital literacy, emotional regulation, and stress management interventions into university curricula. Expanding opportunities for physical activity and strengthening academic and financial support systems for at-risk students may further promote healthier internet use patterns and psychological well-being.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, since the research was conducted only with students from the Faculty of Health Sciences at a single foundation university in Gaziantep, the results cannot be generalized to all university students or different age groups. Second, the use of a cross-sectional design prevents the establishment of definitive causal relationships between internet addiction and life satisfaction. Third, the data were collected through self-report scales, which may introduce social desirability bias or subjective interpretation by the participants.

Ethical Approval

Ethics Committee permission to conduct the study was obtained from SANKO University Non-Interventional Research Ethics Committee (Date 06.03.2023/No: 2023/02-02/5).

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Author Contributions

Sibel Polat Olca: Research design, literature review, data collection, data analysis, manuscript writing, critical review.

Eda Azan: Research design, literature review, data collection, manuscript writing, critical review.

All authors discussed the entire manuscript and approved the final version.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest.

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