Internet Addiction of College Students from the Psychological Perspective

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ABSTRACT

With the rapid development of network, the phenomenon of Internet addiction is prevalent on campuses, which has produced a variety of negative effects on college students in terms of learning, living, working and so on. In recent years, there are many research literatures on Internet addiction overseas, covering all aspects of this psychological phenomenon. Moreover, domestic research on Internet addiction started late. In the light of the fact that college students do not have clear understanding on hazards of Internet addiction, it generally shows their self-control is poor. They do not believe they can control their behavior and results and give up taking responsibility for the results and tend to agree network identity. Based on this phenomenon, we propose the network psychological source control concept. In view of the close contact between the excessive use of the network and the individual time management, this study selected the time dimension of personality characteristics on Internet addiction as another influencing factor, and explored the integrated influence of the psychological source control to Internet addiction.

KEYWORD: Internet addiction; college students; locus of control network; time management disposition; influencing factors

1 INTRODUCTION

The presentation of Internet addiction immediately aroused widespread concern in society, and the psychology has begun to study it. In 1995, the concept of internet addiction was included into the dictionary of psychiatry, medicine and sociology dictionary thesaurus. In 1996, Dr. KS Young of University of Pittsburg took pathological gambling for example and defined the Internet addiction as substance dependence without impulse control disorders. Moreover, he published a research report on Internet addiction and proposed symptoms of Internet addiction. It includes chronobiology disorders, sleeping disorders, depression, slow thinking, reduction in social activities, decreased self-evaluation and so on. More seriously, the intent or behavior of suicide may occur. He believes that Internet addiction is a problem of the use of network. If we want to have an in-depth study of the phenomenon of addiction, the most important thing is to confirm the diagnostic method of internet addiction and distinguish the Internet addiction from the general Internet use, which is to facilitate further study. With the expanded of network addiction research, in 1997, the American Psychological Association (APA) officially recognized the academic value of Internet addiction study, causing scholars from various countries to discuss and study this phenomenon gradually.

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Internet addiction is a chronic or periodic fascinated physiological or psychological state caused by individuals’ uncontrolled using the network. It produces an irresistible desire to re-use network, accompanied by some physical symptoms of withdrawal reactions, tolerance, and weakened impulse control. And it will lead to damages on individual social function, mental function and other aspects.

2 COMPENSATION FOR THE LACK OF SOCIAL SUPPORT IN REALITY

When users use the Internet to make up for the absence of social support in reality, they also expand their sources of social support. The connotation of social support in traditional study also continues to expand, and thus social support networks gradually attracted the attention of psychologist. Research on social support network is not much, but studies have shown that social support of network affects network usage behavior. When an individual gets much more network support, his dependence on the network will increase. Social support plays an important role in the formation of Internet addiction, which is a crucial factor of it. There is little research on the relation between Internet social support and Internet addiction. However, there have been studies that have provided the theoretical basis for further study and research clues.

For the relationship between Internet addiction and loneliness, it still needs to have further research. Some different views show, due to the highly interactive nature of the network, network users will not feel lonely when using the network. The network makes them feel that they and others are linked, even though physically isolated, but psychologically connected; therefore, they will not feel lonely. Even if Internet addicts sit alone before the computer screen for a long time, he will not feel lonely.

Locus of control is understood to be related to the personal character or conduct of inter-relationship with the event ending generalization expectations; it is the different view that an individual has his ability to influence future events. One pole of the continuum is the internal resistance; the other pole is outside the control of nature. Internal control is that people believe they have the ability to control what happens to them; that is, a person’s behavior, personality and ability are determinants of events. The external control is that people believe what happened to themselves and others are controlled by luck, social background, other people and other external control. They tend to give up their own consequences of lives. Locus of control actors actually represents the degree of responsibility for their actions to themselves (internal) or to other people, or other things (external), which directly affects one’s views, attitudes and approach of events happening around them.

After the psychological concept of control is presented, it, as a decisive variable of affecting person’s psychological behavior, attracts a widespread attention of researchers. Firstly, the locus of control is taken as views and beliefs that can influence people’s lives and destiny. It influences people’s psychology in the level of value. Secondly, as the general expectation of relationship between people’s personality behavior and the result of events, it affects people in the level of behavior. Thirdly, it is not only the tendency of people’s willingness to the activities and results, but also an important component of personality characteristics. Therefore, it is a psychological force where it can play a long-term role in people’s psychology and behavior.
3  INTERNET ADDICTION AND LOCUS OF CONTROL

China had not done researches on the relationship between Internet addiction and locus of control before. In 2004, some empirical studies involving forecast of control on Internet addiction and the network started. Studies have shown that people with high Internet addiction firmly believe that life is controlled by others’ irresistible force and a lot of things in their life are determined by luck, which illustrates that the general locus of control on Internet addiction has a certain prediction effect.

The difference between Internet-addicted college students and non-addicted college students reflects in meeting the needs of psychology: the Internet satisfaction in needs of psychology of the former is higher than that of the latter. The relationship between psychological needs and Internet satisfaction of Internet-addicted college students is close, but the relation with reality is not obvious. For non-addicted students, some needs are closer with reality and some are more closely related with the network. Thus, for Internet-addicted college students, their psychological needs cannot be well satisfied in real life, and they will turn to Internet to satisfy their psychological needs. However, for non-addicted college students, reality and the network are two ways to meet their psychological needs. They can be flexible shift in dual channels to meet the needs of their psychological needs and reality is still more important. Thus, by increasing the reality satisfaction of college students’ psychological needs, we can reduce the possibility of Internet addiction.

External control is developed based on internal control. External control is to balance the adverse effects arising from polarizing internal control, allowing individuals to better adapt to the development. But external control is abstinent. Once over, it will adversely affect the individual. Therefore, in terms of college students, because there is no much difference in their internal control, the role of external control is prominently exhibited. It shows higher external control of individual is easier to be addicted to Internet than the lower external control. Of course, the factors affecting students are various. It is limited to only using the locus of control to predict Internet addiction. In further studies, we should pay more attention to the factors affecting internet addiction, such as interpersonal relationships, a sense of self-worth, mind, etc., which would increase the scientificity of research’s explanation.

4  INTERNET ADDICTION AND THE DISPOSITION OF TIME MANAGEMENT

There is a distinct difference on the disposition of time management between Internet addicts and non-addicts. The Internet addicts’ time management disposition is significantly lower than non-network addicts; that is, the Internet addicts’ time management skills and monitoring capabilities are poor. Internet addiction scores and time management disposition are significantly negatively correlated, and the same with scores in different dimensions and the total score. This shows that those who have a better time management skills are less likely to be addicted to the network. It also shows that time management may have a good function of predicting the Internet addiction. In the regression analysis between time management disposition and Internet addiction, time effectiveness has a better predictive power on Internet addiction, which could explain the 14.6% of the total Internet addiction variables.

Effective social support can enhance the ability to cope with the situation and get rid of tension. In addition, social support networks can help individuals get and develop their ability of anticipation and respond before tense things happen, thus increasing the overall level of
mental function. This study found that Internet-addicted students’ ways of actively coping with things are related with a higher level of mental health, while negative ways are related with a lower level of mental health. When individuals are facing stressful events, their choice of coping often shows a certain bias. How to effectively use positive coping styles in life and learning? How to make Internet-addicted students have a better quality of life? How to enhance mental health? How to eliminate psychological and behavioral disorders network brings? Psychological intervention should take them into further consideration. Therefore, cultivating and improving the ability of frustration tolerance and psychological adjustment of Internet-addicted students, and adopting active coping strategies when faced with intense issues, are important contents in Internet-addicted students’ mental health education in colleges and universities.

5 FACTORS AFFECTING COLLEGE STUDENTS’ INTERNET ADDICTION

Most scholars are concerned about the factors of Internet addiction, mainly from the network with its own characteristics, students’ social development, individual differences and environmental factors. These studies have achieved fruitful results, providing a theoretical basis on reducing the hazard of Internet-addicted college students. This study attempts to have a deeper understanding of the relationship between these factors and Internet addiction by investigating the importance of individual factors on cognitive mechanisms and the processes of Internet addiction. Motivation psychology believes that psychological needs are the most important driving force of individual behavior and it determines the individual’s action. When psychological needs are not met, individuals may have problems of having destructive behavior, low study motivation, declining level of academic achievement, poor social relationships and so on. Once psychological needs are met, it will enhance the ability of individuals to respond positively and produce positive behavior changes etc. At the same time, many researchers also believe that self-efficacy has a greater impact on the emergence and development of behavior. The concept of self-efficacy was firstly put forward by the famous psychologist, Albert Bandura. It refers to people’s ability to organize and execute a behavior to achieve the desired results. When self-efficacy levels of the individual are higher, he has a better faith in completing a certain act. And he is more likely to perform this behavior. Currently, in network’s usage behavior research, the researchers have focused on using network’s self-efficacy, and have found that it can well predict an individual’s network behavior. Recently, some researchers further divide specific network self-efficacy into network using self-efficacy and network control self-efficacy. And they believe the latter can better predict an individual’s Internet addiction.

The mental health status of Internet-addicted students is not optimistic. Their summarization, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety and hostility scores are significantly higher than the national youth norm. As college students, their mental endurance and adaptation capabilities are relatively weak. From this study we can found that life events and coping styles are important factors of Internet-addicted students’ psychological health. In life events, things related to relationships, studying pressure and health had a significant impact on the various aspects of these students’ mental health. With the development of society, the further spread and popularity of network, the accelerated pace of life, increased competition and family rearing ways and other factors have led to increasing their learning, relationships, employment, and other emotional pressures.
Network indeed works as the function of meeting the college students’ psychological needs that are missing in reality. When the psychological needs are not well met in real life, they will turn to other ways to meet, and the network is one of the ways. When the network can well satisfy the needs college students cannot meet in real life, it is more likely to encourage college students to use the network. Then it is constantly reinforced and finally forms the Internet addiction. We call this function as the compensation or mechanism to meet the psychological needs of the network.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Students’ psychological capital total score and all dimensions’ scores were significantly negatively correlated with Internet addiction scores. Among them, the psychological capital, self-efficacy, and optimism scores were all negatively associated with addiction, salience, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, and social comfort and the negative consequence scores. Hoping scores were negatively correlated with addiction, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms and negative consequences scores. Toughness scores were negatively correlated with addiction, withdrawal symptoms, and negative consequences scores. Research found that college students’ Internet addiction was related with mental capital, where hoping dimension scores can well predict the Internet addiction scores. The higher level of students’ psychological capital relates to the better psychological quality. It is less likely to lead to Internet addiction when using network. Moreover, the expectations of college students being able to realize their goals of study and work can make them spend much more time on real life. Besides, they will achieve their goals with their own practical action as far as possible, rather than looking for achieving goals in the virtual Internet, which is not likely to lead to Internet addiction tendencies.

References